

THE READING GROUP

WITH THE LONG FORGETTABLE NAME

FOLLOWING YOUR DREAMS ^X

There are people in Brazil known for seeking the Land Without Evil. Chroniclers often remarked upon the ease they left their villages behind and went searching for it.

This has often [frustrated](#) state bureaucracies and colonizing missionaries.

The people are Guaraní, and “Yvy Mara Ey” means Land Without Evil.



Vision quests often were undertaken by youths upon puberty. Elders would determine whether you're spiritually ready, as it's physically and mentally demanding. You may go without food and water for a while; and communicate with spirits through sleeping dreams and waking visions.



Dreams are a window into our unconscious. Showing our relationships with the rest of the world. They're part of memory being processed & sorted into their proper place.

A recurring dream means your unconscious is trying to navigate and set the memory in place. (As opposed to PTSD, which is a memory not fully formed.)

People in the tech industry exploit this with “[hammock time](#),” building bridges between their conscious and unconscious minds.

THE DAVIDS MISREPRESENT ROUSSEAU?

Dawn of Everything's Founding Myth?

You'd be forgiven for reading DoE and only knowing Rousseau from “*Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality Among Mankind*.”

But Rousseau's “*The Social Contract*” may be his more major and influential book, which tries to introduce ideas of democracy.

Ironically, it is also the blueprint of a totalitarian society. For instance, it has the notion of “The General Will”; and once it's established you can't go against it. For example, if you go against the state religion, you're executed.

None of this contradicts DoE's points, but Rousseau's ghost may be a bit put out. No representatives of Rousseau's estate were around to comment.

SLAPPING THE DEAD HAND OF THE PAST

Rousseau

- 1754: "Discourse on the Origin & the Foundation of Inequality" *yadda yadda*
- social org evolutionary stages:
 1. hunter-gatherers, tiny bands
 2. agricultural revolution
 3. "civilization" & "state"
 4. lit/science/philosophy 🙄

but also

patriarchy/standing-armies/mass-executions/bureaucracy 🙄

Hobbes

- 1651: "Leviathan"
- humans: selfish 😬
- base nature: war of all vs all 😡
- progress: thanks to gov't/courts/bureaucracies/police 🇮🇹
- society's basis: hierarchy, domination, cynical self-interest

👻 **Channeling his ghost**

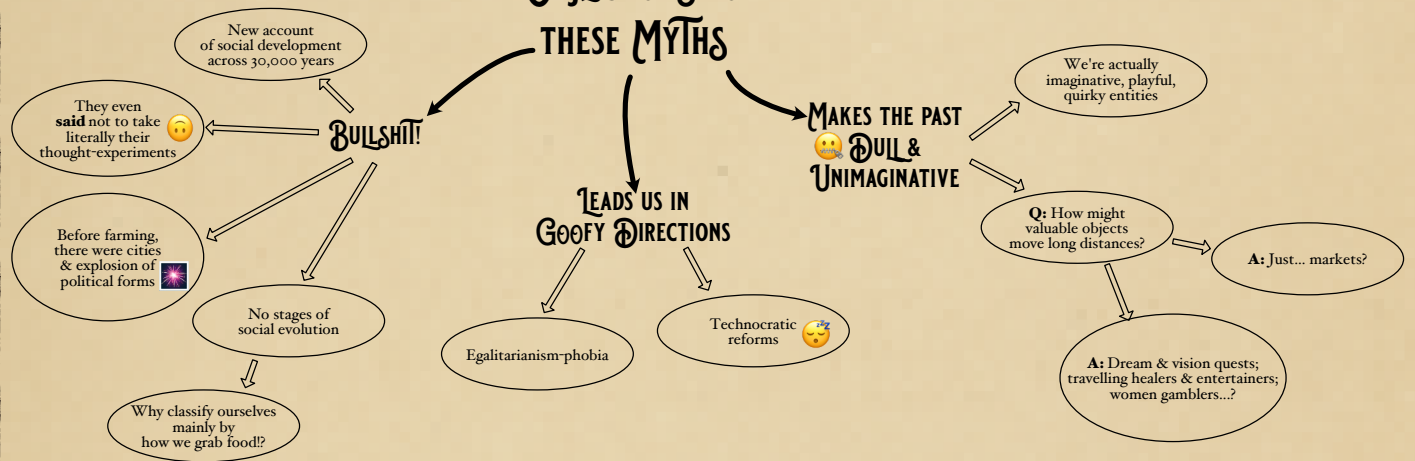
Jared Diamond
Francis Fukuyama



👻 **Channeling his ghost**

Steven Pinker: a psychologist who makes things up & cherry-picks

OBJECTIONS TO THESE MYTHS



A mind-map of DoE's chapter 1



PUZZLES!

Go Find Yourself

Dream & vision quests help people talk with their unconscious mind & spiritual entities. Imagine joining a great group that helps people do this. What sorts of things would your group do?

You Are Not (Only) What You Eat

What's a more useful way to categorize societies, than just by how they obtain food? Please explain.

The Game of Life

Suddenly society begs you to do the most important things you can imagine doing. What would you do?

Mystery of the Travelling Treasures

People move precious objects long distances, for all sorts of quirky reasons!

(Some examples: dreams or vision quests, traveling healers & entertainers, and women's gambling.)

Can you imagine other interesting, quirky reasons people pass them around?

Share Your Answers!

Tell us your answers to any or all of these puzzles! (If you don't want them published, please say so.)

Email:

puzzles@dawnofeverything.industries

PESKY SPECIES OF VIOLENCE

Nassim Nicholas Taleb [analyzed](#) how Steven Pinker hides modern-day violence. Since violence remains a problem to solve, let's consider hidden ways people harm each other.

For now, let's define violence as: when humans or social entities cause physical harm.

Slow violence

Rob Nixon coined "slow violence" to describe unspectacular, incremental violence that moves slowly through time. As journalists say, "If it bleeds, it leads." This lets them bury bloodless, slow-motion violence — especially when reported by witnesses lacking cultural authority.

Structural violence

Social structures—not just individual humans—can cause you predictable, repeatable harm. For example, depriving you of nutrients because you lack some imaginary points (i.e. "money").

Underlying it are direct threats of violence. One of the Davids wrote, *"If you see a hungry woman standing several yards away from a huge pile of food—a daily occurrence for most of us who live in cities—there is a reason you can't just take some and give it to her. A man with a big stick will come and very likely hit you."*

Temporal holes

"Workplaces" often punch temporal holes in people's lives. Outside workplace-time is "free time"; inside a workplace, you're "on the clock" and lack basic freedoms like free speech and free association.

As a result, the timeline of many people's lives resembles Swiss cheese.

Threats of violence

As explained in the movie *The Princess Bride*: *"Once word leaks out that a pirate has gone soft, people begin to disobey you, and then it's nothing but work, work, work all the time."* Threats are a cost-effective way to wield violence.

Personal Reflections

This is a writeup of a reading group we held in December. It's called the "Governance, Conflict Resolution, & Migration Reading Workgroup"—but I imagine we're all hard-pressed to remember this name.

We're inspired by one chapter each month. The first meeting of a chapter provokes ideas for the second meeting, where we focus on things we wish to discuss.

Ruhi helped me explore my dreaming world. She is an interdisciplinary sleep-researcher. Some of us met privately to discuss our sleep problems, and Ruhi advised us with non-obvious solutions to try. For example, one of us regularly woke with nightmares since early childhood. Ruhi advised her to "*capture the dream*":

1. **take deep breaths**
2. **remember the nightmare**
3. **write it down:** give it language & form. (Lest it remain too abstract.) So you understand where the nightmare comes from, thus giving you a plan of action—or attack

Furthermore, don't turn on much light. Lest you activate cortisol—an alerting and stress hormone. Instead, you may walk about in a dim light, if you desire; a chair could be handy in case you wish to read.

Incidentally, neuroscientists identify a "gut brain"—a big collection of neurons around the stomach that's like a second brain. It can even get Alzheimers! Naturally, it'd be **too easy** for it so communicate with "me" via simple conversation. So I like to imagine it red & cranky, getting "my" attention by spamming the rest of me with cravings and brutal imagery. So that I must stop and figure out its objections to a course of action.

Sometimes I think my gut brain is unkind & humorless. But then again, I may be biased: pain causes you to focus on only the pain, while happiness liberates your mind to go everywhere else. So maybe I just don't notice its comic aptitude.

(Naturally, since my mind emerges from things distributed through space, I have little idea "where" any given thought originates. But it's nice to imagine getting spammed by a gut brain near my stomach.)

The unconscious is of great importance to me. After all, the "conscious" mind is only the tip of the mental iceberg. Most of the mind is unconscious—closed to direct introspection. And the human brain may be the most complex thing in the universe. An interesting realm to explore, since it's how the universe observes itself.

Rob is very knowledgeable about Rousseau, and prodded us to be more cautious about TDoE's representation of him. There's different ways to understand Rousseau: historically, politically, or through his mythic influence on social imagination. And different ways to understand what influenced his writings: social & psychological.

Every 2-dimensional world map distorts geography differently. And so TDoE necessarily distorts Rousseau in its way. Thus, we can observe political scientists objecting to some chapter, in a way anthropologists generally don't.

In the next meeting, Rob delved deeper into Rousseau.

Your verbose scribe,
Tj

Members of our reading group

(well, those who permitted me to record their names):

- Alex Prichard
- Clare Jeffery
- Gabriela de Athayde
- Jim DeArruda
- Matt Schultz
- Rob Latchford
- Ruhi Snyder
- Sofie Roehrig
- Tayssir John Gabbour

For more info about this reading group, email either:

- Sofie <sofieroehrig@gmail.com>
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Would you like to learn more about The Dawn of Everything—and even join our community of investigators & interveners? Visit:

<https://dawnofeverything.industries/>

This is where we met, and where you're liable to find supportive, like-minded people.

