

The Atheist Machine

Clearing the Ground of Idols in Neolithic Çatalhöyük and Modern Istanbul

F. LeRon Shults, Chapter for *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Religion*
(Shults and Powell-Jones, editors, Bloomsbury Academic)

In their first co-authored book, *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari challenged the psychoanalytic idealization and capitalist appropriation of Oedipus, and set out a plan in which – or a plane on which – a new set of questions could be productively engaged: "Given a certain effect, what machine is capable of producing it? And given a certain machine, what can it be used for?" (1983, 3). My focus in this chapter is on what I will call *the atheist machine*, the multiple uses and effects of which are expressed throughout the productions, registrations and consumptions of Deleuze's literary corpus. Using the language of *A Thousand Plateaus*, we might say that the abstract machine of affirmative atheism produces rhizomic lines of flight whose absolute deterritorialization molecularizes the transcendent pretenses of monotheistic molarities. I will argue that the atheist machine is always at work wherever schizoanalysis (or rhizomatics, micropolitics, pragmatics, etc.) proceeds, as long as it proceeds.

In their last co-authored book, *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari argued that "Wherever there is transcendence, vertical Being, imperial State in the sky or on earth, there is *religion*; and there is Philosophy only where there is immanence ...only friends can set out a plane of immanence as *a ground from which idols have been cleared*" (1994, 43, emphases added). When it comes to dealing with priestly erections of arborescent icons within a religious Imaginarium, the schizoanalytic task of the Deleuzian Friend is definitely destructive. "Destroy, destroy. The whole task of schizoanalysis goes by way of destruction..." (1983, 342). As the last few sections of *Anti-Oedipus* make clear, however, this destruction is inextricably linked to the positive and creative tasks of schizoanalysis.

This chapter is an expanded version of a keynote presentation given at the 7th annual International Deleuze Studies Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, in July 2014. Its sub-sections reflect the general theme of that conference: "Models, Machines, and Memories." I begin by introducing the concept of theogonic (god-

bearing) mechanisms: evolved cognitive and coalitional *machines* that engender shared imaginative engagement with supernatural agents. Insights derived from empirical findings and theoretical developments within the bio-cultural sciences of religion can help us understand how and why gods are so easily born(e) in human minds and groups. We also need to refresh our *memories* about the historical contingencies surrounding the emergence of the (western) monotheistic idea of “God” – an infinite supernatural Agent who has a special plan for a particular Group. In the second section, I briefly explain how the advent of this conception, which turned out to be logically, psychologically and politically unbearable, contributed to the assemblage of the atheist machine during the axial age.

Third, I utilize the conceptual framework outlined in section one as a heuristic *model* for clarifying the dynamics at work within and among the four main social-machines treated in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project (i.e., the territorial, despotic, capitalist and war machines). As we will see, the atheist machine plays a special role in the creative production of the (revolutionary) war machine. The fourth section demonstrates the explanatory power of this integrated model by examining two case studies – cases selected in part because of their significance in the context of the original conference presentation. The excavation of Çatalhöyük, a well-known archaeological site in south central Turkey, has shed light on the development of significant social-machinic shifts during the Neolithic. Deleuze and Guattari themselves referred to this site in their discussion of the Apparatus of Capture (1987, 473-4). Istanbul is a contemporary site that exemplifies the tension between religion and naturalist-secularist forces within a complex, pluralistic and globalizing cosmopolitan society.

Finally, I will explore the implications of the integration of these machines, memories and models for the productive task of *becoming-atheist*, that is, for the experimental construction of bodies without organs on the plane of immanence without any recourse to transcendent religious Figures imaginatively engaged by subjugated groups whose rituals allegedly mediate divine revelation. Elsewhere I have spelled out the conceptual framework of “theogonic reproduction theory” and its relation to Deleuzian philosophy in

more detail (Shults, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). In the current context I limit myself to a broad outline of the theory, demonstrating its usefulness for abstracting a Deleuzian atheist machine and extracting its revolutionary force for the schizoanalysis of religion.

I. Atheism and Schizoanalysis

The goal of schizoanalysis is “to analyze the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres, and thereby to show how, in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression... All this happens, not in ideology, but well beneath it...” (1983, 115). One of the goals of *theological* schizoanalysis, I suggest, is to show how subjects come to desire their own *religious* repression. “All this” does indeed occur “well beneath” the surface of priestly ideology. As we will see in the next section, evolved cognitive and coalitional mechanisms surreptitiously regulate desiring-production by engendering god-conceptions in human minds and cultures. At this stage, however, our focus is on the way in which schizoanalysis works to challenge the striations and segmentations of the socius effected by priestly figures, whether psychoanalytic or religious (1987, 171).

Deleuze expresses astonishment that so many philosophers still find the death of God tragic. “Atheism,” he insists, “is not a drama but the philosopher’s *serenity* and philosophy’s *achievement*.” The dissolution of God is not a problem. “Problems begin only afterward, when the *atheism* of the concept has been attained” (1994, 92, emphases added). Why, then, would the Deleuzian Friend continue to devote attention to religious ideas, such as concepts of God that hold up monotheistic molarities? First of all, chipping away at such repressive representations is valuable in and of itself. But Deleuze suggests another motivation for poking around religious and theological edifices. “Religions,” he argues, “are worth much less than the nobility and the courage of the atheisms that they inspire” (2007, 364).

Some of Deleuze’s most inspiring pages are those in which he attends to sacerdotal stratifications; this makes sense in light of his claim that “there is always an atheism to be extracted from religion.” In fact, Deleuze singles out

Christianity as that religion that *secretly* *atheism* “more than any other religion” (1994, 92). This helps to explain his frequent criticism of that long-dominant monotheistic Coalition. However, Deleuze explicitly separates *all* religion from philosophy, art and science. The latter three require more than the making of “opinions,” which are attempts to protect ourselves from chaos based on the invocation of “dynasties of gods, or the epiphany or a single god, in order to paint a firmament on the umbrella, like the figures of an Urdoxa from which opinions stem.” Art, science and philosophy “cast planes over the chaos... (they) want us to tear open the firmament and plunge into the chaos. We defeat it only at this price” (1994, 202). Each of these struggles with chaos in its own way, “bringing back” varieties (art), variables (science) or variations (philosophy). Efforts within all three disciplines are always and already bound up in the struggle against *opinion* – especially opinions woven into sacred canopies defended by religious hierarchies.

What does any of this have to do with schizoanalysis? Does Deleuze really link schizoanalysis (and rhizomatics, micropolitics, pragmatism, etc.) to *atheism*? Indeed he does. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze notes that denying God is only a “secondary thing,” and accomplishes nothing if “man” is straight away set in God’s place. The person who realizes that “man” is no more central than “God” does not even entertain the question of “an alien being, a being placed above man and nature.” Such a person, he observes, no longer needs “to go by way of this mediation – the negation of the existence of God – since he has attained those regions of an auto-production of the unconscious where the unconscious is no less atheist than orphan – immediately atheist, immediately orphan” (1983, 65-66). For the schizoanalyst, the unconscious is not mediated by Oedipus or Christ (or any other religious Figure): it is *immediately* orphan *and* atheist.

In his critique of psychoanalysis Deleuze identifies three errors concerning desire: lack, law and the signifier. These are in fact the same error, an “idealism that forms a pious conception of the unconscious.” But where did these errors come from? “These notions cannot be prevented from dragging their *theological* cortege behind – insufficiency of being, guilt, signification... But what water will cleanse these concepts of their background, their previous existences – *religiosity*?” (1983, 121, emphases added). In *A Thousand Plateaus* these

notions are explicitly linked to the triple curse cast on desire by “the priest,” the most recent figure of which is the psychoanalyst: “the negative law, the extrinsic rule, and the transcendental ideal” (1987, 171). The similarity between traditional interpretations of the Genesis myth as a “Fall” and models of the Oedipal conflict that rely on privative, punitive and palliative categories is hard to miss: both understand desire in terms of loss, guilt and idealization – as under the curse of anxiety, prohibition and displacement from a desexualized paradise (cf. Shults, 2014b).

In the plateau on “Nomadology,” Deleuze also explicitly links atheism to the creative war machine that was invented by the nomads. “It may be observed that nomads do not provide a favorable terrain for religion; the man of war is always committing an offense against the priest or the god... The nomads have a sense of the absolute, but a singularly *atheistic* one” (1987, 422; emphasis added). Although the phrase “war machine” does not appear in *Anti-Oedipus*, we do find references there to a “revolutionary machine,” and to hunters in nomadic space who follow the flows and escape the “sway of the full body of the earth” (1983, 354, 163). Atheism and schizoanalysis cannot be separated. “For the unconscious of schizoanalysis is unaware of persons, aggregates, and laws, and of images, structures, and symbols. It is an orphan, just as it is an anarchist and an *atheist*” (1983, 342; emphasis added).

This link between atheism and schizoanalysis will come as no surprise to those familiar with Deleuze’s earlier single-authored works of philosophical portraiture, in which he consistently hammers away at religious resentment and traditional notions of God, and celebrates the atheistic effects of Nietzsche (1983), Spinoza (1990), Hume (1991) and even Kant (1984). In *Difference and Repetition*, he encourages us not to judge the atheist from the point of view of the belief that supposedly drives him, but to judge the believer “by the *violent atheist* by which he is inhabited, the *Antichrist* eternally given ‘once and for all’ within grace” (1994, 96, emphases added). In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze insists that there has only ever been one ethics, the *amor fati* of the humor-actor who is “an anti-God (*contradieu*)” – the Stoic sage who “belongs to the Aion” and opposes the “divine present of Chronos” (2004, 170-71).

Deleuze found atheism a somewhat obvious place to begin. Instead of loitering around the starting line of philosophy, he encouraged us to get moving, to experiment on the plane of immanence by creating concepts. Getting people to the starting line, however, is harder than Deleuze seemed to realize. One of the most important effects (and uses) of an atheist machinic assemblage, I suggest, is the disassembling of the god-bearing machines that reproduce supernatural agents in the human Imaginarium and covertly pressure believers to keep nurturing them through regulated ritual engagement. Unveiling these evolved mechanisms, which operate “well beneath” theological ideologies, is an important initial step as we begin to have “the talk” about religious reproduction.

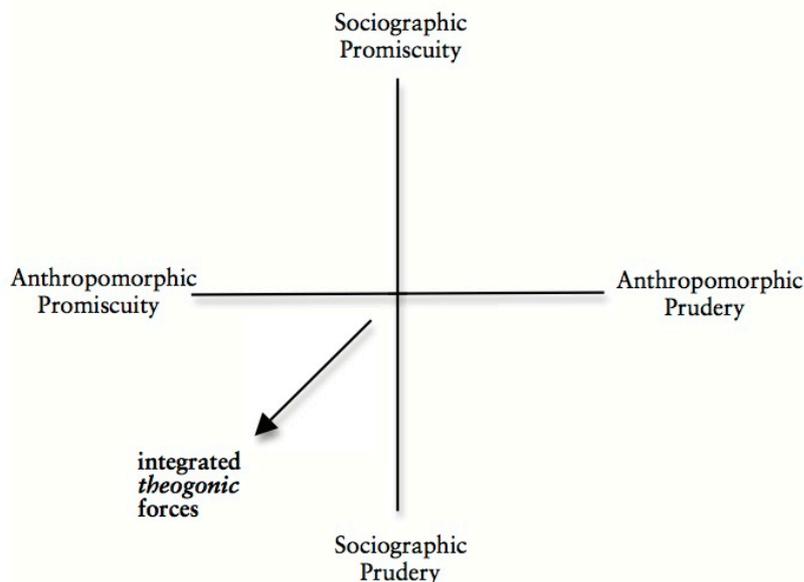
II. Theogonic machines: how gods are born(e)

Where do babies come from? Why do parents keep them around? Archaeologists working at sites like Çatalhöyük do not have to dig around for answers to such questions. As they unearth Neolithic skeletons and artifacts, clearing the ground of “idols” (or, at least, of “figurines”), they can confidently assume that the regular arrival and continued nurture of the infants in that community were the result of the same basic sort of coital procedures and mating strategies that were naturally selected during the evolution of *Homo sapiens* in the Upper Paleolithic and that continue to replenish the human population today. Although research on these practices in a cosmopolitan city like Istanbul might yield insight into some interesting variations, cultural anthropologists know enough about the human phylogenetic inheritance and the dynamics of the transmission of social entrainment practices to explain, without additional field work, where Turkish *babies* come from today and why adult Turks keep them around.

A similar confidence is emerging among scholars in the bio-cultural sciences of religion about the mechanisms by which *gods* are born in human minds and borne in human cultures. During the last quarter century, theoretical proposals based on empirical research within a wide variety of fields such as evolutionary biology, archaeology, cognitive science, moral psychology and cultural anthropology, have been converging around the claim that religious phenomena can be explained by the evolution of *cognitive* processes that over-

detect human-like forms in the *natural* world and *coalitional* processes that over-protect culturally inscribed norms in the *social* world. Elsewhere I have summarized many of the major theories within the bio-cultural study of religion that shed light on god-bearing mechanisms, consolidating them in what I call *theogonic reproduction theory*.¹

It is important to recognize that phenomena associated with “religion” are complex and contested (like the term itself). For the purpose of this interdisciplinary experiment, however, I am using the term to indicate an aggregate of features that have in fact been found in every known culture, past and present, namely, *shared imaginative engagement with axiologically relevant supernatural agents*. Where do conceptions of gods come from, and why do groups keep them around? Belief in supernatural revelations and participation in supernatural rituals are the result of the integration of evolved perceptive and affiliative tendencies that I call “anthropomorphic promiscuity” and “sociographic prudery.” The coordinate grid in figure 1 provides a conceptual framework for discussing the possible correlations between these types of cognitive and coalitional dispositions – and their contestation.



¹ See especially Shults, 2014c. Some of the material in the current chapter is adapted from this book, and overlaps with fuller arguments developed in Shults 2014a, 2014b and 2014d. For other integrative presentations of some of the most salient empirical data and theoretical developments by leading scientists in the fields that make up the “bio-cultural” study of religion, see, e.g., Boyer (2002, 2011), Atran (2002, 2010) and Lewis-Williams (2010). For extensive bibliographies and reviews of relevant literature, see the *Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion* website: <http://www.ibcsr.org/>.

Why are humans so prone toward *superstition*, that is, to proposing and accepting interpretations of ambiguous (and especially frightening) natural phenomena that are based on false conceptions of causation? Such interpretations are due, in part, to evolved *cognitive* defaults that pull us toward the left side of the horizontal line in figure 1. When we encounter some pattern or movement we do not understand, our first guess is likely to involve the attribution of characteristics like mentality and animacy. This over-active predilection helps to explain why we so easily see “faces in the clouds” and worry about hidden forces that may intend us harm. Moreover, we quite often double down on such guesses and keep scanning for human-like agents even when there is no clear evidence of their presence. This tendency to assume that hard-to-detect agents are the cause of hard-to-understand events served our Upper Paleolithic ancestors well; otherwise, we would not be here to write and read about them.

Early hominids who developed hyper-sensitive cognitive devices that scanned for agency were more likely to survive than those who did not. What made that noise in the tall grass? Was it a human enemy or some other animal? Or was it just the wind? Those who quickly guessed “intentional force” and acted accordingly were more likely to avoid being eaten (if the animal was a predator) and more likely to find food (if the animal was a prey). Despite almost constant false positives in the short run, this over-active perceptual strategy would have granted survival advantage in the long run. It would have paid off to keep searching for and believing in such hidden agents. Anxiety about the failure to find an actual agent generates other hypotheses; just because we are paranoid does not mean that an animal-spirit or angry ancestor-ghost was not really lurking in the grass before it mysteriously disappeared.

Contemporary humans have inherited this anthropomorphic *promiscuity*. We jump at any opportunity to postulate human-like entities as causal explanations even – or especially – when these interpretations must appeal to counterintuitive disembodied intentional forces, i.e., to “supernatural agents.” Of course, it is also possible to contest this sort of evolved default. Scientists and philosophers, for example, are trained to become anthropomorphically *prudish*.

Far more cautious about such appeals, and typically critical of superstition in general, they are more likely to resist ascribing intentionality to unknown causes. If something strange happens in a test tube during an experiment, the chemist will not guess that it was a “ghost.” If something seems to be missing in a causal (or logical) chain, the (non-religious) philosopher will not insert a “god.”

Why are humans also so easily prone toward *segregation*, that is, to making and reinforcing inscriptions of the social field that protect their own in-groups from contamination or domination by out-groups? Our evolved *coalitional* defaults pull us toward the bottom of the vertical line in Figure 1. This (often vehement and sometimes violent) fortification of boundaries is engendered, in part, by an evolved over-active tendency to embrace and defend conventional modes of segmenting and regulating society. This naturally generated prejudice for one’s own collective makes it tempting to just stay at home where the proscriptive and prescriptive norms feel most comfortable. This default tendency is so powerful that we will often engage in costly and painful behaviors in order to follow the rules – and willingly inflict pain on those who do not. It makes sense that such a hyper-sensitive propensity toward protecting one’s own coalition would also have served our early *Homo sapiens* ancestors well.

When it comes to competition among small-scale societies, especially when resources are low or under other stressful conditions, those groups that are most likely to survive or those in which the individual members are able to cooperate and remain committed to the group. Natural selection reinforces the tendency of an individual organism to watch out for itself, but if there are too many cheaters, freeloaders or defectors in a society it will quickly fall apart. Research in the bio-cultural sciences of religion suggests that this problem was solved in some hominid coalitions during the Upper Paleolithic by an intensification of shared belief in and ritual engagement with potentially *punitive* supernatural agents (such as animal-spirits or ancestor-ghosts). Such coalition-favoring “gods” could catch misbehavior that regular natural agents might miss and could punish not only the miscreants, but their offspring or even the entire group. Belief in invisible or ambiguously apparitional “watchers” helped to enhance the motivation to follow the rules and stay within the coalition.

Contemporary humans have also inherited this sociographic *prudery*. Most people somewhat automatically follow the authorized social norms of their in-group, or at least put great effort into building up a reputation for doing so. Here too, however, the evolved default can be contested. Those who are *promiscuous* in their sociography are less likely to accept claims about or demands for the segregation of human groups that are based only (or even primarily) on appeals to authorities within their own coalition. They are more likely to be open to intercourse with out-groups about alternate normativities and to the pursuit of new modes of creative social engagement. In-group bias helped (some of) our ancestors survive in small-scale societies in difficult socio-ecological niches. Today, however, this evolved default does not always serve us well – especially those of us who live in large-scale, urban societies characterized by the pressures of globalization and radical pluralism. A growing number of policy-makers and legislators in such contexts refuse to appeal to “ghosts” or “gods” in their attempts to inscribe the public sphere.

Anthropomorphic promiscuity and sociographic prudery reinforce one another. Conceptions of gods may be easily born within human minds but it takes a village to raise them. Supernatural agents who are cared for and ritually engaged within a coalition then become easy imaginative targets for the hair-triggered agency detection mechanisms of each new generation. In the environment of our early ancestors the selective advantage went to hominids who developed cognitive capacities that quickly *detected* relevant agents in the natural milieu and whose groups were adequately *protected* from the disruption that could result from too many cheaters in the social milieu. All living human beings share a phylogenetic inheritance shaped by the integration of these god-bearing biases, which explains why we are so easily drawn into the bio-cultural gravitational field of the lower left quadrant of figure 1.

The explanatory power of the disciplines that contribute to the bio-cultural study of religion challenges the plausibility of belief in ghosts, gods and other culturally postulated disembodied intentional forces. Scientists and (non-religious) philosophers may not be able to provide deductive logical arguments that *disprove* the existence of supernatural agents or inductive evidence that *invalidates* claims about their causal relevance, but they can offer powerful

abductive and retroductive arguments that render their existence *implausible*. The more reasonable hypothesis is that shared imaginative intercourse with supernatural agents emerged over time as naturally evolved hyper-sensitive cognitive tendencies led to mistaken perceptions, which in turn slowly became entangled within erroneous collective judgments about the extent of the social field (cf. Shults, 2014c).

The (relative) success of science and the (relatively) peaceful cohesion of democratic, pluralistic societies require that those who want to participate in the academic and public spheres learn how to challenge the cognitive and coalitional defaults that promote superstition and segregation. But if the biases that lead to shared imaginative engagement with supernatural agents were so deeply woven into the genetic and memetic structures of human life, why and how did they come to be challenged in the first place? Scientific naturalism and political secularism are expanding in many parts of the world. A growing number of us do not think we need gods to make sense of the natural world or to act sensibly in the social world. Where did such “atheistic” ideas come from? They were already gestating during the axial age.

III. Monotheistic memories: the birth of (a)theism

During the tenth millennium BCE, shared belief in local animal-spirits or limited ancestor-ghosts was enough to hold together small-scale societies of hunter-gatherers. Shamanic engagement with such finite supernatural agents even sufficed for the egalitarian sedentary collectives that began to form during the Neolithic. Over the millennia, however, in many contexts across the most fertile areas of east, south and west Asia, human groups grew in size and complexity and claimed ever-larger plots of land for themselves. So did their gods. As coalitions were amalgamated or assimilated by one another, smarter and more powerful supernatural agents were needed – “high gods” who could monitor the behavior of more human agents and trump the local spirits or ancestral authorities of the newly-merged coalitions. Ever bigger groups required ever bigger and ever more punitive gods in order to ensure that everyone cooperated and stayed committed (cf. Norenzayan, 2013).

During the first millennium BCE, within the largest and most complex literate states across east, south and west Asia, a new sort of god-concept was born in the minds of intellectual and priestly elites: an all-encompassing Supernatural Agency whose influence was universal and in relation to whom all behavior was punished (or rewarded). The period from approximately 800-200 BCE is commonly called the “axial age” because it represents a turning point, or axis, in the transformation of civilizational forms in human history. The most common ideas about an ultimate Reality that emerged in east and south Asia during this period did not explicitly (or unambiguously) involve the attribution of intentionality to an infinite Force. Dao and Dharma, for example, were supposed to be morally relevant for any and all groups, but most Chinese and Indian religious scholars seriously questioned whether such Realities should be primarily conceived as person-like and coalition-favoring.

There was far less doubt in the monotheist traditions that emerged in the wake of the west Asian axial age: we are made in the *image* of God and God has a special plan for *our* group. The identity of Jewish – and eventually Christian and then Muslim – coalitions was tied to narratives about the creation of Adam and the call of Abraham to a promised land (paradise lost, and found, in west Asia). Theological debates among these religious in-groups center around questions about the extent to which (or even whether) Moses, Jesus or Muhammad mediate divine law-giving and care-giving. Which group has the definitive revelation of – and ritual access to – the one true God who will personally punish (or reward) everyone for all eternity? Monotheism is anthropomorphic promiscuity and sociographic prudery gone wild – superstition and segregation applied to infinity.

As we will see in the next section, Deleuze often noted a special relation between monotheism and what he called the *despotic* machine. When the coding of flows in the “primitive” territorial socius are overcoded in the despotic socius, then “the ancestor – the master of the mobile and finite blocks – finds himself dismissed by the deity, the immobile organizer of the bricks and their infinite circuit” (1983, 217). For Deleuze, the main role of the deity seems to be the inscription of debt into the very existence of the despot’s subjects, who now owe their very being to the despot-god. “*There is always a monotheism on the horizon*

of despotism: the debt becomes a debt of existence, a debt of the existence of the subjects themselves” (1983, 215, emphasis added). Even if the priest (or the prophet) connected to the king-despot does not see the disobedient actions or disrespectful attitudes of the people, the inescapable Eye of God will – and no sinner can hide from his judgmental Voice and punitive Hand.

Among the despot’s bureaucrats, the monotheistic priest has a special role: administering the face of God and interpreting His intentions. “A new aspect of deception arises, the deception of the priest: interpretation is carried to infinity and never encounters anything to interpret that is not already itself an interpretation” (1987, 126-128). The revelation that is allegedly encountered in holy texts and engaged in rituals is ambiguous; it can be (and must be) endlessly interpreted in new ways because ideas about counter-intuitive discarnate forces are not empirically constrained. What does the Torah (Bible, Qur’an) *mean*? What does God *want* us to do *now*? The transcendent God of monotheism, Deleuze notes, “would remain empty, or at least *absconditus*, if it were not projected on a plane of immanence of creation where it traces the stages of its theophany.” Whether it takes the form of imperial unity or spiritual empire, “this transcendence that is projected on the plane of immanence paves it or populates it with Figures” (1994, 88-89).

On the one hand, the intellectual and priestly elites of monotheistic coalitions insist that their supernatural Agent has appeared and will continue to appear in the finite world. On the other hand, they also insist that His glorious nature is infinitely transcendent and beyond comprehension – even the despot may misinterpret God (cf. Eisenstadt, 1986, Arnason, 2005, Bellah, 2011). This tension has always characterized *theology*, which was also born during the axial age. Broadly speaking, theology is the construction and critique of hypotheses about the existential conditions for axiological engagement (cf. Shults, 2014b). What is it that makes possible – or actual – the real, finite human experience of valuing and being valued? In their attempts to answer this sort of question, the majority of theological hypotheses within the monotheistic coalitions that eventually came to dominate most of west Asia and Europe (and much of the rest of the globe) followed the theogonic trajectory depicted in figure 1.

Even among theologians (as well as priests and prophets) who were committed to the sacerdotal regulation of religious minds and groups within particular monotheistic in-groups, however, one can also find minority reports that contest the idea of God conceived as a person-like, coalition-favoring, punitive disembodied Entity. We have already alluded to the first reason the intellectual elite in such religious groups might have for resisting finite images of God as, for example, a “Father” or “Judge”: whether material or semiotic, such images (icons) are all too easily taken by regular religious folk as actual representations of an infinitely glorious and holy divine Reality that ought not to be represented. This is (part of) the motivation behind warnings against idolatry and occasional acts of physical iconoclasm. An infinite God *must not* to be represented for doxological reasons.

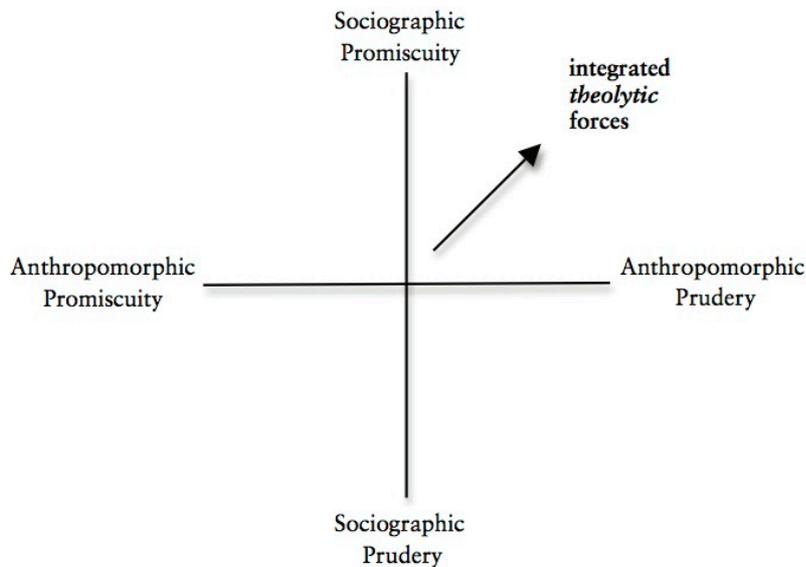
However, God *can not* be represented for logical, psychological and political reasons. One of the existential requirements for intentionality is being in relation to something not identical to oneself, that is, to an object of intention. This is the case even if one is intentionally relating to one’s imagined, future self – intending, for example, to become a better person. Intentionality presupposes an in-tensional relation to that which one is not, or which one does not yet have. In other words, it requires being-limited, which is the de-finition of finitude. This is why absolute infinity cannot be intentional: to conceive it as such would be to imagine it as *related* to an object that it was not (such as a finite creation), in which case it would not be *absolutely* unlimited. Moreover, cognitive and coalitional defaults evolved to engage *finite* supernatural agents, and the pressure exerted by the notion of an all-knowing and all-powerful *infinite* despot-God is simply psychologically and politically unbearable (cf. Shults, 2014c). People may memorize and repeat orthodox doctrinal formulations about God’s omniscience, omnipotence and impassibility but, especially under stress, they immediately fall back into their default tendencies and imagine a finite, temporal god who is interested in their kith and kin (cf. Slone, 2004).

The idea of “God” as an infinite disembodied intentional Force was tentatively born(e) in the minds of theologians who pressed the evolved defaults toward anthropomorphic promiscuity and sociographic prudery as far as they would go – which turned out to be too far. If God is so transcendent that He

cannot be represented, then he cannot be conceived (or perceived) as a human-like agent (or anything else). If God eternally fore-knows and pre-ordains *everything*, then it is hard to understand the point of praying to or ritually engaging Him. Throughout the centuries, monotheistic theologians have worked hard to defend hypotheses about the conditions for axiological engagement that utilize images (icons) of God as a Person who cares about a Group while simultaneously emphasizing that such images must be broken.

Evolved cognitive defaults for detecting finite agents crumple under the pressure of trying to think an infinite intentional Entity. Evolved coalitional defaults for protecting in-groups implode (or explode) under the stress of trying to live in complex literate states. It is not hard to understand why and how atheism would emerge as an option (albeit rarely, slowly and tentatively) as monotheism took over within large-scale, pluralistic societies. The abstract, transcendent God described by the priest does not seem to have any relevance for daily life. All these people around me have different views of gods whom they think care about their group. They try to explain the natural world in superstitious ways that make no sense to me. They try to regulate the social world in segregative ways that make it difficult for me and those I love. Perhaps we can make sense of the cosmos and behave sensibly in the socius without bearing God – or any other finite supernatural agents preferred by particular in-groups.

The assemblage of the atheist machine involved the contestation of the evolved theogonic mechanisms, which opened up lines of flight that were previously unimaginable. Although its use within and effect on the mental and social fields of the civilizations that emerged out of the west Asian axial age were initially quite limited, the atheist machine began to unveil the implausibility of the various (contradictory) ideas and the infeasibility of the various (contradictory) ritual strategies for organizing normativity. Even when contesting the relevant cognitive and coalitional biases is not consciously used to clear the ground of religious Icons, it automatically has a theolytic (god-dissolving) effect. The intensification and integration of the forces of anthropomorphic prudery and sociographic promiscuity are part of the actualization of the atheist machinic assemblage (figure 2).



The effects of the atheist machine are obviously destructive but, like all schizoanalytic (rhizomatic, pragmatic, micropolitical) proceedings, its uses are also productive.

Its most palpable productions are naturalism and secularism. There are many varieties of *naturalism*, but most share a resistance to appeals to supernatural agency in theoretical explanations of the natural world, especially in the academic sphere. Individual scholars may continue privately to harbor superstitious beliefs, but most are (at least) methodologically naturalistic in the sense that they exclude god-concepts from their scientific hypotheses. There are also many varieties of *secularism*, but most share a resistance to appeals to supernatural authority in practical inscriptions of social worlds, especially in the public sphere. Individual civil leaders in complex, democratic contexts might maintain membership in religious in-groups, but a growing number are (at least) methodologically secularist in the sense that they exclude divine-sanctions from their political proposals.

We do not yet know what naturalist-secularist bodies can do. Whatever they *can* do, hypothesizes the atheist, their axiological engagement is not conditioned by human-like, coalition-favoring gods. Atheism follows out the logic and practices that flow from the integration of the theolytic forces, pressing beyond methodological versions of anthropomorphic prudery and sociographic

promiscuity and insisting on *metaphysical* naturalism and secularism. The atheist machine cuts away at superstitious beliefs and segregating behaviors based on shared imaginative engagement with supernatural agents, and constructs pragmatic plan(e)s within socio-ecological niches in which survival no longer depends on the detection and protection of the gods of particular in-groups.

I have argued that the naturally evolved theogonic defaults operate “well beneath” monotheistic ideology, reproducing repressive religious representations that fuel the despotic machine. I now want to make more explicit the relation between the theolytic forces and the other three social-machines described in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project.

IV. Scientific models: Deleuzian social-machines in bio-cultural perspective

It is important to remember that Deleuze does not think of the social-machines as concrete, historical formations of the socius that were (or will be) realized in a particular order. Rather, they are abstract machines that are actualized in diverse ways within all complex social assemblages, precisely in their intensive mutual interactions. The territorial, despotic and capitalist machines are all social-productions that “fall back” on desiring-production; each in its own way creates a “full body,” a “recording surface” that inscribes lack, law and idealization on the schiz-flows of the Real, which is pure becoming. As we will see, although the war machine can be captured by the State, in itself it is the creative element or productive force of rhizomic lines of flight that escape repressive representations.

The territorial (or primitive) machine is the “first form of socius, the machine of primitive inscription” (1983, 155). A socius is produced whenever there is a coding (inscription) of stock (consumption) that falls back upon the flow (production) of desire. The first mode of representation organizes itself at the surface by the coding of filial flows through alliances, thereby creating a “territory.” The unit of alliance is debt, and alliance, suggests Deleuze, is “representation” itself. When it falls back on the desiring-production of human

bodies, the territorial machine constitutes a debt system involving “a voice that speaks or intones, a sign marked in bare flesh, an eye that extracts enjoyment from the pain.” An element of transcendence (representation of an ideal) is introduced, but it remains “quite close to a desiring machine of eye-hand-voice” (1983, 207). The territorial assemblage is declined on the full body of “the earth” through the *coding* of lateral alliances and extended filiations.

The despotic (or barbarian) machine, on the other hand, appears with the force of a “projection that defines paranoia,” in which a “subject leaps outside the intersections of alliance-filiation, installs himself at the limit, at the horizon, in the desert, the subject of a deterritorialized knowledge that links him directly to God and connects him to the people” (1983, 211). Deleuze describes despotism as the first principle of a paranoiac knowledge that withdraws from life and from the earth, producing a judgment of both. The socius will now be inscribed on a new surface, not the earth, but the full body of “the despot” (or his god). The voice is no longer one of alliance across filiations, but “a fictitious voice from on high.” The *overcoding* of the despotic machine (or imperial barbarian formation) is characterized by the mobilization of the categories of *new* alliance and *direct* filiation.

The eyes watching the hands’ inscription of bodies are replaced by the Eye and the Hand of the despot, who watches everyone through the eyes of his bureaucrats, officials and priests, and subordinates graphism to the Voice that “no longer expresses itself except through the writing signs that it emits (revelation).” Now, interpretation becomes all important: “The emperor, the god – what did he mean?” (1983, 224). Having claimed a direct and transcendent filiation, the despot appropriates all the forces of production. All alliances are now organized around and oriented toward him. Instead of blocks of mobile and finite debt coded by horizontal alliances, the despot extracts taxes for a vertical tribute that feeds a constantly expanding glorious expenditure.

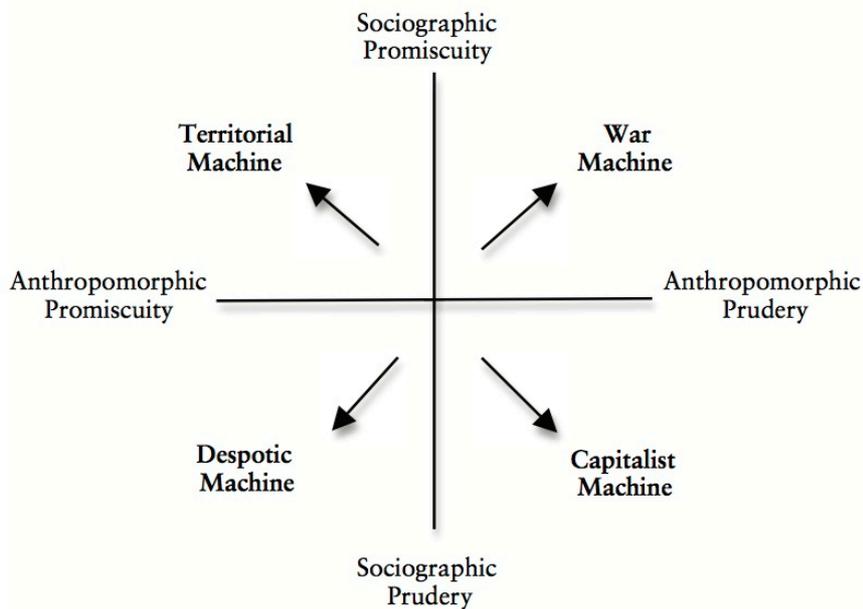
In *A Thousand Plateaus*, this is also spelled out in relation to the “facialization machine,” which effects an overcoding wrought by the signifying despotic Face, irradiating a surveillance that reproduces paranoid faces. The savage system of *cruelty* is replaced by the barbarian system of *terror*. The despotic State, Deleuze insists, is an abstraction that is realized only as an

abstraction (1983, 240). As an abstract machine, it can be conceived as “the common horizon” to what comes “before” and what comes “after,” that is, as a complex of syntheses that can overcode the territorial machine’s coding of break-flows and, in turn, that can become relativized and incorporated within the capitalist machine’s axiomatization of decoded break-flows.

This *decoding* of flows that characterizes the capitalist (or civilized) social-machine has also always been present in human populations, even if only as that which was “warded off” by primitive and barbarian social inscriptions (and the nomads). This machine has a deterritorializing effect, but it is only “relative.” It immediately reterritorializes the decoded flows on the “full body” of Capital. The surplus value of production, as well as the qualities of alliances, which had been coded through kinship or overcoded through tribute are now decoded, rendered quantitative and relativized in relation to the surplus flux of the market, which registers value on the basis of the potential for earning wages or generating profit. The capitalist machine is fully installed when money begets money, when Capital itself becomes filiative. “It is no longer the age of cruelty or the age of terror, but the age of *cynicism*, accompanied by a strange *piety*...” (1983, 245, emphasis added).

What about the war (or revolutionary) machine? Despite its name, the primary use (and effect) of this machine is not war. Only when it is appropriated by the State apparatus of capture does war necessarily become its object. The essential aim of the war machine is “revolutionary movement,” escaping the molar organization and conjugation of flows through a becoming-molecular that effects an *absolute* deterritorialization (whether artistic, scientific or philosophical). Once the capitalist machine has relativized the despotic machine’s overcoding of the territorial machine and taken over the socius, every struggle involves the construction of “*revolutionary connections*” in opposition to the “*conjugations of the [capitalist] axiomatic*” (1987, 522). Resisting facialization (and oedipalization), the war machine creates and populates smooth space with “probe-heads” that draw lines of flight, cutting edges of deterritorialization that become positive and absolute, “forming strange new becomings, new polyvocalities” (1987, 211).

How can the conceptual framework of theogonic reproduction theory, derived from bio-cultural scientific models of the origin and evolution of religion, shed light on the repressive (and liberating) functions of the Deleuzian social-machines? In this context, I limit myself to a quick summary of the fuller answer to this question provided in chapter 5 of my *Iconoclastic Theology* (2014b). In the next sub-section I will apply the heuristic model to two case studies: Neolithic Çatalhöyük and Modern Istanbul. My intuitions about the way in which evolved cognitive and coalitional defaults operate “well beneath” social-machinic ideologies are depicted in Figure 3.



Let us begin with the “primitive” territorial machine. Archaeological evidence (and ethnographic analogy) suggests that the hominids that flourished in the Upper Paleolithic were extremely anthropomorphically promiscuous. They somewhat automatically postulated ambiguously embodied intentionality behind everything – rivers, trees, crystals, the weather and the earth itself. Apparently early hominids were also relatively sociographically promiscuous. In the wide open spaces of Africa and the Levant, interaction with other in-groups would have been more rare. It seems that Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* got along surprisingly well in Europe, at least until around 35,000 BCE. The integration of these tendencies can still be found today in some New Age groups,

and in idealized science fiction portrayals of tree-hugging indigenous people like the Na'vi in the movie *Avatar*.

That movie also provides us with an example of a coalition that is prudish in both its anthropomorphism and its sociography. The RDA mining corporation is only interested in profiting from the “unobtainium” under the surface of the Na'vi's home planet Pandora. Formed by an extreme actualization of the “civilized” capitalist machine, the leaders of RDA do not detect human-like agency even in the human-like Na'vi, whom they refer to as “blue monkeys.” It might initially seem like Capitalism promotes sociographic promiscuity since it decodes the qualitative alliances that code human affiliations and encourages the multiplication of images. In fact, however, its inscriptive prudery is absolute: the capitalist machine forces *all* surplus value to fall back on the “full body” of Capital, converting all codes to abstract quantities (Money). It spreads a universal anxiety: everyone must accumulate surplus value for their own group.

The anxiety spread by the “barbarian” despotic machine, on the other hand, is of a different sort: everyone must follow the laws of our group's god. As we have seen, monotheism is sociographically prudish. The one true God has revealed the norms by which all human groups are to be regulated and judged. There is no point in arguing with or trying to trick an infinite, unchanging despot-God, whose prescriptions and proscriptions are absolute. Unlike the capitalist machine, however, the despotic machine is excessively promiscuous in its anthropomorphism. First and foremost, it promotes the detection of a Supernatural Agent who is allegedly everywhere at all times. However, it also promotes paranoia about His bureaucrats (whether Spirit-filled embodied priests or disembodied spirits like angels, demons or saints) who are also watching and waiting to enforce divine judgments.

The nomads who invent the “revolutionary” war machine, on the other hand, want to “have done” with the judgment of God (1997, 126). The monotheistic machine exists only by overcoding territories and resisting the axiomatizations of the immanent capitalist field that relativize its preferred religious Figure. The territorial and capitalist machines promote tendencies that partially challenge the despotic mode of theogonic reproduction (figure 3). Their inscriptions inevitably throw wrenches into the monotheistic machine. The war

machine, however, fractures the repressive “representations” of all three of the other modes of social-production. It has no time (or place) for the segmentarity of Oedipus, much less for the sedentary arborescence of the transcendent Icons of monotheism. In this sense, it is always consuming, registering and producing an atheist machine.

The war machine is anthropomorphically prudish and sociographically promiscuous. It escapes the facialization machine and draws positive and absolute lines of deterritorialization, populating a smooth space with “probe-heads ...that dismantle the strata in their wake, break through the walls of signifiante, pour out of the holes of subjectivity” (1987, 210). The nomads refuse the segmentation of sedentary collectives whose striation of the socius finds its center of gravity in the State. The *nomos* of the war machine is a movement and composition of people that cannot be captured in the apparatus of the “law.” Its becoming is a celerity that constantly invents tools and weapons that can be used on the move in the encounter with and the production of new modes of social assemblage.

All of these abstract social-machines, argues Deleuze, are operative in every human population – although in each concrete context they are more or less successful in their coding, capturing, axiomatizing or escaping in relation to one other. I have tried to show how they are also shaped by underlying cognitive and coalitional tendencies, which are distributed and contested in various ways across human populations. I now briefly explore some of the ways in which this conceptual integration of machines, memories and models might illuminate some of the factors at work in two of the most important social assemblages in the geographic region we now call Turkey.

V. Case studies: Neolithic Çatalhöyük and Modern Istanbul

Centrally located on the Konya plain in south central Turkey, Çatalhöyük is one of the most well-known archaeological sites in the world. The domestication of plants and animals had occurred well before the founding of this Neolithic “town,” but it has a special significance because of its unusually large size (up to 5,000 people on about thirty-four acres) and its unbroken temporal extension

(continuous settlement from 7,400 to 6,000 BCE). The material culture and artistic symbolism of Çatalhöyük is also more complex than earlier sites in the region such as Göbekli Tepe and Aşıklı Höyük. Since 2006 I have been collaborating with a team of interdisciplinary scholars who descend on Çatalhöyük every summer in order to reflect “at the trowel’s edge” (cf. Hodder, 2006) on the role of religion in the transformation of civilizational forms during the Neolithic.

Elsewhere I have discussed some of the evidence for anthropomorphic promiscuity and sociographic prudery at Çatalhöyük (Shults, 2014a). A wide variety of artifacts indicate that shared imaginative engagement with supernatural agents was pervasive within the community. Feasting deposits, wall art, pottery symbolism, the installation of wild auroch buchrana, and the hiding of other animal and human skeletal remains within the houses and under the foundations, all suggest ritual interaction with imagined disembodied agents. The cognitive tendency to detect human-like intentionality in inanimate objects is also implied by the way in which the inhabitants of Çatalhöyük buried (some of) their dead within their houses, usually immediately under the sleeping area, occasionally unearthing their bones and engaging them in a variety of ways. Ethnographic analogy (cf. Coe et al., 2012) suggests that the discovery of hundreds of figurines at the site is a sign that the young were socialized to imaginatively engage animal-spirits and ancestor-ghosts.

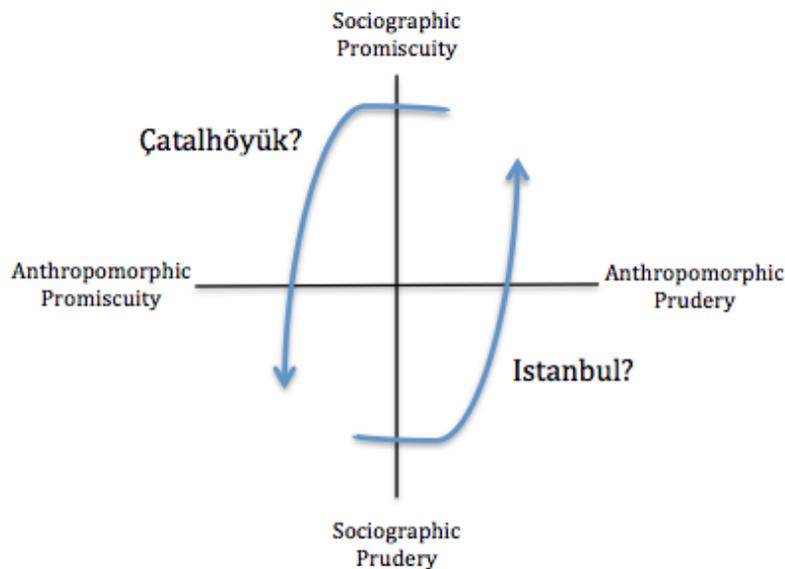
Even more relevant for the purposes of this essay, however, is the apparent shift in *sociographic* strategies over the centuries at Çatalhöyük. Based on an extensive review of the archaeological evidence, Hodder and Whitehouse (2010) argued that there was a slow shift of ritual modes during the life of the settlement. Initially it was characterized by the dominance of the “imagistic” mode, in which rituals tend to be highly emotionally arousing but relatively infrequent – this is typical of small-scale, non-hierarchical societies. In the later levels of the site, however, the consistency of symbolic patterns, the use of molds, and the reduction of wild animal parts (*inter alia*) suggest the emergence of a more “doctrinal” mode, which is characterized by more frequent, less emotionally arousing rituals – this is typical of larger, more hierarchical societies.

This hypothesis was expanded in light of more recent data and analysis in Whitehouse et al. (2014), where the authors argue that religious routinization was a major factor in the emergence of more complex social forms at Çatalhöyük. One of the primary functions of religion in hunter-gatherer societies was holding small groups together, but “gradually, as agriculture intensified, this ancient function faded and religion became a means of reproducing much larger (if more diffuse) group identities.” The vitality of religious life would have shifted from “esoteric mystery cult to something more ideologically uniform, in some ways less awe-inspiring and more controlling” (2014, 134). In other words, it appears that the “doctrinal” ritual mode slowly began to replace the “imagistic” mode, with a phase shift around the year 6500 BCE. Several factors would have played a role in this shift but cross-cultural multiple regression analysis indicates that agricultural intensity is the most significant predictor of this sort of change in civilizational form (Atkinson and Whitehouse, 2010).

Although not directly based on evidence from Çatalhöyük, a recent computer simulation analysis based on wider empirical data from the Neolithic suggests that at least two other conditions were in place that would likely have contributed to the shift from egalitarianism to a more “despotic social organization:” (1) the generation of surplus resources generated by agricultural leaders, which would have led to demographic expansion of their groups and the reduction of the viability of acephalous niches in the region, and (2) subsequent limitation of outside options for followers as a result of high dispersal costs (Powers and Lehman, 2014, 8). This does not mean that “despotism” or “monotheism,” in the sense they emerged millennia later in the bronze and iron ages, were already present in the Neolithic.

Rather, I am suggesting that what Deleuze calls the abstract machine of despotism was increasingly installed in some places during this revolutionary period in human history. At the very least, Çatalhöyük represents one example of an apparatus of capture in which the coding of various terrestrial machines (hunter-gatherers and perhaps even nomads) was slowly overcoded as the socius on the Neolithic Konya plain became more stratified, arboreal and hierarchical. Anthropomorphic promiscuity continued to run wild, but as the population grew and religious routinization intensified at the settlement, its

members became increasingly sociographically prudish. Over time the default slowly shifted from the upper right to the lower left quadrant of figure 4.



It would be several millennia before despotic monotheism would be fully installed and take over the social fields of west Asia. Such an installation occurred only after the emergence of a class of intellectual and priestly elites who tried detecting the biggest God they could conceive (an infinite intentional disembodied Force) and ended up protecting the cohesion of Empires by inscribing the most terrifying social segmentarity imaginable (the negative disjunction between eternal pleasure and eternal pain).

Leaping ahead a few thousand years I turn now to a brief exploration of the uses and effects of the other social-machines on the complex metropolitan settlement(s) we now call Istanbul. The upward arrow in figure 4 suggests a way of thinking about the overcoding and decoding of this geographical space over the last few centuries. Istanbul has had its share of despots, including leaders of the Byzantine empire (e.g., Constantine I in the 4th century CE) and the Ottoman empire (e.g., Mehmed II in the 15th century CE). The city has been the origin and goal of more than its fair share of religious crusades, and the effects of centuries of theological debates and holy wars are still evident in its architectural ruins and reconstructions.

The most significant events shaping the social texture of *modern* Istanbul were the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in the early 1920s and the consequent reforms instituted by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk and the “Kemalists.” For our purposes, the most important of these reforms were policies that supported naturalist interpretations of reality and secularist inscriptions of society. Several universities were founded during the first half of the 20th century, and Turkish scientist of all sorts have contributed to the development of anthropomorphically prudish hypotheses and theories in a wide variety of disciplines. As in so many other modern societies in which the *ancien regime* was held together by a dominant monotheism, methodologically *naturalistic* scientific research came into conflict with traditional religious education in Turkey. The difference between “empirical sciences” and “religious sciences” was not new; such a distinction had already been made by al-Farabi in the 10th century.

The tension between these types of “science,” however, intensified throughout the 20th century. Akşit and Akşit (2010) have traced the way in which shifts in the conceptions of science, religion and society have been linked to the transformation of the cultural, economic and political structures of Turkey. From the 1930s to the 1960s, modern rationalist modes of thinking were promoted by Kemalists and consolidated in Turkish universities. Eventually the word *bilim*, derived from the Turkish word “to know,” came to be used for “science,” and distinguished from the older (Arabic-based) Ottoman word *ilim*, which also means “knowledge,” but more often connotes *religious* knowledge. As in most western societies, the universities in Turkey were also shaped by the move away from positivism and toward more postmodern, pluralistic conceptions of science later in the century.

Given our interest here in social-machinic assemblages, it is important to note the concomitant shift toward *secularism* in modern Turkey, which required more sociographically promiscuous modes of inscribing the social field. Scholars (and politicians) continue to argue about the real nature, and the deeper causes, of the tension between religion and secularism in Turkey. Some suggest that it is not primarily a battle between opponents and proponents of religious freedom, but a struggle “between two rival middle classes” (Başkan, 2010), or even between “two totalizing Islams” (Pinar, 2014). It seems clear, however, that what

Ahmet Kuru (2009) calls the relatively “aggressive” secularism favored by the early Kemalists (as compared to the more “passive secularism” in the U.S. and France) led to a sense of alienation and oppression among conservative Muslims, who still make up the majority of the population in Turkey. Perhaps the most visible example of the resulting conflict, which also evoked some of the most vocal protests, was the “headscarf controversy” (cf. Arat, 2010, Warhola and Bezci, 2010).

How we can conceptualize the uses and effects of the capitalist and war machines on the Turkish socius? I want to suggest that “well beneath” the ideological debates in modern Turkey we can discover the tension between the theogonic and theolytic mechanisms depicted in figure 4, which in turn fuel the operation of the Deleuzian social-machines. Several scholars have pointed to the importance of Turkey as a potential model for political change in the wake of the “Arab spring” (e.g., Erdem, 2012, Ünver, 2013). Such analyses and prognostications are important and necessary, but my argument is that unless we *also* unveil and work toward weakening the forces of anthropomorphic promiscuity and sociographic prudery they will continue to undermine efforts for reform and reinforce the sort of superstition and segregation that helps despotic regimes to thrive.

As we have seen, the axiomatic of capitalism relativizes the coding (and overcoding) of the territorial and despotic machines. Its quantification of surplus value, which always falls back on the full body of Capital, tends to dissolve the absolute, qualitative claims of monotheism. The current government of Turkey, led by the AKP (Justice and Development Party), is more religiously conservative than the Kemalists. According to Howard Eissenstat, however, even the Gulenists within the AKP, who disapprove of prime minister Erdogan’s antagonistic style, share with him “a long-term vision of a Turkey that embraces both modern *capitalism* and Islam.... (and) assume that devout Islamic faith and *secular* modern institutions can – and indeed must – coexist... (and) that Turkey should take a leading role in world affairs and serve as a bridge between civilizations” (2013, 25, emphases added). But can subjects in a modern socius really serve both God and Mammon?

But why should we serve either? The (creative, nomadic, revolutionary) war machine resists the repressive representations of the other social-machines, refusing to fall back on the full body of the Despot or Capital. The “six arrows” at the foundation of the modern Republic of Turkey were secularism (*laiklik*), republicanism (*cumhuriyetçilik*), statism (*develtçilik*), nationalism (*milliyetçilik*), populism (*halkçilik*) and reformism or, as it is sometimes translated, revolutionism (*devrimçilik*). What is the relation between this last “arrow” and the others? There are certainly many residents of Istanbul who want to follow what Deleuze called the “revolutionary path.” It should be obvious enough that Deleuze was not (nor am I) calling for a return to an idealized, historical period in which we all give up our actual houses and begin literally roaming around like nomads.

The real question is whether or not we can learn to contest the evolved defaults of anthropomorphic promiscuity and sociographic prudery, mechanisms that served (some of) our ancestors well in the Upper Paleolithic and the Neolithic, but which do not seem to be serving us well today as we try to adapt within pluralistic, globalizing socio-ecological niches. Superstitious renderings of the cosmos and segregative striations of the socius that appeal to the gods (or God) of a particular in-group are no longer contributing to our survival. Where does this leave the citizens of Istanbul – and the rest of us? How can we use the atheistic, schizoanalytic machine; what creative effects will it have? We do not yet know what Turkish bodies can do. But we are coming to a better understanding of the underlying theogonic and theolytic forces that can block or facilitate their revolutionary lines of flight.

VI. Becoming-Atheist

Deleuze has helped clear the ground for revolutionary experimentation by disclosing the repressive power of social-machinic representations. I have tried to show how *theogonic* machines, which integrate and intensify superstitious and segregative tendencies, make this process of clearing far more complicated than it initially appears. The repressive representations they (re)produce are reinforced by naturally evolved biases that all too easily lead to the detection of

gods and the protection of in-groups. This is why we also need to pay closer attention to the uses and effects of *theolytic* machines. How can we produce atheistic registrations and consumptions on the field of immanence as we clear the ground of the religious Figures of transcendence that make us anxious and distract us from creating new connections? As Deleuze consistently emphasized, the criteria for answering such questions can only be discovered in the actual, problematic process of schizoanalysis.

Developments in the bio-cultural sciences provide us with conceptual tools that can supplement the insights that arise in the debates among defenders and detractors of psychoanalysis. They help us unveil the secrets of theism, especially the cognitive incoherence and coalitional irrelevance of representations of an infinite personal God. Such prodding exerts a pressure that intensifies the secretion of atheism. But this is not enough; the forces of theogonic reproduction have led to adaptive defenses that continue to hold subjects within religious coalitions. For example, theologians committed to monotheistic in-groups can insist that these “mysteries” are part of what is adorable about the divine nature or part of what is hidden in the divine plan. Appealing to concealed secrets, secrets that are appealing in part because of their concealment, keeps the secretion in check. This is one of the reasons that theology should not be left to theists.

It is important to keep talking about where the god-conceptions within in-groups come from in the first place because unveiling theogonic mechanisms automatically weakens them; they function well only when they are hidden. I have argued elsewhere (2014c) that having “the talk” about *religious* reproduction should involve more than simply explaining how “it” works. It is equally important to work out the physical, emotional and social consequences of “doing it.” This is just as true for religious education as it is for sex education. We need a theological version of “the birds and the bees” that deals with the dynamics by which supernatural agents are reproduced in human minds, and the consequences of nurturing them in human coalitions. Part of the problem is that we are socialized not to ask where gods come from, and we learn early that it is not polite to ask folks why they keep them around.

When it comes to having the talk about where babies come from and what it takes to care for them, we know that waiting too long can have devastating effects. Of course, it can be equally devastating if the conversation makes people feel attacked, afraid or ashamed. The activities that lead to sexual and religious reproduction can feel terrific to our bodies, but baring our souls about them can feel terribly vulnerable. When discussing such intimate issues, it is important to be sensitive – but it is also important to be direct. We do not know where such conversations will lead. We cannot know ahead of time what effects the atheist machine will have; the secretion of productive atheism will not solve all our problems and will surely create some new ones. However, insofar as it clears the ground of arborescent religious Icons that reinforce mythical and superstitious interpretations of nature and divide us through supernatural segregations of society, at least it gets us moving.

We do not yet know all that godless bodies can do, but we do know they can move on the surface, liberate lines of flight, construct rhizomes, feel the movement of the pack, and unleash the creative forces of art, science and philosophy. For obvious reasons, such movements threaten groups whose molarity depends on centralized imaginative engagement with supernatural agents. Like the State apparatus, despotic religious societies treat their secrets with gravity, but inevitably – it is the nature of secrets – something oozes out, something is perceived. The war machine treats secrets with celerity, molecularizing their content and linearizing their form (1987, 320). This is why the atheist machine feels so dangerous to the monotheistic machine, which uses its massive arsenal to crush or domesticate it. But we nomads have no reason to fear: we have weapons of mass secretion that work just by bringing them into the open.

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