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**THE BIG HISTORY OF EDUCATION. PART ⅔. THE BRONZE AGE.
“THE PRISON OF THE WILL”¹**

I *aim* to examine three dimensions of Bronze Age culture: science based on procedural knowing of skills (*techne*); law based on arbitrary will of the powerful (despotism); and cult based on the worship of willpower (Pagan idolatry). I *hypothesize* that feedback loop between such science, law and cult amounts to education that teaches humans to rise up against nature and reality as such. Since procedural science empowers us to *coerce* our environment, transform the world while avoiding being transformed by it, it issues in education what is separated from transformation. Since people who are educated to impose will on their environment value power to impose will above all, they legally sanction and religiously sanctify arbitrary exercise of power — freedom of choice of the strongest. Procedural knowing and mythological storytelling as a medium of communication teach people servility, subservience to the will of the powerful, and idolatry, worship of willpower. Law protects freedom of those who excel at coercion, i.e. people in power, to do whatever they want. Idolatry teaches people to worship the rulers who have power to coerce the world. The will of the powerful is thus poised in mid-air, in revolt against its own terms and natural course of time and change. And the society at the mercy of ruler’s freedom to choose is the society where feedback between lawmaking and ‘news’ about reality is simply no longer there, where there is no self-scrutiny that makes social organisms conscious and creative with regard to their code of conduct, where statesmen “oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice”, and “prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations” (Ezekiel 22:29, 22:28). In the Bronze Age, science, law and religion failed to do their job because they became subservient to the irrational, unjust and demonic will of the powerful, bound to sanction and sanctify arbitrary choices of people in power. I use Hebrew Scripture as record of human fall into possessive form of relationship that defines the Bronze Age — into slavery.

Keywords: **Bildung, adult development, big history, Bronze Age, Axial Age, philosophy, radical orthodoxy, theology, stages of development.**

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1. The Science of Coercion. Procedural Knowing of skills (*techne*).

The Fall began when human “eyes were opened” and “they saw that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7). Once humans became insecure, awake to their vulnerability, aware and beware of impending death, they began to pursue invulnerability and immortality through the exercise of will. Their first exercise was to *hide* from direct conversation: “the man and his wife heard the sound of

¹ This title is inspired by M. Luther’s 1525 seminal work against the notion of free will, *De Servo Arbitrio*, commonly translated as *On the Bondage of Will*, and by V. Nabokov’s 1939 *Tyrants Destroyed* (Rus. *Istreblenie tiranov*) where a man of will [“that molds a triumphant monster from a mediocre man” (Page 388 of Russian 1990 edition)] locks himself up in a prison cell “for he calls himself a prisoner of the people’s will” (ibis, Page 393). The English collection *Tyrants Destroyed and Other Stories* was published in 1974.

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the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid...” (Genesis 3:8). Hiding was the consequence of their insecurity – “I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid”, says Adam (Genesis 3:10). Considering that this alienation became a regular state of the fallen humanity, ‘orphaned’ from the truthful and transparent communication within the material world, humans were condemned to the tacit manipulations so as to bend the environment to their will: their second exercise was to *lie*. If I hide and lie my way out of truthful conversation it is because I do not need any feedback that can question my pristine choices, I want to impose my will on you, to impose a choice that is calculated to serve my unexamined ends, to choose a course of action to which you’ll never consent and so can only be enforced. Thus the third exercise was to *coerce*. Hiding and lying necessitate violence — if we cannot converse to define the common good and converge our choices accordingly, we end up fighting on the battleground, we find ourselves in carnage where the strong simply impose their choices on the weak. Deprived of choice, the weak no longer have a say in how things are run. Once we began to hide, lie and coerce, we launched the cycle of *privation*, of excluding certain parts of the world from communication by acting upon them as if they have nothing to say, as if they were a numb “standing reserve”, a raw resource that we own and use for our unexamined ends. It was then when, armed with this zero-sum logic, we the humans began committing our gravest sins: exploitation of ecology, women and colonies.

In the Bronze Age, humans no longer relied on the gifts of nature as hunter-gatherers did in their reliance on wild plants and animals, and hence no longer had to adapt to their environment. For them, it was the other way around: in order to secure their livelihood and survival they had to adapt the environment to themselves. Human wellbeing came to depend upon their power to change their material circumstances. This meant that we had to become skilled at coercion. And after the point when humans put their hope in the exercise of will, they were condemned to “painful toil” “by the sweat of their brow” (Genesis 3:17, 19). “Painful toil” was done with the help of procedural knowledge of skills which gave the power to *tame* nature. Even the name of the Bronze Age shows that its people were not content to use natural materials like stone and preferred to use artificially produced composites like cast bronze — nature was to be reduced to raw resource and reshaped into what humans willed. But the will was also imposed on the living things — people started to enslave free and wild animals into livestock and wild plants into agricultural produce. Procedural skills empowers us to enslave the outer world. No predator except humans has its prey fully under *control*, fully enslaved. And, of course, to *own* something is to engage in privation par excellence: my freedom to do whatever I want with what I own means that what I own is ‘excommunicated’ from the free exchange that constitutes the process of creation. And once humans began to *own* other living beings, they were not far from owning other humans.

The hunter-gatherers always had a chance to avoid intertribal violence because there was always a bountiful expanse of nature where to migrate so as to hunt and forage without struggle for living-space (Ger. *Lebensraum*) with other tribes. But the first humans born after the Fall were no longer hunter-gatherers: “Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground” (Genesis 4:2). Settled pastoralists and agriculturalists couldn’t migrate because they invested their time and effort to utterly change their landscape — having, say, cut down forests to create room for the fields and pastures, they now believed to *own* it. The self-reliance of the agriculturalists made them arrogant. Since the obstinate and consistent execution of the routine procedures of crafts demanded the exercise of willpower, it led humans to the blasphemy of supposing that their success was merited by their voluntary choice of hardworking. Since their travail demanded painstaking sacrifice, the disciplined investment of willpower, it made humans think that they *merited* ownership of resources like land and cattle. Thenceforth, people began to compete for scarce means of production. Hardwork justified ownership and ownership justified violence. Humans began to fight for the possession of *Lebensraum*. In addition to that, since the pastoralists and agriculturalists were able to sustain themselves without each other’s help, they thought that they could exterminate each other without apparent detriment to their own wellbeing. Many a time, the story is the same. The pastoralists are more successful because animals give a better supply of food and perhaps make up for a better sacrifice. The agriculturalists grow resentful because their sacrifice, their labour, which is arguably more painstaking than the pastoral one, is not rewarded according to its merit: “on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour” (Genesis 4:5). St Augustine would argue that Cain was the builder of the first earthly city (Lat. *civitas terrena*), the city of idolatrous reliance on human

merit whereas Abel “walked closer” to the city of God (Lat. *civitas dei*) because, as a shepherd of grazing flocks, he had to rely on and adjust to a more animated level of creation. Once Cain kills Abel, violence unravels and spirals into the feedback cycle of perpetual revenge — Cain is “avenged sevenfold” (Genesis 4:15), but his descendants, the inventors of weapons, are “avenged seven times sevenfold”: “I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me” (Genesis 4:23), says one of them^[1]. Intolerant to their vulnerability, humans were willing to start the spiral of violent vengeance. An example from the XX century: pastoralists and agriculturalists settled in a certain African country and pushed away local hunter-gatherers. The agriculturalists were becoming resentful because of the prolonged supremacy of the pastoralists. Resentment led to an ethnic cleansing that wiped out up to 800,000 people, many of whom were tortured to death. The country is Rwanda, agriculturalists are the Hutus and pastoralists are the Tutsi. The myth is by no means a counterfactual story about the distant past, it is the account of the everlasting constants of human experience, of the invariable patterns of life.

The medium of information exchange that allowed humans to communicate the knowledge of the ‘know-how’ skills like husbandry or blacksmithing was the instruction algorithm that linked various procedures into a sequence, which, if followed diligently and stubbornly, issues in a habit of manipulating the material world, in a skill of mastery over the environment. But for any skill to be communicated, it has to be somehow expressed in human proportion and speak human language, it has to be *personified*: communication is something that happens between persons. We develop a skill or a trait through communication with and imitation of those who embody and personify it. Thus to understand the essence of any given age we have to ask “what is personified while it lasts?”

And since the Bronze Age understood their wellbeing as a result of human skillfulness, they entered into communication with the personifications of the skills (Greek τέχνη). To intensely concentrate and attend to something is to worship it. The Bronze Age religion gradually progressed to the limit of the meritocratic continuum — from the early Pagan gods still personifying the elemental forces of nature to the late Pagan gods personifying human craftiness. Polytheists travelled a long way from reliance on their environment to coercion thereof. The worship of personifications of skills like agriculture, cattle breeding, and military art as if they were gods taught humans to become craftsmen, to become masters of their environment.

But how does one acquire the will (Greek θέλημα) to be a master? What makes people *desire* to acquire skills? The will-to-power. The Bronze Age humans worshipped the heroes as divine because they were so good at what Pagans valued most — at dominating, at accommodating the environment to their will. Heroes who personified traits like courage and cunning had the status of demigods. The brave and daring Heracles, dogged and treacherous Jason, vengeful and furious Achilles, sly and stealthy Ulysses, all taught humans to become heroes. On the general point, the skills and traits that gave the power to impose will over the surrounding world and achieve dominance in social hierarchy were deified because people always worship the power that seems to be in charge of their life. Education became the matter of communicating skills and traits that empower humans to bend the world to their will.

But what could be the medium for such communication? What “bears witness” to the life of willpower? That which narrates the hero’s journey to dominance. That which *relates* heroic accomplishments under the rubric of a single piece of information: a success story. A story is a medium that *orders* and *relativises* many sentences — the Stone Age limit of linguistic complexity — into a sequence of sentences, into a coherent narrative, be it a myth, a legend, or an epic tale. In contrast to the primordials who refused to *follow* a narration of discrete events which they have not seen with their own eyes, Bronze Age humans began to “think in stories” because they were used to following procedure after procedure while learning a skill.

But why do myths lead to the worship of willpower? Since the medium of oral storytelling functioned under the selective pressure of human attention, only those stories survived that *impressed* and *captivated* the audience with the memorable accounts of the vehement deeds, passionate actions and courageous accomplishments — spectacular “triumphs of will” (Ger. *Triumph des Willens*). Singers of tales that do not sing of the fabulous labours of heroes (say the *Labours of Heracles*) fail because they fall short of the constraints of oral storytelling — tales in which things are not accomplished are incapable of ‘pressing’ themselves into human memory because they are not impressive enough to capture human attention. But what kinds of stories

succeed and are thus selected for? For a story to be captivating, it has to be filled with passions. And in which conditions do passions thrive? In the conditions of dramatic struggle for scarce resources. A zero-sum contest is the nursery of passions. And since passion is a derivative of intense rivalry, it all makes congruent sense: myths tend to be about strife and warfare. Passion arises in the struggle for dominance between contestants for the possession of *this* scarce good that cannot be shared, cannot be made common. There can be no solidarity or cooperation in the contest for that which cannot be shared. Zero-sum contest for scarce goods casts everyone as either a winner or a loser: I can win only if you lose, only at your expense. My ascent necessitates your downfall.

And to succeed in the condition of scarcity one has to be able to focus on and pursue a concrete goal. We can now look closer at the characters who accomplish impressive feats, who bring desired changes to the world, who *make a difference*. These are the people who dare to take risks. These are the people of great willpower, audacious and assertive, “obstinate and stubborn” (Ezekiel 12:4). Technically speaking, a hero has to be a single-minded *maniac*, possessed by a single goal and pursuing it by any means necessary. A typical heroic ordeal is disturbingly close to addiction (Russian *нприспастмие* is a very useful word that connotes both passionate attitude and addiction to something, partiality and fixation).

The passion (Greek πάθος) is acutely unnatural because our evolutionary ancestors did not function under the premises of individual ownership. This ‘possessive’ form of relationship comes with the dawn of the Bronze Age. Since the passion stems from the scarcity mindset, it compels us to see all circumstances as a zero-sum game for the possession of scarce goods and anyone else as a rival. Since the passion stems from our revolt against vulnerability, it allures us to take a dominant position, to have the “upper hand” against others (We have all seen many scenes on TV and in movies and in ads where a certain bully is made harmless by pointing out his (I’m sorry, but it’s often *his*, isn’t it?) — childhood traumas, lack of parental love, the birth of an attention-seeking younger sibling, you name it. Aggressive dominance is rooted in the revolt against one’s weakness.) — this is why passion is the ‘fuel’ of competition. Passion engulfs the world in the cycle of *privation* because it excludes me, desired object, and other contestants for desired object from the conversation about what should be our proper relationship to it and to each other — from the conversation that could have allowed the desired object to ‘speak’ by thinking of it and defining it properly so as to do justice to its nature or, after all, by simply asking it and giving it room and hours to respond. A conversation by means of which we could have found out how the desired object is to be used or perhaps precisely *not used*. Yet the passion frustrates such education of desire because it bends my desire to a particular choice of how to use a particular object. Not only it narrows my attention to a particular thing but it addicts me to the particular end I have in mind for it. The passion transforms things into idols by addicting my attention to what *I* can make of them (this arrogant and utilitarian attitude to the world is described in the Bible as a dangerously narrow perspective: ‘All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame’ (Isaiah 44:9). ‘They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see’ (Isaiah 44:18). I will return to the theme of idolatry in the third chapter of this essay, 3. *The Cult of Willpower*). The passion excommunicates the desired thing from any other relations it may participate in, including with my ‘real’, my ‘long-term’ self. The passion leads us to use and discard others as a raw resource: “Being stronger than she”, the prince “forced her, and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, arise, be gone” (2 Samuel 13:14-15). The object of passion is raped, made speechless, de-personalised, excluded from the conversation as a passive and voiceless means for satisfaction. Such a possessive or privative turn of mind is the ‘root of evil’: ‘excommunication’ of the other from the world of intelligent exchange so that it no longer “speaks of something else”, of things I do not know, and therefore is reduced to what *I* say it is, to my private choice with regard to what I own, my own property.

When a man is enslaved he is excommunicated, he cannot engage in communication and relationships, cannot make commitments or promises, in short, he cannot be a *friend*: the English word ‘free’ derives from a Germanic term meaning ‘friend’.

Privation deprives humans of the chance to grow according to their nature by excluding them from the friendships in which they learn to intelligently negotiate their choices.

It is as if fate itself is visited upon them. In fact, the belief in fate and servility to the authorities go hand in hand; the 'free will' is always exercised at the expense of people whose life will be governed by 'fate', who will lose their sense of agency; this is the feedback loop by which the decision-making is concentrated in the hands of the powerful, while the 'weak' are made to accept decisions they did not make as blows of 'fate'. Every arbitrary decision (the free choice of the free will) automatically echoes as the 'stroke of fate' with which the weak can neither communicate, nor negotiate. For how can one bring fortune on one's side, how can one 'ally' it? When human wellbeing depended on nature we figured out that the vessel of communication that could propel their attunement to it was their most natural and *material* faculty – the body. So the question to ask is what human faculty corresponds to the contingency of fate, 'what is most random and arbitrary in human beings?' It is their *will*, the sheer exercise of free choice which rebels against the logical consistency of reason and the material continuity of the body. We thus enter into the feedback loop of numbness: the thing about fate is that it is speechless, you can't communicate with it, but you can *bargain*, sacrifice to it, present concrete deeds and things as offerings, make a deal with it in which you sacrifice something important now in order to achieve goals of security and invulnerability. Empower your will to get what you want, so as to align your unjust will with the will of an unjust universe. Thus, when the equality and the ability to negotiate are cancelled, the people become divided into the despots who are free to make arbitrary choices and people whose lives come to be governed by 'fate' — by the choices that are arbitrary, that is, unexamined and unintelligible. If I become powerful enough, I can become a god, I can dispense fortune and misfortune in the same arbitrary way gods do. But what if I do not have the power to bargain? My choices become limited to those that are determined without me; in fact, I become *addicted* to them. But this addiction reigns in both ways: because choices with regard to the world that are not intelligently deliberated with all of the involved agencies become biased by the arbitrary pursuit of what is expedient, of what how it can be used or even consumed – and this is dictated by the passion; it is thus the passion that addicts the powerful to the narrow interpretation of what is around, including the 'weak' who are around; the powerful become addicted to the particular ways in which they reduce outer reality to their needs. The 'weak' are *fated* to be possessed by the powerful while the *will* of the powerful is possessed by their passions. The tandem of *fate* and *willpower* becomes instantiated when the intelligent communication becomes impossible, and impossible it becomes when the imbalance of power corrupts the equality between different actors. And when this happens, the dynamic of power-struggle can only lead to one direction: the simultaneous enslavement of the weaker party to the stronger and enslavement of the stronger party to sin. The arbitrary exercise of power narrowed the distance between parts of creation, dividing them into the 'owners' and the 'owned').

The privation has the structure of addiction because it is the reciprocal narrowing [Lewis, 2011] of the distance between the owner and the owned: while you reduce the world to what you can make of it, you reduce yourself to a consumer, to a short-sighted and narrow, unthinking, unlearning and 'retarded' version of yourself — a version that can't participate in the conversation because its tunnel-vision reduces the world to a raw resource. Thus the world is ensnared into market relations: just as in your lust you reduce the world to a prostitute, "the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread" (Proverbs 6:26) — market makes everything mediocre, reduces everything to its instrumental value of satisfying whimsical consumer choices that exist apart from who we really are, arbitrary choices that are made apart from prolonged converse, friendship and love. In this way humans become passive instruments at the mercy of passions that possess, consume and discard them: "Such is the end of all who are greedy of gain; It taketh away the life of owners thereof" (Proverbs 1:19).

Yet the humans who value domination above all else cannot help but regard the passions they serve as gods. "The sudden unaccountable feeling of power, or the sudden unaccountable loss of judgement, is the germ out of which the divine machinery developed", wrote E. R. Dodds [Dodds, E. R. 1951, p. 14]. The passions are always plural: "I am Legion, for we are many" (Mark 5:9), they are always envious of each other, always at each other's throat. And since the world, including the human beings, is more easily owned and 'possessed', controlled, coerced, and consumed, from the height of the hierarchy, this passionate, possessive attitude to the world is always aimed at social dominance, always wills to get power. The will to power is the will for the arbitrary exercise of sovereignty, whose choices are totally free and therefore totally *coercive*. Choices that are arbitrary, that is, unintelligible to others, can only be imposed through violence. Coercion is the only means to

impose choices to which the others would never give conscious *consent* — the choices are dictated by essentially un-communicative and egocentric passions — wrath, pride, envy, lust, you name it.

Thus we can see how the feedback loop of procedural knowing and mythological storytelling led Bronze Age humans to the worship of concrete and tangible power — a dominant position in the social hierarchy. Because of this the education of this Age was aimed at teaching those skills and traits that empower people to impose will on the environment — skills of coercion and traits of willpower. Yet from the Biblical perspective, to serve the willpower is to serve the devil: it was the devil who “took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him: “To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours”” (Luke 3:5-7). Having listened to the stories of heroic success, ancient youths began to imitate their beloved role-models. By making a lasting impression on the youths, the heroes *impressed* their form of life unto their memory, making it a participant in their internal conversations. Via the medium of mythology, the youth were entering into conversation with the personifications of willpower. By accommodating the personifications of willpower into their psyches, the youths were accommodating passions. By making people addicted to passions, mythological storytelling invited the devil into people’s minds. And once people began to accept the devil’s offer, the Bronze Age or the Faustian Age was ushered in, because, like Faust, people were now willing to “sell their souls” to the devil in order to acquire the knowledge and power that would bend everything to their will. When I sell my soul I sell my participation in direct communication to get the knowledge and power to manipulate the world indirectly, secretly, so as to impose choices to which no one would ever consent — irrational choices dictated by passions. Thus instead of intelligently defining the common good with others and shaping my choices so that they become intelligible with regard to the definitions we have agreed upon, I simply impose my pristine choices, my uneducated and unexamined will. If this happens, social relations become mediocre: society outsources moral judgement with regard to the definition of the common good to mediating competitions like war or market where the strongest or the richest can impose his will through brute violence or clandestine scheming without being accountable and responsive to society at large (What is often said in such conditions is ‘This is fate, this is the invisible hand of the market’). Because of “selling his soul” a ruler is condemned to *hide* from converse and relation in which he could have been growing into increasingly mature and humane identities, condemned to *lie*, to live in the prison of a narrow and self-serving standpoint (“An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk” (Proverbs 12:13)), and the society is condemned to be governed, or rather *coerced*, from that prison.

2. The Law of the Powerful. “Might makes right”.

The Bronze Age society does not last because it fails to create the law that is conducive to the common good. Ideally the law would protect the distance between the people that is necessary for the forms of interaction that are of more refined and graceful than mere imposition of power, forms of interaction like conversation or thinking, forms of interaction constitute proper statecraft. Yet the typical Bronze Age sovereign “exercised a power that was above and beyond the law” [The Dawn of Everything, p.366].

If we define injustice as a condition where disagreement is resolved by the exercise of power, the feedback loop of the Bronze Age lifeform creates the fundamentally unjust zero-sum-game where “no *thinking* is going on: the processes of power are still working at a pre-reflective level... In plainer English, oppression is a situation where people don’t talk to each other” [Williams, 2000, p.113]. Injustice is the state where nothing stands in the way of the strong to do and inflict whatever they will upon the weak, where the distance between people is canceled. Injustice is the state where the statecraft is contaminated with this passionate or possessive or proprietorial attitude. Ownership implies freedom with regard to the property. And if the state is understood as the property of the ruler, his will becomes the law of the land. The unjust society is the one whose ruler is the autocratic tyrant who is immune to alien viewpoints that might have challenged his will but cannot because they are automatically recognised as a dangerous agenda of potential rivals who are only interested in power. This makes the ruler himself (now and further I use the masculine advisedly) miserable because he cannot grow — cannot live in harmony with his own nature, his

potential that can only be actualised through living as a responsible participant of relationships. The despot cannot grow because he cannot participate in political relationships in which people grow into more complex identities, in which the character is forged. He is stuck because he is never answerable to other viewpoints, his conversations are limited to issuing orders and receiving reports, there is no feedback except the execution of his orders, there is no critique except reassurance and flattery, his identity is constantly reinforced, never challenged. The master and the slave are shut-in within the *privative* cycle: the master's choices are not constrained because he has freedom with regard to his property; the slave has no choices; thus they both cannot grow, cannot learn, cannot *think together* about their common good and the choices that are conducive to it.

The society which understands the zero-sum-game, the enslavement of the weak by the strong, as a fair and eternal state of affairs, issues laws that justify coercion. “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked” (Proverbs 28:4).

The lawmaking of the Bronze Age is succinctly expressed by the infamous soundbite “might makes right”, derived from Thrasymachus's “‘justice is nothing else than the interest of the stronger” (Republic 338c). Once the rulers “have shown partiality in the matters of law” (Malachi 2:9), “the law is paralysed and justice never prevails” (Habakkuk 1:4).

To understand why the Bronze Age society fails to create impartial laws we have to see who tends to rule over it. When people vie for domination they have two vehicles of ascent at their disposal: the skill and the will. The skill empowers me to impose my will on the outer world. The willpower empowers me to heroically *persevere* in imposing my will. Yet both faculties fade if compared to the opportunity to dictate people of skill and willpower what to do. One who is in command of craftsmen and heroes is the one whose ability to coerce is virtually limitless. This means that the key question we should be asking ourselves is “who becomes a ruler?” And if the dominance contest is all we rely upon, then the answer is the one who combines mastery of skills and heroic character. But this is a serious problem: skills of mastery would not be of much use because of having very little to do with the skill of governance. It is not good enough for a ruler to be a good trader, a good military leader, or a good orator, he needs to organize a government where different experts “talk to each other”, he needs to be a good mediator between different procedural skills, needs to provide space and time for the *synopsis* of different fields of expertise. The statecraft is not a procedural craft because it has a very *abstract* or *general* task: to sustain a robust conversation between multiple specialists, to sustain politics — the process of defining the common good and legislating choices of it. A skilled craftsman often cannot do this because he tends to think that his expertise in a given field of knowledge makes him knowledgeable in all the other disciplines. And the people who are characterised by the will-to-power are not noted for either trust or care for other people's points of view (Compare with Plato's critique of the tyranny of Dionysius who was not able share his power with competent friends ‘because in his wisdom he distrusted everyone’ (Greek ὑπὸ σοφίας πιστεύων οὐδενί) (Letter 7 332a-c)). “They are a law to themselves” (Habakkuk 1:7). Their quest for autonomy and autocracy, their unwillingness to be vulnerable to the exchange of perspectives, leads them to the utter arbitrariness, to the revolt against reality: “They have eyes to see and but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people” (Ezekiel 12:2).

Yet the crux of the matter is that the people who are obsessed with securing their freedom of choice mistake precisely this sovereignty, voluntarism, autonomy and autocracy, — the exercise of power to choose any course of action whatsoever — for the mastery of the *techné* of lawmaking and governing. People who measure competence by the ability to impose one's will confuse the “collateral damage” of acquiring power, that is, the fact of having a freedom of choice, with a genuine competence in statecraft. They see the fact that the ruler's choice is not constrained as the sign of skillful leadership (Ger. *Führung*).

And so it comes to be that the only thing that distinguishes the ruler is the fact that his exercise of power is less constrained in comparison to other people. That is to say, his choices are more arbitrary or, frankly, more stupid since they are less bound to do justice to what is the case, that is, less answerable to the collective sensemaking, less bound to be unintelligible to other people. A despot is autonomous and autocratic, he can legislate for himself and for others whatever he wills, whatever comes to his mind. But since his freedom of choice is divorced from common sense it is ultimately at the mercy of what is most arbitrary and unnatural — the passions. It is important to

understand that arbitrariness is not the same as randomness. The apparent independence from carnal continuity and logical consistency does not mean seeing the world randomly, it means narrowing our purview to a self-centred question: “what’s in it for me?”

This is why the freedom of choice does not lead to the freedom of will. The will can be free only if its choices are exercised in concord with the social nature of humanity, that is, if we choose to care about others, whereas the emphasis on willpower, on the limitless freedom to choose and act upon their choices, enslaves our will to the sin, to the prideful delusion of omnipotence. In reality, our choices are always contingent upon our limited stance in time and space and if we are obsessed with the freedom of choice, our choices will be undertaken in a sort of revolt against their own terms. The stress on the freedom of choice is ultimately arbitrary — it comes from a place of dissatisfaction and insecurity. Arbitrary choices are those that seek to deny the very terms on which they are exercised. At the end of the day, arbitrariness stems from our refusal to come to terms with our carnal predicament. We refuse to be incarnated because we abhor our mortal bodies. Ruler’s fear of death leads him to enslave the outer world to his unexamined desires, that is, to his ‘free’ will that is understood as the freedom of choice — the will that is free from ‘constraints’ of reason and education because it is possessed by the passions. When the ‘free’ will of the statesmen became the ‘law of the land’ the social life degraded into fundamental injustice, into arbitrary domination and slavery, a form of relationship that defines hell. “If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable” (Proverbs 28:9).

3. The Cult of Willpower. Paganism and Idolatry.

Self-made men. In the Stone Age, humanity was embedded within the natural course of creation, it was a work of God’s art. Since human life did not depend on the *artefacts*, we could not believe that we created our world, that we were self-created, a work of our own art. But this is exactly what happened in the Bronze Age — humans began to think that their wellbeing is their own doing. Humans succumbed to the sacrilege of thinking that they are self-reliant, self-created, self-made. And, since religion is always the practice of communication with what seems to create our life, Pagan gods were either the masterful patrons of useful skills, personifications of various *techne*, or the personifications of various passions and heroic traits that empower humans to dominate. The Pagans revered the tempestuous passions and skills that gave the power to impose will on the world so as to satisfy these passions.

Idolatry. Yet feedback of procedural knowing and mythological medium of communication reproduced a far more disturbing pattern than the addiction to passions, crafts, and heroic deeds.

It reinforced the belief, or, rather, the myth, that the the will, the faculty of making a choice with regard to how the world should be and persistently remaking the world so as to conform it to the desired state of affairs — is the real creator of the world and that those in society who are the best at imposing their will (not only masters of crafts, but also masters of people, not only those who *have* power, but also those who are *in* power) are the rightful objects of worship. They worshipped their ability of artificial transformation: turning the things of the world into artefacts, turning natural niches into artificial cities.

But the worship of our capacity to remake the world is the definition of idolatry. The idols are what our “hands had made” (2 Kings 22:17), results of handiwork and exercise of will. “Do men make their own gods? Yes, but they are not gods!” (Jeremiah 16:20). The Pagans “bow down to the work of their hands” (Isaiah 2:8). Idolaters are the “guilty people, whose own strength is their god” (Habakkuk 1:11). A craftsman casts the idol “in the form of man, of man in all his glory...” (Isaiah 44:13). “Cursed is the one who trusts in man” (Jeremiah 17:5). Instead of attuning our attention to the world as it is, idols addict us to the majestic display of what *we can make of it* — to our own mastery. The idols corrupt attention because the dazzling light of temporal glory blinds people — they “set their eyes on” (Ezekiel 20:8) the stardom of the celebrities instead of attending to what is truly relevant. Attention of the idolaters is addicted to the lower-order of creation, concrete created objects instead of a more abstract, long-term and intensely alive creative processes: “craftsmen are only human beings” (Isaiah 44:11), says the Lord, whereas “it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges...” (Isaiah 54:16). “You praised the gods of silver and gold, of

bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life” (Daniel 5:23).

Worship of the ruler. There is an insistence in the Scripture that “all the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced” (Isaiah 45:16). “You will no longer bow down to the work of your hands” (Micah 5:13). The fundamental lie is that we are self-made: “Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation” (Habakkuk 2:18). Since “those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them” (Psalm 135:18), they “followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless” (2 Kings 17:15). Bronze Age people “are taught by worthless wooden idols” (Jeremiah 10:8) to worship not only the craftsmen and heroes who are courageous or skilled at various *techne*, but mainly the rulers who merely happen to stand in a position of power.

Mythological media taught humans to value coercion. One cannot but notice that both the Iliad and the Ulysses are the stories about wrath and vengeance. Myths, legends, epics, are the media that convert any content into the eulogy of concrete might. Yet since the statesmen were the living embodiments of the “success stories”, they *appeared* to the naïve concrete thinkers^[2] as the gods on earth, as divine. It was happening because the people in power have the ultimate freedom of choice – their will is not constrained and so can be totally arbitrary.

Survival of the strongest. As was said earlier, while the skills and heroic traits give you power, they fade in comparison with the authority to *govern* craftsmen and heroes. Therefore, at the top of the Pagan value hierarchy, say, the hierarchy of Olympic gods, is not the most masterful craftsman, but a tyrannical rapist, one who is distinguished by *wrath, envy, lust, and willful pride* (Isaiah 10:12). The worship of Zeus who was possessed by passions even to the extent of multiple rape cases justified the right of people of power to do whatever they want. Natural selection, survival of the fittest, gave way to unnatural selection, the survival of the strongest. In the Bronze Age, people no longer adjusted to nature but adjusted nature, including themselves, to the strongest men, to the whimsical arbitrariness of the rulers whose perspective was as narrow as their only criterion: “what do I stand to gain from it?” “Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared” (Daniel 5:19).

Adaptation to willful lying. Religion is the practice of communication with what is most valued in society, with what humans think is in charge of their lives. In the Bronze Age, the shamanic project became redundant due to the irrelevance of tamed nature. Instead, religion became a means of communication with the powers that be, which means that instead of adapting to the physical reality of the environment, society began to be adapted to the arbitrary will of those who happen to be in power. David’s “Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent” (2 Samuel 7:2, 1 Chronicles 17:1) is a clear indictment to the imbalance between religious and governmental authorities. In the Bronze Age, religion became a mere mediator of the ruler’s will. In contrast to the Stone Age shamans, the Pagan priests did not communicate with nature, but, being the servants of the rulers, they conformed to what is most unnatural in the world, to the human will: “Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the Lord” (Jeremiah 8:7). People have fallen from the natural course of creation, from adapting to ecological equilibriums. It happened because humans now had to adapt to the lies of the rulers, to their arbitrary legislation: “You must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up [out of arbitrary whim]. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace [because violence is the only means to coerce people into implementation of unintelligible precepts]” (Daniel 2:5-6). At the heart of the Bronze Age is Paganism — the cult of rulers who are presently empowered to coerce anyone as they will, the worship of the strongest: “anyone who prays to any god or man... except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den” (Daniel 6:7). People were educated, borrowing Cornel West’s brilliant soundbite, to be “well-adjusted to injustice”. The Pagan religion is at odds with reality because it is bound to sanction and sanctify the wickedness of the powerful. Paganism attunes human life to the oddities of a finite man instead of attuning it to something infinite, either the creativity of nature or the constancy of law: “In the Fijian kingdom of Cakaudrobe there was a daily rule of absolute silence at sunrise. Then the king’s gerald would proclaim that he was about to chew his kaca root, whereon all his subjects shouted, ‘Chew it!’ This was followed by a thunderous roar when the ritual was completed. The

ruler was the Sun, who gave both life and order to his people. He recreated the universe each day” (The Dawn of Everything, Page 430). Paganism is subservient to the unexamined self-deception of the autocratic authority. This means that a ruler ceased to have any critical feedback from his sycophantic servants. It is so because the willpower is essentially arbitrary, it revolts against whatever the structure, logic or continuity the outer world threatens to impose. The will is never content with what the world is and always aims to make a difference because it is exercised from the place of utter dissatisfaction with its own terms and limits, with the vulnerability and finitude of the mortal man.

From Coliseum to Palace, Pyramid and Prison. One of the keys to understanding a given society is figuring out what kinds of long-term projects it is invested in and what kinds of monumental buildings located at the centre of its cities it results in. Thus in the last section I will trace how the mythological worldview that addicts our imagination to zero-sum contests for scarce goods led the rulers to pursue invulnerability and immortality by all means necessary and how this pursuit, impassioned by the scarcity mindset, was reflected in the buildings that had the central stage in the life of the Bronze Age empires.

Coliseum. At the end of the day, the Bronze Age education prepares its pupils for a zero-sum fight for scarce resources. Mythology often shows Pagan gods entertaining themselves by devising violent contests whose winners merit a demigod status. And since the real-life of mortals always reflects their beliefs, to this day at the centre of Rome stands the Coliseum, a corporeal testimony to the Pagan atrocities, an embodiment of the myth that the life is ultimately a zero-sum game where it is fair for the strong to shred the weak into pieces — which is exactly what the gladiators did to merit a precarious respect and (an extremely precarious) similitude to the Emperor. Around half a million innocent people were raped, dismembered, tortured, and eaten alive in the Coliseum — all to entertain the passions of the cruel contemporaries in the audience who were ethically sick to the point of taking pleasure in the spectacle of human slaughterhouse. Yet what else can we expect from people whose hierarchy of values, that is, whose pantheon of gods, was crowned by the thunderers (a bolt of lightning is the symbol of arbitrariness) and sometime rapists like Zeus, Jupiter, Baal, Wotan, and Perun, gods of war, wrath and willpower?

Palace. Since the Bronze Age humans thought of the world as of a coliseum and of the life in it as an everlasting zero-sum-fight for scarce resources, the only possibility of rest they could imagine was found if they could find the means to protect themselves and their property from potential rivals. To secure their peace, the ‘winner’ of competition hoards scarce resources behind the tall and thick walls of his palaces, the ruler “piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion” (Habakkuk 2:6). He locks himself and his possessions in the fortified palace so as to be protected to the extent of invulnerability. “The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall” (Proverbs 18:11).

Pyramid. Thus the pursuit of invulnerability culminated in the construction of a palace, the edifice of the ‘having mode’, of unlimited ownership. The two most prominent empires of the Bronze Age — Rome and Egypt — have palaces at the centre of their cities, private property consecrated to the comfort and security of the ruler. But a palace does not solve the second problem of fallen humanity — the problem of mortality. This is why the Bronze Age gets much uglier than a bunch of palaces. The Bronze Age way to solve the problem of mortality was figured out by the Egyptians. At the centre of Egyptian life was the will of the Pharaoh. He has succumbed to the self-deceptive belief that his wellbeing is his own creation: “you great monster... you say “The Nile is mine, I made it for myself”” (Ezekiel 29:3). “The pride of your heart has deceived you” (Obadiah 3). Therefore, he cannot come to terms with his death — he confuses it with the end of the world at large. He *wills* to avoid death by all means necessary. To do so he needs to make a truly *lasting* impression, to cater such an ornate display of grandeur that would make it impossible for the Bronze Age mindset to think that such a blatant manifestation of luxuriance will be relativised or annihilated by death — to think that this excess will not ‘overflow’ onto the netherworld. Thus the pursuit of immortality had culminated in the building of a tomb that must have created the impression that the king's life after death was just as comfortable and imposing as his life in the palace. To do just this, Pharaoh *wills* to let thousands of slaves die on the construction in the scorching heat of Egyptian summer’s dog days, and, in addition, to let countless servants, caregivers, finery, and food that might

have belonged to the starving populus, all rot together with his embalmed corpse only so as to see to it that his afterlife will taste just as good as the 'business as usual'. But if the afterlife is just as comfortable as the days in the palace, is there any death at all? As far as the Pagans are concerned, there was not, because the exuberant spectacle and affluent splendour were *salient* enough for the concrete thinkers (who worship power because it *appears* to be divine) to make a lasting impression that the ruler's life lasts forever.

Prison. The Fall is the gradual co-imprisonment of society to the ruler's passions, his narrow perspective of short-term self-interest; and the ruler to the society's servility and sycophancy, society's broken feedback loop. First thing first, the Bronze Age is the condition where the whole society falls victim to the ruler's pursuit of *invulnerability* and *immortality*. To secure themselves against death and to grant themselves eternal life, the rulers began to take a 'defensive posture': began to coerce others to construct palaces to dwell before death and pyramids to dwell after, to construct an ultimate stronghold to protect property and withhold death. The palace and the pyramid are the Pagan solutions to the problem of security and mortality. But there are two problems: first, these solutions only work for a single strongest man. Second, these solutions do not really work. The rulers end up in the prison of self-deception. "They do not know how to do right... who hoard plunder and loot in their fortresses" (Amos 3:10). A palace-dweller "is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captives all the peoples" (Habakkuk 2:5). The king himself becomes a captive of this loop of privation and his palace becomes a prison "because this tyrant calls himself a "prisoner of people's will"" [Nabokov 1990]. "For most of history, this was the dynamic of sovereignty. Rulers would try to establish the arbitrary nature of their power; their subjects... would try to surround the godlike personages of those rulers with an endless maze of ritual restrictions, so elaborate that the rulers ended up, effectively, imprisoned in their palaces..." (The Dawn of Everything, Page 396). This loop is critical: as your choices get more arbitrary, *id est* more irrational and immoral, your spectrum of possible choices narrows. The more free your will becomes, the less free your life becomes.

The thicker the walls and the taller the towers, the closer it is to a prison, because its fortifications also 'protect' the ruler who lives there from communication with other people, the only form of relationship in which humans can find real peace. There is a parallel insistence in the Scripture that the "having mode" endangers parting from God: "give me neither poverty nor riches. but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say 'Who is the Lord?'" (Proverbs 30:8-9). The palace-dweller is indeed possessed by the unsatisfiable addiction to power that is rightly called demonic, he is condemned to consume and still crave, to possess and still lack: "You will eat but not be satisfied... You will store up but save nothing" (Micah 6:14) — he is never satisfied because he seeks to reduce patches of the environment to his private property and seeks to find rest in ownership instead of in intelligent communication with it — in the form of relationships that constitutes human nature.

It is a cliché yet it ought to be repeated: the Pharaoh acted as a cancer cell that sucked the life out of society because he refused to come to terms with death, to accept his mortality — he feared to die to such an extent that he was willing to do anything so as to escape it. A pagan society inevitably becomes enslaved to the self-deception of its ruler — this is the "triumph of the will" at the heart of the Bronze Age. Having built their pyramids, the rulers took their prisons to the netherworld. Even in their death, they remained unfree. This is how God's sardonic remark that "the man has now become like one of us" (Genesis 3:22) comes to actuality. "We have entered into a covenant with death... we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place..." (Isaiah 28:20). "Death and destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of men" (Proverbs 27:20).

The Scripture is a record of the conversation that is especially kind on bringing this point home: "You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God"..." (Isaiah 14:13). But "All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you" (Isaiah 14:11). "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble...?" (Isaiah 14:16). "The Lord Almighty planned it, to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth" (Isaiah 23:9). "The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass" (Isaiah 40:7).

Conclusion

Once science, law, and cult became subservient to the will, education was reduced to the *empowerment* to impose one's arbitrary choices. But these choices are not really random, these choices were distorted by the passion of short-sighted self-seeking. The education was reduced to the empowerment of evil: "The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net. Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire — they all conspire together" (Micah 7:2-3). Yet the societies that are ruled not by the conversations that do justice to reality but by the unexamined private self-interest of those who happen to be the strongest, not by intelligent argument, but by the arbitrary and coercive will of the powerful, do not last. All the Bronze Age empires had collapsed — for such is the end of organisms that live by conquest and ownership. Graduates of the Bronze Age education "... are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs... they never have enough... they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain" (Isaiah 56:10-11). Even Hezekiah, an otherwise decent king, provides a spectacular exemplar of a self-serving short-sightedness. After the prophet Isaiah tells him that "... your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon", Hezekiah replies that "the word of the Lord you have spoken is good... There will be peace and security in my lifetime" (2 Kings 20:18, Isaiah 39:8). And so it came to be that the most thorough education in the spirit of the Bronze Age, education in blindness and bondage, was visited upon his descendant Zedekiah, the last king of Judaea, who was made to watch his children killed so as to make this scene the last thing he sees before being blinded and taken to the land of exile: Babylonians, "the most ruthless of nations" (Ezekiel 30:11), "killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon" (2 Kings 25:7, also in Jeremiah 39:6-7).

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ВЕЛИКА ІСТОРІЯ ОСВІТИ. ЧАСТИНА ¾. БРОНЗОВИЙ ВІК. “РАБСТВО ВОЛІ”.

Мета цієї статті – дослідити три виміри культури Бронзового Віку: наука, заснована на процедурному знанні навичок (*techne*); закон, заснований на сваволі сильних світу цього (деспотизм); і культ, заснований на поклонінні волі (язичницьке ідолопоклонство). *Гіпотеза* полягає в тому, що петля зворотного зв'язку між такою наукою, законом та культом вчить людей повстанню проти природи та реальності як таких. Процедурне знання і міф як засіб комунікації вчать людей до раболіпства, підпорядкування волі сильних світу цього, і ідолопоклонства, поклоніння силі волі. Оскільки процедурна наука дає можливість примушувати довкілля, перетворити світ, щоб уникнути долі тих, хто перетворений ним, освіту бронзового віку було відокремлено від перетворення. Людей вчили ставати тими, хто має владу нав'язувати свою волю своєму оточенню, ставати майстрами навичок та майстрами людей. Таким чином, їхня воля ширяє в повітрі, повставши проти природного перебігу часу і змін. Оскільки люди бронзового віку понад усе цінують силу нав'язувати волю, їхній закон виправдовує, які культ освячує довільне використання влади – свободу вибору сильного. Суспільство, яке перебуває у владі права правителя вибрати все, що він хоче, - це суспільство, небезпечно відірване від правди - суспільство, в якому порушено зворотний зв'язок між законотворчістю і «новиною» про навколишню реальність. У Бронзовому Віці право і священне втрачають всякий сенс, оскільки вони стають підлеглими волі найсильніших, стають зобов'язаними виправдовувати і освячувати свавілля влади: “Люди використовують свої переваги один перед одним, вони крадуть і брешуть, вони ображають бідняків та безпорадних, обманюють чужих, що для них немає жодних законів” у той час як “пророки не попереджають людей, вони приховують правду” (Єзекііль 22:29, 22:28). *Метод* полягає в прочитанні Біблії як свідчення про падіння людини в рабство – у власницьку форму відносин, властиву Бронзовому Віку.

Ключові слова: **Bildung, розвиток дорослої людини, велика історія, бронзовий вік, осьовий вік, філософія, радикальна ортодоксія, теологія, етапи розвитку.**

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