



The Axial Age, the Moral Revolution, and the Polarization of Life and Spirit

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Abstract: The essay concerns issues related to my book, *From the Axial Age to the Moral Revolution*, and begins with a discussion of how I came to uncover the forgotten work of John Stuart-Glennie, who some seventy-five years before Jaspers proposed a comprehensive theory of the phenomena described by Karl Jaspers as the Axial Age. Although they each drew similar conclusions regarding many of the facts of the moral revolution respectively the Axial Age, there are significant differences in their philosophies of history, concerning, for example the problem, whether history can be regarded deterministically or as an open whole, and whether nature can be a source of profound spiritual significance and even transcendence or whether that realm is limited to historical consciousness. I also briefly discuss two other overlooked contributors, namely D. H. Lawrence, who wrote on the phenomena twenty years before Jaspers, and Lewis Mumford, who is one of the first writers to draw from Jaspers' work. I then respond to four diverse scholarly essays on my book.

Keywords: Stuart-Glennie, John S.; Jaspers, Karl; moral revolution; Axial Age; panzooism; ultimate law of history; evolutionary legacy.

Let me first express my gratitude to Helmut Wautischer for organizing the author meets critics session on my book, *From the Axial Age to the Moral Revolution*, at the 2018 APA Pacific Division meeting.¹ I am honored that such able critics discuss my work. It is rare to have people who can understand you, and these critics understand what I was trying to say, and raise serious and important questions that I address below, after first providing some context as to how the book came to be written.

Ever since I was a graduate student in the 1970s, I have been interested in issues surrounding what Karl Jaspers termed the Axial Age, that revolutionary period

centered roughly around 500-600 BCE. Little did I know then that I would someday rediscover a forgotten scholar, John Stuart Stuart-Glennie, who articulated a detailed theory of that period three quarters of a century prior to Jaspers, and who termed it, "the moral revolution."

In those days at the University of Chicago I was fortunate enough to study with some outstanding teachers and researchers, such as Victor Turner and Marshall Sahlins in anthropology, the geographer of ancient Chinese cities Paul Wheatley, and others. I hung out regularly with Assyriologists and Egyptologists, sometimes drinking beer from Sumerian cuneiform clay tablet recipes, not infrequently discussing why those ancient civilizations seem to us today at once so distant and yet so near. I also got to know historian Arnaldo Momigliano, going for coffee with him after his lectures.

¹ Eugene Halton, *From the Axial Age to the Moral Revolution: John Stuart-Glennie, Karl Jaspers, and a New Understanding of the Idea*, London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. [Henceforth cited as AMR]

He had addressed the idea of the Axial Age favorably in his then recent 1975 book, *Alien Wisdom*: "New models of reality, either mystically or prophetically or rationally apprehended, are propounded as a criticism, and alternative to, the prevailing models. We are in the age of criticism."²

I pursued an interest in the philosophy of Charles Peirce, the founder of pragmatism and semiotics, who I began to see as offering a thoroughly scientific outlook that nonetheless allowed a kind of "semiotic animism," as I called it. I put his insights to use in my research for my first book, *The Meaning of Things*, which is on the meanings of things in people's homes, and it was an influence in my later turn toward conceiving my own account of human development and the evolutionary significance of aboriginal mind; ideas that also involved my interest in the moral revolution respectively the Axial Age.

Peirce's critique of the dominance of nominalism in the modern era, and his proposal for a modified scholastic realism that is scientifically grounded, provided me a basis for a critique of modern culture, which I have developed earlier in *Meaning and Modernity*.³ Pragmatism offers a philosophy of communicative sociality continuous with nature, and, together with Peirce's doctrine of "critical commonsensism," an outlook open to the tempered instinctive and emotional resources available for human conduct and their relation to critical rational capacities. It is not confined to the Kant-influenced nominalist divide between nature and culture that is characteristic of some of the key founding figures in sociology, such as Max Weber, Georg Simmel, or Emile Durkheim.

Even in this intellectually inspiring environment in Chicago there was seemingly no place on the academic map for Lewis Mumford, whose work I had become interested in. Despite this, my interest in Mumford's work continued to grow; I also had correspondence and meetings with him in the 1980s. In his writings Mumford spoke to my soul. He was someone who wrote clearly and eloquently and profoundly about a huge range of issues, and who was unconstrained by artificial academic boundaries. He addressed matters

of broad scope with critical understanding, humanistic warmth, and an evolutionary and ecological sensibility. The humane qualities were what I also found appealing in Jaspers' work on the Axial Age. Both thinkers sought a broad understanding of what Mumford called "the 'fibrous structure' of human history,"⁴ where the past remains embedded, even if, at times, obscured. And both sought to put their ideas in the context of history with the intent to address present and future concerns. As Jaspers says in the "Foreword" to *The Origin and Goal of History*, "The aim of this book is to assist in heightening our awareness of the present."⁵

For years in the late 1980s and 1990s I included in my sociological theory graduate seminars side by side selections from Jaspers and Mumford on the Axial Age, though neither author was part of the sociology canon, as I believed that they addressed large questions of the past and its potential influence on the present. I never believed in the disciplinary limits of the sociological canon anyway. Nor did I believe in the tendency to be found among scholars of the Axial Age to celebrate it as a triumph of the human spirit in a non-critical manner. Already by 1995 in my book, *Bereft of Reason*, I had noted that, despite its benefits, the costs of the greater reflective and ascetic outlook of the axial age amounted to a devaluation of the life process itself as a spiritual source:

A new kind of human and civilizational structure emerged from this period, in which the personality could be enhanced through ascetic discipline. Yet it might be said that the cost of this transformation was a devaluing of the life process itself. The ascetic attitude harnessed life-energies and put them to its services, but this harnessing or repressing effort, the raising of spirit over flesh, unnecessarily polarized life and spirit. Should we be entering a "World-Age of Adjustment," as Scheler envisioned, it would be an age that could draw from the invaluable positive legacy of the axial age, while internally reuniting life and spirit as living spirit, and that would externally manifest as a civilization centered in organic potential, limitation, and purpose...Incarnate mind, not ethereal spirit, would be its source and goal...In the fallible big picture I am suggesting, critical consciousness, which

² Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press 1975, p. 9.

³ Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *Meaning and Modernity: Social Theory in the Pragmatic Attitude*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

⁴ Lewis Mumford, *The Transformations of Man*, New York, NY: Harper and Brothers 1956, p. 191. [Henceforth cited as *TM*]

⁵ Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, transl. Michael Bullock, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1953, p. V. [Henceforth cited as *OGH*]

it was the virtual task of the modern era to cultivate—and perhaps the axial age up to the present—is fused with those deeper, tempered forms of reasonableness, the biosemeiotic capacities through which we became human in the first place.⁶

In Mumford's chapter titled "Axial Man," from his 1956 book, *The Transformations of Man*, he agrees with Jaspers in the second paragraph that this development marked a "real turning point of human history," yet he also notes, "this change of direction was noted early in the present century by J. Stuart Glennie" [*sic*, TM 71]. Mumford was the only writer to observe that Stuart-Glennie had preceded Jaspers by many decades, yet even Mumford did not take the time to discuss Stuart-Glennie's work in any depth. So I was aware of Stuart-Glennie's name from way back, but it took me to about 2008-2009 to plunge into reading systematically his original works. As I began to realize how he had provided a fully fleshed-out theoretical account in 1873, embedded within a broad philosophy of history and consciousness, only to be forgotten after he died in 1910, I took it upon myself to resurrect his work.

All the commentators of the Axial Age to that point had known of Jaspers. None, including Jaspers, had known of Stuart-Glennie except Mumford. Robert Bellah's 2011 magnum opus, *Religion in Human Evolution*,⁷ draws heavily from Jaspers, yet Bellah had not even heard of Stuart-Glennie until I informed him in 2013. Similarly, Bellah and Hans Joas edited a book in 2012, *The Axial Age and its Consequences*,⁸ containing numerous contributors from a variety of disciplines. Yet there is no discussion of Stuart-Glennie, but only a brief quotation from his work in a footnote to the bibliography. Also Joas had not previously heard of Stuart-Glennie until I informed him in November 2009 during a talk he gave at my university on, "The Axial Age Debate as Religious Discourse," which explains how the quotation made it at least into the bibliography footnote. But still there was no discussion there, or by

Shmuel Eisenstadt, who had written for decades on the Axial Age.

In trying to make Stuart-Glennie's original ideas known, one of the facets of the project that stood out for me was how closely many of Stuart-Glennie and Jaspers' characterizations of the phenomena were, thereby almost providing a kind of independent verification of the idea. I did want to show the nuances of their differences as best I could, but the fact that many of their observations closely overlap was interesting in itself for me. This is especially so given that Jaspers' own philosophic outlook involves a view of reason as transcendence, and an uneasy tension between the poles of religion and secularism, neither of which by themselves are adequate to do justice to the openness of transcendence. Stuart-Glennie was a socialist, an empirical folklorist, and an Aberdeen philosopher who sought a naturalistic account of history and mind. Despite those two very different starting points they arrived at similar conclusions on many of the aspects of the moral revolution or Axial Age. Of course there are also significant differences between the two philosophers, perhaps this shows most notably in Jaspers' denial that nature can be a source of profound spiritual significance and even transcendence: "We see the vast territories of Northern Asia, Africa, and America, which were inhabited by men but saw the birth of nothing of importance to the history of spirit" (OGH 22).

An important idea of Stuart-Glennie's that emerged for me in writing the book was his concept of panzooism, of that outlook characteristic of the aboriginal and early civilizational mind as being oriented by the livingness of things. He also called it "Naturianism." Stuart-Glennie's critique of E. B. Tylor's conception of animism only two years after Tylor published his 1871 book, *Primitive Culture*, and his proposal of panzooism as an alternative for it, struck me as another lost idea of Stuart-Glennie worth retrieving. It connected not only to my work on what I have termed "animate mind," but also to my earlier work on *The Meaning of Things*. There I developed an outlook I called "critical animism," in order to draw attention to how objects could be imbued with meaning, not simply by a spirit from without, as in Tylor's sense of animism, but as real sign components of the self, semiotically and relationally conceived.

One of the fortuitous findings I also made while writing the book was the realization that, twenty years prior to Jaspers, D. H. Lawrence also addressed the

⁶ Eugene Halton, *Bereft of Reason: On the Decline of Social Thought and Prospects for its Renewal*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1995, pp. 56, 276.

⁷ Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2011, pp. xviii-xvix. [Henceforth cited as *RHE*]

⁸ Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, eds., *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2012.

phenomena, in ways that connect to today's discussions on a range of issues including rationalization and what I have termed elsewhere "sustainable wisdom."⁹ Stuart-Glennie and Lawrence also address issues that relate to current discussions of the new animism, which builds upon a relational ontology that easily connects to Peirce's semiotic animism.

Although my primary purpose was to make Stuart-Glennie's ideas known, I felt that it was important to make these other overlooked contributors, Lawrence and Mumford, known as well. The great irony was that both were world-renowned authors, yet were being ignored in the scholarly discourse on the moral revolution and the Axial Age. Their perspectives enrich the scholarly field, even though both of them as well as Stuart-Glennie have their own limitations. Lawrence may have written far less on the moral revolution and Axial Age than Jaspers, Stuart-Glennie, or Mumford, but his insights represent the most radical challenge to interpretations of its meaning. Lawrence saw it as a tragic cleaving from cosmos, a devaluing of "the primal way of consciousness," of the "affirmative mind," by an overweening elevation of "the questioning method of consciousness."¹⁰ Almost ninety years ago he had already raised questions of profound significance for our unsustainable civilization today, this holds true even if one does not agree with his answers. I also introduced a fourth perspective in the last chapter, namely my own view of history as a paradoxical progressive contraction of mind, though I kept its discussion limited. In part I used it there to illustrate how ideas discussed earlier could be put to use in a different model.

Recently I reread an 1876 work by Stuart-Glennie, and came across a wonderfully succinct sentence that goes to the heart of the differences between Stuart-Glennie and Jaspers' stances: "the Civilisations prior to the Sixth Century B.C. were chiefly determined by the Powers and Aspects of Nature, and those posterior thereto by the Activities and Myths of Mind."¹¹

⁹ Eugene Halton, "Indigenous Bodies, Civilized Selves, and the Escape from the Earth," in *Indigenous Sustainable Wisdom: First-Nation Know-How for Global Flourishing*, eds. Darcia Narvaez, Four Arrows, Eugene Halton, Brian Collier, and Georges Enderle, New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing 2019, pp. 47-73. [Henceforth cited as *IB*]

¹⁰ David Herbert Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, New York, NY: Viking Press 1982, p. 164.

¹¹ John Stuart-Glennie, *The Modern Revolution, Proemia 1*:

Whether one accepts the powers of nature as elements of the history of spirit which continue as such, as Stuart-Glennie does or whether one denies them spiritual significance, as Jaspers does, marks a formidable gap within which much more remains to be said. I turn now to respond to my critics.

Stuart-Glennie's Ultimate Law of History and Jaspers' History as an Open Whole

Victor Lidz raises a number of significant points of comparison between Stuart-Glennie and Jaspers, most basic of which might be their contrasting approaches to history, but also ways in which their understandings of the moral revolution converge and diverge. He claims that ultimately Jaspers' theory may be a richer model to build on. Stuart-Glennie's three-stage outline of history, which moves from the panzoonist through the moral revolution to a modern scientific humanism, is deterministic in claiming a final stage of history. I agree with Lidz that it marks a stark contrast with Jaspers' rejection of an "exclusive total outline of history" and that Jaspers' non-deterministic approach allows more malleability. Put in Jaspers' words: "The totality of history is an open whole" (*OGH* 268).

Jaspers remained open to the idea of reason motivating breakthroughs in history, which could not be determined in advance. He also wrote *The Origin and Goal of History* in the postwar period, where the German National Socialist totalitarian ideology and its understanding of history had been defeated, while the totalitarian Soviet Communist comprehension of history remained in power. These dehumanized models illustrated the dangers of totalizing history, the malignant outcomes of the benign Enlightenment hopes for progress, including those of Stuart-Glennie. And on this point I tend to agree with Lidz's criticism that Jaspers' model is broader in allowing more variation to the different strands of axial civilizations in historical development; yet Stuart-Glennie differentiates East Asia from the West in one significant way, which Jaspers does not. Still, there are ideas within Stuart-Glennie's model of history that remain significant in providing alternative perspectives, and that also reveal serious shortcomings in Jaspers' philosophy of history too.

Lidz views Stuart-Glennie's philosophy of history as an updated version of Comtean positivism, to which

Pilgrim Memories, London, UK: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1876, p. 479.

evolutionary elements from Darwin and Spencer are added, and notes the influence of G. W. F. Hegel and Auguste Comte in Stuart-Glennie's attempt to found an Ultimate Law of History through "a conception of mutual determination of idealistic and material factors, and of causation and change."¹² I agree with Lidz's characterization, and also with his criticism that Stuart-Glennie did not adequately explain his theory of a presumed continuity between matter and mind. However, Stuart-Glennie's first stage of history radically differs from the Comtean one. Comte characterized his first stage as "the theological, or fictitious," and posited a progression through the next two stages to true, positive science. Stuart-Glennie's end-stage of development may share similarities to Comte's ideas, however his first stage of panzooism is characterized as being about true intuitions shrouded in false conceptions. Thus he allows human nature to have a formative connection to true ideas, which the course of human development would clarify through true conceptions of modern science. At this juncture let me suggest another influence.

As a young man of twenty-one Stuart-Glennie had met and traveled with the well-known philosopher John Stuart-Mill, whose middle name was given to him by his father, philosopher James Mill, to honor Stuart-Glennie's grandfather, Sir John Stuart. Mill said of Stuart-Glennie that he was, "a young man of, I think, considerable promise, who occupies himself very earnestly with the higher philosophical problems on the basis of positive science."¹³ Mill approved of Stuart-Glennie's interests in positive science and history, and also influenced his conception of humanitarianism, which became a key element of his third phase of history.

I suspect there was another influence, for which I have not yet found evidence, namely that of Scottish common sense realism, which had early connections to Aberdeen, for example, through Thomas Reid. I am

¹² Victor Lidz, "Context and Meaning of the Axial Age Concept: Comparing the Formulations of John Stuart-Glennie and Karl Jaspers," *Existenz* 13/2 (Fall 2018), 72-77, here p. 73.

¹³ John Stuart Mill, "The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill 1849-1873 Part II," in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XV*, eds. Francis E. Mineka and Dwight N. Lindley, Toronto, CAN: University of Toronto Press, London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972. Accessed 3/10/2019, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/252>.

only speculating here, but perhaps there could have been an indirect cultural influence occurring rather than one being exerted directly through works. Scottish common sensists held that there are indubitable ideas which, as Reid put it: "which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them."¹⁴ The common sensist philosophy thus allows that there could be true intuitions of nature, the basis of Stuart-Glennie's panzooism, without being able to give reasons for them, this could be transposed into Stuart-Glennie's terms as: without being able to adequately conceptualize them.

I agree with Lidz's criticism that, although while mentioning East Asia as part of the moral revolution, nonetheless Stuart-Glennie tends to neglect later developments of East Asia. There may be more that he had addressed which might not yet have been uncovered, but the point is fair: Stuart-Glennie tended to concentrate more on Western Asia, Egypt, Europe, and the West. And he did not employ the approach of divergent strands that Jaspers did, and neither did he elaborate the implications for varied institutional manifestations in the different civilizations toward which Max Weber's studies have drawn attention.

It seems to me that Stuart-Glennie sacrificed the nuanced details of divergence, in order to draw a broad schematic outline that is more distanced regarding the specific cases. One question concerning Weber I have is: taking into account his specific studies of the different world religions, could he allow himself to adopt at all the overarching Axial Age concept in Jaspers terms, let alone Stuart-Glennie's approach?

Lidz also notes that Jaspers had access to scholarship that was not available to Stuart-Glennie, an observation with which I agree, although Stuart-Glennie, as a folklorist and philologist, had access to ethnographic and philological scholarship, including Egyptology, to which Jaspers did not avail himself. So there seems to me an interesting situation with respect to the source materials that each of them might have used.

Stuart-Glennie makes an important distinction between East and West that Jaspers did not make. He

¹⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Reid on Common Sense," in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*, eds. Terence Cuneo and René van Woudenberg, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004, pp. 77-100, here p 85.

claims that in the moral revolution East Asia preserves more of panzooism in its new ideas than did the West. Animism is, in its original formulation by Tylor, the idea that spirit inhabits things from without. Stuart-Glennie criticized Tylor's original formulation as missing the centrality of the inherent powers or properties of things as signifying livingness worthy of deserving attention. He argued that Aboriginal and early civilizational religious beliefs and outlook were panzooist in this sense, that is, motivated by the belief in the livingness of things as providing clues for human living. He repeatedly claimed eastern Asia retained a greater panzooism (or, as he sometimes termed it, panzoism), distinguishing the religions of eastern Asia from the West:

The new religions of Farther Asia, though, so far, like the new religions of Hither Asia and Europe, that they were religions of conscience rather than, like those of which they took the place, religions of custom, were yet clearly distinguishable from the western religions in retaining the fundamental conception of panzoism, the conception of immanence of power in nature itself, and were, therefore, still esoterically pantheistic and atheistic. But the new religions of Western Asia and of Europe, — Judaism, half a millennium later, Christianity, and, after another half millennium, Islamism, — were, on the contrary, for the first time supernatural religions, not in their popular forms only, but in their essential principle, the conception, not of a power immanent in, but of a creator independent of, nature.¹⁵

Thus Stuart-Glennie drew a contrast between eastern philosophies and religions that inherently admit the significance of nature more than the West. He also described the implications of early Persian incursions into India, yet again, as Lidz claimed, Stuart-Glennie does not engage the later developments of Eastern civilizations.

Of particular interest is first, that Stuart-Glennie's model of religion and history originates out of perceptive relations to habitat. Reason, for Stuart-Glennie, originates out of the human relations to the natural world. Jaspers cannot permit that; he makes a nominalistic distinction between nature and Reason consistent with neo-Kantian thinking, and similar to Max Weber's understanding, that denies generality

to nature. Second, Stuart-Glennie's model of the moral revolution calls attention to the differentiation of objective and subjective as a developmentally purposive dialectic, a transitional phase, marked especially in the cultural tensions of naturalism and supernaturalism, science and religion, that is immanent in "the Greco-Judean religion of Christianity." And third, it claims a telos in history involving realignment with nature. Stuart-Glennie, despite the fact that there are shortcomings in his philosophy, establishes in his first phase of naturianism or panzooism connections between the development of consciousness and nature that have profound implications today, as the emergent consequences of the Anthropocene unfold.

Mumford, D. H. Lawrence, and my philosophy of history that holds a progress in precision, paradoxically counteracted by a regression of mind—arguably a progressive contraction of mind—all allow for nature being seen as an element in historical development without being deterministic. All three models allow a *telos* to history and take a critical view of history and civilization, using standards of human nature and sustainability, as well as societal well-being. All three models view the current trajectory, if unchanged, as leading to catastrophe.

Lidz criticizes Stuart-Glennie's treatment of an emergent third era of human history as too narrowly focused on the scientific and technical frameworks, at the expense of other dimensions of contemporary culture, including the religious, moral, and artistic, and many social institutions. He says that I follow Stuart-Glennie's over-focus on the mechanico-centric mind, but that is my term, not Stuart-Glennie's, and I criticize that mind precisely for being pathologically restrictive, a contraction from the fullness of evolved mind. Stuart-Glennie, in contrast to me, endorses the future triumph of science in the form of a resolution of the subjective-objective dialectic of history. As he stated in 1901: "Would not such a view so transform all our ideas of nature and of life as to create a new ideal, a new religion, and a new art no more opposed to, but inspired by, science?" [HID 462]

In keeping science as the pivot, Stuart-Glennie's statement supports Lidz's criticism that he had understated other dimensions of modern culture, while also assuming that modern science was free from its own ideological limitations. In various places describing the moral revolution, Stuart-Glennie draws attention to the significance of lyric poetry: "As an era of *moral* revolution this century [sixth century BCE] is

¹⁵ John Stuart-Glennie. "The Law of Historical Intellectual Development," *The International Quarterly* 3 (January-June 1901), 444-463, here pp. 457-8. Hathi Trust access <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015063515335> [Henceforth cited as *HID*]

distinguished by a great change in the spirit of poesy, which is now lyric and subjective, rather than epic and objective; but chiefly it is marked by the origin of great new religious movements."¹⁶ But he seemed not to accord the same significance to modern art. For example, the Czech novelist Milan Kundera claimed that the novel was the most important invention of modern culture, opening up whole new interior spaces of the imagination, in works such as Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. If a greater interiority marked the moral revolution and the Axial Age, the question becomes why not note the new interiority introduced in the modern era?

I have to disagree with Lidz that I do not emphasize other dimensions of modern culture in my criticism of the mechanico-centric mentality. I did not give much space to my philosophy of history in the book, but I have developed it elsewhere,¹⁷ as well as to my critique of modern culture in my aforementioned book, *Meaning and Modernity*, in which I frame modernity as a nominalist culture. There I draw from figures such as Mumford and Peirce, as well as from novelists such as Herman Melville, Thomas Mann, and Doris Lessing, additionally from the two Viennese fantastic realist painters Fritz Janschka and Ernst Fuchs, from the composer George Rochberg, and from further artists. All found ways out of the cul-de-sac of Cartesian modernism that dominated many modern art forms. Upholding unrelenting doubt, the jettisoning of the past and its traditions, though initially liberating in the arts, did not lead ultimately to an immediate certainty or sustainable artistic liberty or to the thing in itself, but led to the blank canvas of Kazimir Malevich, and to composer John Cage's composition "4:33," which consists of silence, all of which ultimately led to the oxymoron of "conceptual art."

The ethos of Cartesian modernism led ultimately

¹⁶ John S. Stuart-Glennie, *Pilgrim-Memories; or, Travel and Discussion in the Birth-Countries of Christianity, with the late Henry Thomas Buckle*, New York, NY: D. Appleton & Co. 1875, p. 475. Hathi Trust access <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044091628248>. [Henceforth cited as *PM*]

¹⁷ Eugene Halton, "From the Emergent Drama of Interpretation to Enscreenment," in *Ancestral Landscapes in Human Evolution: Culture, Childrearing and Social Wellbeing*, eds. Darcia Narvaez, Kristin Valentino, Agustin Fuentes, James J. McKenna, and Peter Gray, New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2014, pp. 307-30.

to abstract nullity. It led to Melville's Captain Ahab, the pure isolate subject that is compelled to break through to the pure object beyond all mediated relations, to the white whale, "the phantom of life" itself. Ahab achieved that ultimate unmediated fusion with the object, tragically, in being literally bound by his harpoon line to Moby Dick in death, in rational madness: a diabolic misdirection of that long subject-object differentiation trajectory. In contrast to this, expressive freedom, a guiding idea of modernism, could be found through reengagement with the past and its traditions, bringing them to bear on the present.

And in my book under discussion here I made the discovery that novelist D. H. Lawrence also described the phenomena of the moral revolution (Axial Age) in profound and tragic terms, and he saw the rise of reflective intelligence as being excessive, and as a separation from the cosmos that prefigured the even more heightened rationalization of the modern era. Let me make a bold claim at this juncture: this lover and husband of a von Richtofen sister, D. H. Lawrence, saw even deeper into the tragic implications of the legacy of the Axial Age and of modern rationalization than the two brothers Max and Alfred Weber who at different periods were lovers of the other von Richtofen sister.

Evolutionary Legacy as Historical Consciousness

Christopher Peet sympathetically describes my attempt to introduce new figures into the field of axial scholarship, as well as my efforts to incorporate an evolutionary account, especially so in my concluding chapter. He asks how this embodied past can act as a potential resource. The attention, for example, I have given to prolonged neoteny in humans—the developmental retention of juvenile traits into adulthood—and the greater plasticity in behavior this affords, in his opinion can ironically support an argument going counter to my claims.

The combined facts that a majority of humans now live in urban environments and also seem capable of easily inhabiting digital environments supports the idea, in Peet's view, that humans have achieved "a technologically enabled transcendence of the natural and the biological realm."¹⁸ I question whether

¹⁸ Christopher Peet, "Reflections on Axiality: Evolutionary Legacy or Historical Consciousness?," *Existenz* 13/2 (Fall 2018), 78-85, here p. 81. [Henceforth cited as *CP*]

unsustainable living really can be called transcendence, as by analogy it appears to be something more like the exhilaration after jumping off a cliff while thinking that one has transcended the laws of gravity. Humans have already entered the beginnings of the Anthropocene, the sixth major period of extinction in the history of the earth, and it is the direct consequence of the systematic changes related to agriculturally-based city living and its denial of the laws of bounded competition, including limits to population expansion. Humans never transcended the natural and the biological: we remain earthlings, and must remain earthlings if we wish to survive at all.

Human neotenus plasticity evolved by being attuned to a greater wild intelligence, in reverential and practical learning relationships, the two sides of a coin that pervade aboriginal religions and that played out in ritual and practical relations in clan-based foragers. By virtue of perceptively attuning to an ecological mindset, humans could find a greater balance and maturity that could offset the relatively immature features of neoteny. Departing from that mindset through domestication, settlement, and eventually cities, humans began to elevate other neotenus, relatively unmaturred urban apes exclusively as role models, separated from the sustainable wisdom of wild nature. And by eventually viewing selected exemplars, such as kings, prophets, and saviors, as representing the ultimate exemplars for social order, mirrors of human immaturity developed, with profound consequences for social life in general and one's psyche in particular.

The evolutionary legacy is embodied as a resource in the human genome, and bodies forth through appropriate practices and relations of parenting and socialization, practices that shape every member of a society. There is great wisdom to be found in parenting practices that tune into the two million years in which infant-parenting practices developed. This evolutionary legacy reveals that infants are born with clearly discernable developmental expectations, an innate sociality that can be optimally met or thwarted. Among a wide range of hunter-gatherers one sees commonalities involving close tactile connection, empathic gaze, and a freedom allowed to the developing child and its needs, representing long term legacies that get altered in the transformations brought about by agriculture and urban living in civilization.

Neuroscientists Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen have described a remarkable "communicative musicality" in the banter between

newborns and their mothers. Their dialogue reveals a precisely articulated call and response having the narrative, pulse, and quality of music. The newborn is fully participant in it, yet only acting from the subcortical brain, as the synaptic connections of the prefrontal cortex have not yet been made.¹⁹ The innate sociality and expectation of communication of the infant brings to bear in the bantering dialogue the mothering responsiveness. In the course of its development this bantering dialogue that is truly a social and biological interaction—of nature-nurture combined—will generate a child capable of symbolic interaction and verbal language. Thus, the evolutionary legacy and biology are not operative at a different level, below Terrence Deacon's symbolic threshold, as Peet claims (*CP* 80), but rather they are the very means that enable the developing child to pass through that threshold, and to prosper in the symbolic realm still animated by the longer trajectory of development.

One assertion in Lewis Mumford's *The Myth of the Machine* is that the first technical invention is the human self, which in my view supports in a direct manner my claim that the legacy of our hunter-gather past remains today deeply embedded within us. This sense of self has evolved into being over an extended period of time, by embodying itself through progressively cooperative social behaviors and increased communicative capacities, culminating in symbolic consciousness, and by means of selection favoring upper brain capacities for greater executive functions and language. This entire development is the legacy of our long-term evolution as hunter-gatherers.

In its incarnation as *homo sapiens sapiens* the emergent self included interiority as well as capacities for reflection. But that reflective, doubting element of the mind was kept in check by the primacy of an affirmative mind. The advent of civilizations altered that balance, especially through the introduction of bureaucratic rationality. Thereafter the moral revolution or Axial Age then brought a further transformation of that balance, elevating the reflective mind to a primary position, and new institutions came into being mirroring that change. And in this context it is important to remember that

¹⁹ Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen, "Musicality: Communicating the Vitality and Interests of Life," in *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*, eds. Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen, New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2009, pp. 1-15, here p. 4.

early childhood traumas and deprivations can become lasting unmet needs in adults, who are potentially passing them on to succeeding generations, and also are potentially influencing historical consciousness through them. As psychologist Jean Liedloff puts it:

The assumption of innate sociality is at direct odds with the fairly universal civilized belief that a child's impulses need to be curbed in order to make him social...the assumption [is] that every child has an antisocial nature, in need of manipulation to become socially acceptable...If there is anything fundamentally foreign to us in continuum societies like the [Amazonian] Yequana, it is this assumption of innate sociality. It is by starting from this assumption and its implications that the seemingly unbridgeable gap between their strange behavior, with resultant high well-being, and our careful calculations, with an enormously lower degree of well-being, becomes intelligible.²⁰

By way of contrast consider under the assumption of innate sociality an axial example of children and parenting, and how historical consciousness can intrude to alter the expression of the evolutionary legacy. Puritanism, one of the key examples Max Weber uses to describe *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, holds to the doctrine of total or innate depravity,²¹ a more extreme version of St. Augustine's idea of original sin, such that a baby is born with innate depravity rather than innate sociality.²² In Jonathan Edwards' words, children "are young vipers, and are infinitely more hateful than vipers, and are in a most miserable condition, as well as grown persons; and they are naturally very senseless and stupid."²³ And as he put it elsewhere,

Wicked children are in God's sight like young serpents. We hate young snakes. They are the children of the devil...The devil is the old serpent and wicked children are his children.²⁴

Here the evolutionary legacy of innate sociality has been turned upside down, and in its place is the historical consciousness of what Melville called "Isolatoism," namely a complete inversion of human nature: "*Isolatoism*...I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each *Isolato* living on a separate continent of his own."²⁵ This is a negative example of consequences of our great plasticity, an outlook that in maligning the infant and its expectations for empathic nurturing and love, can be taken as the real original sin.

The same patriarchal mindset that fantasized the first appearance of woman as being born from a man's rib, needed to negate the innate sociality and goodness of the newborn with depravity, a view no mother could have invented. Was this depravity consciousness itself the product of the kind of traumatizing parenting it endorsed and passed on to succeeding generations? Here is an outright cost of the legacy of the moral revolution respectively the Axial Age, which was supposed to produce a "universal compassion" and a new valuation of "the sacredness of the person," as Bellah put it and as Hans Joas has also written about.

Here too is an opening for the panzooist outlook, the attunement to wild nature and the modeling of its informing properties for human ways, in the case under discussion parenting and the mature adults it aims to eventually produce. A child, based on what Liedloff has called "the continuum concept" that refers to the two million years of evolution embodied in the genome, is born with the expectation of being worthy and welcome. One sees repeated examples of such outlooks in extant hunter-gatherers, extending over a range of parenting practices.

²⁰ Jean Liedloff, *The Continuum Concept: In Search Of Happiness Lost*, New York, NY: De Capo Press 1977, p. 84.

²¹ Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, Boston, New-England: S. Kneeland 1758, accessed September 25, 2018: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;cc=evans;rgn=main;view=text;idno=N06399.0001.001>.

²² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, transl. Stephen Kalberg, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010. [Henceforth cited as *PE*]

²³ Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 4: The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1972, pp. 290-530, here p. 394.

²⁴ Jonathan Edwards, Sermon on II Kings 2.23-24, "To the Children at a Private Meeting" (February 1740-41), published as "God is Very Angry at the Sins of Children," in *Seeking God: Jonathan Edwards' Evangelism Contrasted with Modern Methodologies*, ed. William C. Nichols, Ames, IA: International Outreach 2001, pp. 425-35, here p. 432.

²⁵ Herman Melville, "Chapter 27. Knights and Squires," in *Moby Dick; or, The Whale*, 1851. Accessed March 13, 2019: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2701/2701-h/2701-h.htm#link2HCH0027>.

Peet claims that the idea that panzoonism as revering life should support a view of humans as nonviolent toward other humans. Yet revering life does not necessarily entail nonviolence: hunter-gatherers kill animals and plants even as they revere them, as part of what Paul Shepard termed "the sacred game." Hunter-gatherers were clearly capable of both personal and tribal violence. Peet claims that at best tribes "traded peaceably with each other but the evidence does not support the existence of nonviolent relations" (CP 81). The great Iroquois Confederacy and many lesser-known and less well-organized confederacies would beg to differ. Peaceable relations, alliances, and treaty making are significant aspects of hunter-gatherer life, which is not to deny that peace could be broken by violence.

Murderous violence is manifest in male dominated chimpanzees and common to all human societies, including civilized ones. What is new with civilization is that it introduces mass-killing warfare as a key element of the power complex. Anthropologist Mark Nathan Cohen claims that there is no evidence that violence declined in civilized society, but rather that archaeological evidence suggests the opposite.²⁶ As Will and Ariel Durant noted in their 1968 book, *The Lessons of History*, in: "the last 3,421 years of recorded history, only 268 have seen no war."²⁷ And guess what the fifty-one years since 1968 look like.

Anthropologist Agustín Fuentes has summarized the data on violence and warfare:

If you review the published information on the fossil record of humans and potential human ancestors from about six million years ago through about 12,000 years ago you are provided with, at best, only a few examples of possible death due to the hand of another individual of the same species...Examination of the human fossil record supports the hypothesis that while some violence between individuals undoubtedly happened in the past, warfare is a relatively modern human behavior (12,000 to 10,000 years old).²⁸

Typical hunter-gatherer warfare tends to be skirmishes, not mass-killings. Even in the horticultural-

²⁶ Mark Nathan Cohen, *Health and the Rise of Civilization*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991.

²⁷ Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1968.

²⁸ Agustín Fuentes, *Race, Monogamy, and Other Lies They Told You: Busting Myths about Human Nature*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2012, pp. 130-1.

based highlanders of New Guinea, for example, traditionally two rival clans would form skirmish lines of battle, and the result was typically one or a few people killed or wounded in its course, plus repayment for their injuries or death had to be done by handing over some pigs or other barter to restore balance. The development of mass-killing warfare institutionalized systematic violence as a legitimate expression of civilized behavior. As Jared Diamond said:

Archaeologists studying the rise of farming have reconstructed a crucial stage at which we made the worst mistake in human history. Forced to choose between limiting population or trying to increase food production, we chose the latter and ended up with starvation, warfare, and tyranny.²⁹

Peet notes the axial ethic as one of universal compassion to all life including human life. True, but it also reminds me of the response Gandhi is supposed to have made to a question about what he thought of Western Civilization: "I think it would be a good idea." Axial compassion did not prove to be such a good idea apparently to the axial Athenians who murdered Socrates, who himself had been a fierce warrior, or to axial Judaism, which, with some of its authorities collaborating with axial imperial Rome, violently murdered Jesus. And Gandhi himself was violently murdered by a Muslim for preaching universal compassion, a tenet of the Muslim faith. The history of the ideal of axial compassion, however admirable it may be, is unfortunately covered in millennia of blood. The axial ethic in the religions of the book may speak in favor of having compassion for humans, but not for the wild community of all forms of life, which these religions desacralized. The living habitat is a wonder of ongoing creation that cannot be bottled and frozen in a book.

Peet agrees that civilization has been ecologically unsustainable, and claims that I suggest it has been a mistaken route to take. His counter-claim is that empirically it was an evolutionary outcome taken, "as a genuine result of the evolutionary process and not as a choice" (CP 83), similar to that of hunter-gatherers. As I see it, agriculturally-based civilization was subject to systemic unintended properties arising from agriculture,

²⁹ Jared Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race," *Discover Magazine* 3 (May 2, 1987), accessed March 13, 2019: <http://discovermagazine.com/1987/may/02-the-worst-mistake-in-the-history-of-the-human-race>.

such as greatly increased population expansion, which also gave rise to new radically hierarchical societies and belief systems, and to a sense that the natural order needed to be subdued (the word in Genesis is *kabash*) rather than obeyed. This goes to the heart of the mistaken route, and why, in my opinion, it produced a devolutionary outcome, not an evolutionary necessity. The fact that many hunter-gatherer societies chose not to take that course is due to many reasons, including the reason that they simply preferred their way of life, which was, on average, more equitable, more leisurely, and more in touch with the wonder of nature.

Peet's comment ignores the record of civilizing expansion, and of murderous ethnic cleansing, of theft of land, of relocation, and of genocide of native peoples on each and every continent. Examples taken from Peet's country, Canada, and mine, the United States, give glimpses of what we did and continue to do to First Nations peoples and Native Americans. *The Guardian* writes:

Some 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were taken from their families over much of the last century and put in the schools, where they were forced to convert to Christianity and not allowed to speak their native languages. Many were beaten and verbally and sexually abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died. Almost two-thirds of the 130 schools were run by the Catholic church.³⁰

In the United States similar brutalities occurred in Native American boarding schools. This is not universal compassion; rather it is the dark side of Christian culture as practiced rather than preached. The axial ideal manifest in Christianity does not seem to me to be so "pointedly contrary" (CP 82) to the exclusionism Peet claims marks native peoples. As first nation Mowachaht Elder Chief Jerry Jack from British Columbia put it: "We never told the Christians that they would go to hell if they did not accept our religious beliefs. That's the difference between our spirituality and the white man's."³¹

³⁰ Guardian Staff and Agencies in Ottawa, "Pope Will Not Apologize for Abuse in Canada's Indigenous Schools," *The Guardian* (March 28, 2018). Accessed March 14, 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/28/pope-no-apology-canada-indigenous-schools-abuse>.

³¹ Hugh Brody, *The Other Side of Eden: Hunters, Farmers, and the Shaping of the World*, New York, NY: North Point Press 2001, p. 235.

Peet argues that the "revolutionary visions of transcendence" (CP xyz) provided a powerful critique of civilizational excesses, and I completely agree with him that the humane qualities brought to the foreground in the moral revolution or Axial Age remain a viable alternative to the even more magnified excesses of contemporary global civilization. Yet another way of looking at that critique is to see it as a partial recovery of some of the values of the hunter-gatherer societies that was lost in the turn to civilized power, instead of seeing it as being simply unprecedented new ideas. The loss of relatively egalitarian social relations in foraging societies to radically increased class-based social hierarchy which occurs systemically in agricultural civilizations in the old world and the new one, was partially offset, for example, with the rise of Athenian democracy. But even that democracy, confined to free male citizens, was still a patriarchal hierarchy that was heavily dependent on slaves.

To Peet's question of whether pre-axial societies are inapplicable today due to the enormous "scale and dynamics" of civilization, I would reply that it is precisely because the scale and dynamics of civilization today remain unbounded and ruinously unsustainable, that the vast foraging legacy of bounded limits and sense that the natural order needs to be obeyed can provide clues to the required course correction. The human genome is forged out of having lived for two million years as foragers, out of increasing modes of pro-social behavior that was heavily modeled on sustainable relations to habitat, and it is molded through an economic outlook of few wants that could be easily met. Neolithic civilization reversed that, creating "the economic problem" of unlimited desires and limited means to meet them. This represented a new civilizational construct, not human nature, as the myth of progress and modern economics have falsely claimed. The moral revolution attempted, in part, to offset that mindset, but overall failed to displace it. Indeed, as Max Weber described it, Christianity later fused with that mindset, a component of the modern spirit of capitalism (PE).

Nevertheless, Peet makes a convincing case that contemporary believers in the world religions stemming from the moral revolution or Axial Age might be best mobilized toward sustainability in terms of adhering to the founding visions, which rejected excesses such as contemporary materialism. This raises a number of points in need of consideration. Buddhism and Taoism are the religions that are retaining a greater

appreciation for the natural order than the religions of the book, as the latter ones dissociated the natural order from being a central religious concern. Also supporting Peet's appeal is the remarkable recent document from Pope Francis, namely the Papal encyclical *Laudato Si*, which calls for respect for the peoples of the earth and the earth itself as a moral and spiritual responsibility:

The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail' (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

*Nothing in this world is indifferent to us.*³²

Adopting a greater sense of "Care for Our Common Home," corresponding to the subtitle of the encyclical, would undoubtedly be a major corrective, in the sense of a moral and spiritual responsibility for believers, especially of the Abrahamic religions.

The question remains though, whether the beliefs of the original figures ultimately have become entirely unsustainable, and this not only for the reason that they are not adequately addressing our relation to wild habitat as a moral responsibility and sacred source of learning. Are those axial ideals simply too cerebral, too reflective, and insufficiently appreciative of the powers of a passional mind capable of instinctive engagement? The rational mind, rooted in the newest portion of the brain, is optimized for everyday living when bounded within the greater reasonableness of the instinctive, emotional, and spontaneous intelligence of the passional mind, and that primal balance that marks our evolutionary legacy. Civilization began a long process of setting rational intelligence free, which has been amplified in the moral revolution respectively in the Axial Age, and which has been maximized in the modern era. Modern times have revealed the mistake when rationality is maximized instead of only being optimized. The rational-bureaucratic perfection of the mechanico-centric mind in our time represents the threat of the schizoid automaton, which is calculating without compassion and is colonizing everything.

My call for re-opening the resources of the animate mind are not in opposition to the domains of the mechanico-centric mind and the anthropocentric mind,

but it is an acknowledgment that those resources also remain indelibly within us, yet they are insufficient on their own for sustainable living. Although we possess the capacity for rationality, we are not rational creatures. Humans are passional creatures, whose rationality marks the newest and relatively unmaturing capacity of the brain and the mind. Rationality was hastily set free from its passional moorings, as though, with a moral revolution, humans could live from the knowledge conveyed to us by human prophets toward human ends. We decided to live guided by that image in the mirror that they provided, and more recently, by the reductionist ideology of the mechanico-centric mind that has falsely dominated sci-tech and that has brought about the forgetting of the earth, our touchstone to maturity. In the delusional pursuit of transcending life we lost the touch of the earth.

Delimiting the Term

For some reason Benjamin Schewel devotes the better part of his essay to criticizing another book on the Axial Age for applying Jaspers' term too loosely to other periods of history; here I will discuss the brief portion he allots to my book. He addresses my claims regarding Stuart-Glennie's term and philosophy of the moral revolution, believing when doing so that Stuart-Glennie's term is both too narrow and insufficiently vague.

Schewel disagrees with my use of Peirce's assertion that the originator of a scientific conception has the right to name it first, and he argues that others before Stuart-Glennie also detected the synchronicity of the phenomena (a detail that I have also discussed in my book). Schewel misses my point that Stuart-Glennie, not those forerunners, was the first to articulate a nuanced and comprehensive theory of the phenomena, and neither was Jaspers, who claimed to have been the first to do it. Schewel also believes that the ethics of terminology should not apply in this case for these are "pre-paradigmatic social-scientific and humanistic inquiries."³³ Yet the introduction of new terms, such as Comte's "sociology," or "positivism," is frequently to be found precisely in the realm of the pre-paradigmatic, sometimes, as in Comte's case, even providing the genesis for paradigms to emerge, such as the social science paradigm of sociology.

³² Pope Francis, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*: *On Care for Our Common Home*, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor 2015, p. 7.

³³ Benjamin Schewel, "Should the Axial Age be Renamed?," *Existenz* 13/2 (Fall 2018), 86-92, here p. 87.

Schewel asks why, if Tylor's term "animism" preceded Stuart-Glennie's introduction of panzooism, he should not have been held to the same ethics of terminology, to use Tylor's term, even if his term could be shown to be better. However it was precisely because he was honoring the ethics of terminology that Stuart-Glennie proposed "panzooism," to distinguish it from Tylor's "animism." Stuart-Glennie explicitly acknowledged Tylor's term and conceptualization, yet he disagreed with both, and proposed his own term and theory as an alternative. If Jaspers had known about Stuart-Glennie and had acknowledged him, as Stuart-Glennie did it with Tylor, and had he disagreed with his terminology, and proposed *Achsenzeit* as a better term instead, perhaps the outcome would have been similar. Given that Stuart-Glennie was unknown when I wrote my book, I simply wanted to make the case that his theory and term should be acknowledged. I claimed that it was a more accurate term than Jaspers' "axial age," but I did not say that Jaspers' term should be abandoned, as Schewel also wrongly claims.

Schewel thinks that "moral revolution" is too narrow a term. But consider poet and painter William Blake's statement: "If Morality was Christianity, Socrates was The Savior."³⁴ And at the American Philosophical Association conference where this Author meets Critics session was held, the presidential address given by Kwong-loi Shun was titled "On the Idea of 'No Self,'" and it focused on Confucius and Mencius. Throughout his entire lecture the words morality, ethics, and reflection were being repeated, especially ideas of moral presence and moral detachment. The emergence of philosophy, as an aspect of intellectual development, presents a clear case to be made. The emergence of Greek science may not fit neatly with the term "moral revolution," but nor does the term "axial age" fit it, if one remembers how sophisticated pre-Axial Babylonian science had been.

The rise of the new religions of this era, for example, of Judaism, Buddhism, and later Christianity and Islam, these religions which Stuart-Glennie also characterized as "prophetianism," seem to be the clearest examples of a moral revolution, namely of that shift from custom to conscience. Stuart-Glennie also addressed transformations of the social dimension.

Here the emergence of Athenian democracy marks a shift to the morality of the commonality, of the common life.

Further, Schewel argues that one merit of the word "axial" is its vagueness, drawing attention to the occurrence of the general revolution while leaving freedom for later scholars to advance different insights with respect to it. I tend to agree with Schewel on this point, and I only wish that Jaspers had allowed the term to be relative. Regarding shortcomings of Stuart-Glennie's term, it should be noted that he also used another term for the legacy from that time to the present, namely "the modern revolution," which introduces another interesting way to consider the phenomenon.

In my appeal that the hunter-gatherer, non-agricultural legacy contains much that could inform the present; Schewel believes that I am perpetuating a similar kind of one-sidedness that I criticize in Jaspers. He ignores that I actually propose a recovering from the current narrowing of consciousness, one inclusive of the more recent aberrations of the anthropocentric mind and the mechanico-centric mind within the embodied evolutionary legacy of the animate mind. Here I put to work in my own way Mumford's ideas of "usable history" and the "fibrous structure of history," in order to show how valid insights from whatever periods, including the present, should today be incorporated into a more comprehensive perspective. Mumford could appreciate the genuine achievements of early civilization, but it is also important to point out how lacerating Mumford's criticisms of early civilization are, as the establishment of what Mumford termed the "Megamachine." For him, civilization denotes:

the group of institutions that first took form under kingship. Its chief features, constant in varying proportions throughout history, are the centralization of political power, the separation of classes, the lifetime division of labor, the mechanization of production, the magnification of military power, the economic exploitation of the weak, and the universal introduction of slavery and forced labor for both industrial and military purposes... The negative institutions of "civilization," which have besmirched and bloodied every page of history, would never have endured so long but for the fact that its positive goods, even though they were arrogated to the use of a dominant minority, were ultimately of service to the whole human community... At bottom, every royal reign was a reign of terror. With the extension of kingship, this underlying terror formed an integral part of the new technology and the new economy of

³⁴ William Blake, "Annotations to Dr. Thornton's 'New Translation of the Lord's Prayer' London MDCCCXXVII," in *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London, UK: Nonesuch Press 1946, pp. 825-8, here p. 825.

abundance. In short, the hidden face of that beautiful dream was a nightmare, which civilization has so far not been able to throw off.³⁵

From its very beginnings, civilization was a kind of Faustian bargain, one that even the Axial Age respectively the moral revolution could not resist in a sustainable manner.

The term "axial" as introduced by Jaspers, as the pivot of all history, remains problematic. Yet I am not trying to take away anything from Jaspers' contribution. "The moral revolution" may not be the ultimate terminology, and it does not seem likely to replace "the axial age." I think it is good to have them both in play, so as to allow the first developed theory that Stuart-Glennie invented its place in the scholarly discussion. I use them both whenever it is appropriate to refer to either the moral revolution or the Axial Age. Sometimes the more specific "moral revolution" is more useful, just as the vagueness of the accepted term "axial age" can be the preferable concept for other purposes. A dialectic relation between the two terms can assist keeping in mind the problematic nature of how that age should be characterized.

Quixotic Quests and Quixotic Questions

It is notable that Bryan Turner draws attention to what he calls "the settled account" of Axial Age scholarship, a kind of tacit consensus found in scholars such as Shmuel Eisenstadt, Robert Bellah, Hans Joas, and others, "that nothing new was added by Christianity and Islam that has not already been present in the Axial Age religions,"³⁶ and that the terms set by the Axial Age can still provide "the ethical answers needed for our age" (BT 96). Turner approves that my account challenges "the settled account" of the axial age in a variety of ways, including, for example, bringing to light that Stuart-Glennie, among other contributors, drew attention to material conditions that are largely absent from settled accounts of the Axial Age.

However, Turner questions why my drawing attention to Stuart-Glennie's discovery of the moral revolution seventy-five years before Jaspers has become

intellectually important, and whether it may represent a "Quixotic Quest." He seems to resolve the issue in his conclusion, but I will first address his concerns.

1. Stuart-Glennie's account provides a nuanced account of the phenomena and their broader historical context that offers an independent confirmation of the thesis that there was a transformative Age or revolution.
2. It provides a starkly different way of understanding its significance from that of Jaspers and other scholars. Stuart-Glennie's claim that the moral revolution marked a transitional phase—a historical and developmental differentiation of subjective and objective dimensions of consciousness—adds a contrast to Jaspers' conception and to the settled account. Stuart-Glennie's attention to the material and technological changes (BT 96), as Turner himself notes, addressed sources of change that are undervalued in the settled account.
3. The settled account assumes that the transition from religions of custom to religions of conscience was an improvement, as if custom would be arbitrary, or rote habituation, or simply outmoded. Custom can be all of these, but can also be more. Custom considered as being what I have termed "sustainable wisdom" is practiced and tempered habit, that is forged over many generations and adapted to specific "environments of existence," as Stuart-Glennie called them (IB 47-73). By remembering that Stuart-Glennie took panzooism as being rooted in true intuitions, one can see how customs can become the practiced embodiments of those true intuitions, and the living legacies maintained through ritual practices. Stuart-Glennie's panzooism thus opens ways of considering how vital connections to nature not only were of fundamental importance to the origins of religion, but how they might be indelibly connected to religion in the long term, for example, by way of potentially overcoming the latent antagonism between naturalism and supernaturalism that has marked the synthesis of Greek science and Jewish monotheism in Christianity.

The idea among Native American peoples of what biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer calls "the honorable harvest,"³⁷ where, for example, permission is asked of plants to be harvested and never more

³⁵ Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine, Vol. 1 Technics and Human Development*, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1967, pp. 186, 185.

³⁶ Bryan S. Turner, "John Stuart Stuart-Glennie versus Karl Jaspers: A Quixotic Quest?," *Existenz* 13/2 (Fall 2018), 93-96, here p. 94. [Henceforth cited as BT]

³⁷ Robin Wall Kimmerer, "The Honorable Harvest," in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions 2015, pp. 175-201.

than half of the plants in a place are harvested, is a custom both religious and practical, which produces sustainable harvests and sustainable wisdom. Living within its limits is not arbitrary, rote, or outmoded, but an ongoing dialogue with the environs in the language of custom and with the awareness of conscience. As naturalist, tracker, and bird expert Jon Young put it, "We are all hardwired biologically, even modern humans, to be aware and Nature-Connected."³⁸

In the turn from custom to conscience, what then is the morality that determines religions of conscience? The assumption that it means greater self-awareness to do the right thing leaves the question open of what determines the right thing. The moral revolution elevated the role of human morality and conscience, but also especially in the West tended to diminish or exclude relations to the natural world, especially to wild nature, as key elements of morality and conscience. Instead of the natural world becoming a moral presence and teacher to be obeyed, morality became, in the religions of the book, something ordained by a transcendent divinity directed to human relations. Consequently, the earth became an entity to be subdued, rather than an entity to be obeyed. Thus it represented a diminution from that greater morality of the community of life from which we evolved as participants, not controllers.

4. Stuart-Glennie's term prophetianism was another way to characterize aspects of the moral revolution, which could have been a fruitful influence on Max Weber's discussion of the advent of prophets, and which in turn some, such as Robert Bellah, have claimed was an influence on Jaspers. If prophetianism is intellectually significant in the settled account, Stuart-Glennie's attention to it and coining a term for it decades before Weber clearly unsettles that account even as it now contributes to forging a new one.

In his conclusion Turner resolves his question as to why my effort to resurrect Stuart-Glennie's forgotten philosophy of history and theory of the moral revolution is intellectually important, where he endorses what he identifies as my "attacks" on those Axial Age theorists

fixed on the idea that "nothing new came later in history" (BT 96), and by my claim, especially in the last chapter of my book, that Axial ethics remains insufficient for the problems of the contemporary world. He regards my critique of technological changes and alterations in the material basis of life today, as well as my introduction of Mumford's outlook on technology, as a significant challenge to the settled accounts of the axial debate.

Still, there is that lingering figure of, as Turner put it, my quixotic quest, which I aim to address next. Ironically, sixty years after Jaspers was awarded the peace prize of the German booksellers association, Egyptologist Jan Assmann, who has written extensively on the Axial Age, was awarded the same prize in 2018 along with his wife Aleida, the same week his new book on the Axial Age was published.³⁹ He discusses a range of writers who produced work on the theme, including some of the early forerunners to Jaspers, and devotes a chapter to John Stuart-Glennie and his philosophy of history. Assmann's new book provides evidence that the history of the concept of the axial age has altered, and that Stuart-Glennie is now a key figure in that history. He states, "Had he not found his rediscoverer in the American sociologist Eugene Halton, he would undoubtedly have remained in oblivion, in which he disappeared soon after his death" (AAM 141, my translation).

To Turner's charge that my attempt to revive Stuart-Glennie as the first to articulate a full theory of the moral revolution seventy-five years before Jaspers is "a quixotic quest" I must plead guilty. I found the many questions that bubbled forth from my encounter with Stuart-Glennie's work so enticing, so promising for a new understanding of that history, that I had to set forth to see where they might carry me. My quixotic questions took me to that place wherein settled accounts get unsettled. As Milan Kundera puts it:

When Don Quixote went out into the world, that world turned into a mystery before his eyes. That is the legacy of the first European novel to the entire subsequent history of the novel. The novel teaches us to comprehend the world as a question. There is wisdom and tolerance in that attitude.⁴⁰

³⁸ Jon Young, "Connection Modeling: Metrics for Deep Nature-Connection, Mentoring, and Culture Repair," in *Indigenous Sustainable Wisdom: First-Nation Know-How for Global Flourishing*, eds. Darcia Narvaez, Four Arrows, Eugene Halton, Brian Collier, and Georges Enderle, New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing 2019, pp. 219-43, here p. 225.

³⁹ Jan Assmann, *Achsenzeit: Eine Archäologie Der Moderne*, Frankfurt, DE: C. H. Beck, 2018. [Henceforth cited as AAM]

⁴⁰ Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, transl. Michael Henry Heim, New York, NY: Penguin 1983, p. 237.

My quest to comprehend Stuart-Glennie and the broader meaning of that age also led to my discovery of D. H. Lawrence's writings on the subject, and to deeper understandings of the course of human development

and the sources of contemporary unsustainable global civilization. It opened up in me an understanding of that age as being a question that is still not yet sufficiently answered.