



DISCOVER SDIS
san diego independent scholars

SCHOLARS NOTEBOOK

September 2018

Next Meeting: Sept. 15 at 1:30pm

The Roman Republic in Stone

The past is vital to individuals and groups. Memory is fundamental to our sense of self. Its loss through accident or disease is devastating. In the case of groups, common experiences and ways of doing things generate cohesiveness and solidarity. They often mark the boundary between insiders and those who stand outside the group. States, forming one of the largest of human groups, have a vital need to develop a sense of self. They often look back to the past whether it is real or mythical to find legitimacy. Rome was no different.

At the beginning of the fifth century BC Rome became an aristocratic republic that through war and conquest encompassed most of the Mediterranean and had expanded north of the Alps as well.

At the heart of the elite's domination was a system of elected offices. The leading men competed for office and in the process created the norms and customs that governed Roman life.

Normally, we study the elite through written texts, but they also created a physical legacy. Their actions also created an ethical system in the absence of an alternative source of morality.

In the end the Republic fell of its own weight. It was replaced by a disguised monarchy, clothed in Republican forms. The memory of the Republic lived on, in part as a political program and in part as an exercise in nostalgia. The talk will focus on the creation in stone of a legacy in the period of the living Republic from its beginning until its death at the end of the first century BC.



About Our Speaker Michael Sage

Michael Sage received a BA and an MA from the University of Michigan. He then obtained a PhD from the University of Toronto. He taught at the University of Waterloo in Canada before taking a position at the University of Cincinnati in the classics department, where he taught for thirty-five years.

Escaping the ice and snow, age moved to San Diego in 2010-- then taught at UCSD part-time in the history department. He has published in Greek and Roman history, authoring five books, the latest of which, on the army of the Roman Republic will be available in the U.S. in June.

Sage has also written a number of articles in journals and encyclopedias. He has been a member of SDIS for three years. Last year he was awarded a Helen Hawkins Grant to do research on his next book. *The Roman Republic as Memory*.

Monthly meetings of SDIS are free and open to the public. A question/discussion period follows the talk. The Chancellor's Complex, on the UCSD Campus, is a low building opposite the Price Center Center at the end of Myers Drive, which runs north from Gilman Drive.

Colloquy Café

There will not be a September meeting. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 17 at 1:30 to discuss "poetry."

Our July discussion was about "civility." Our August topic was "end of life" issues. We talked about how an expected death can be handled by the patient's family, with

Some saying the patient should make the decisions and others taking the opposite position. Most of us have varied reactions to death and how it's to be handled, and it would be interesting to hear what other members think.

Mary Ellen Stratthaus

Culture One

We are reading Harari's final pages of *Homo Deus*: Chapter 11. "The Data Religion". The first section of "Dataism" covers groundbreaking technologies, organisms as algorithms and methods for processing data. Economy and politics are construed as data-processing systems that compete as centralized (autocratic) or distributed (democratic) processing methods.

Our present assignment begins with the section "History in a Nutshell" in which the entire human species is treated as a single data-processing system that evolved over time. As such, its output may produce a more efficient data-processing system, called the "Internet-of-All-Things". The supreme value of this new system is 'information flow'. Our bodies, cars in the street, refrigerators, chickens, trees; all will be connected to the Internet-of-All-Things.

Stop by to skim "Information Wants to Be Free" and take in its warning that we mustn't let any part of the universe be disconnected from the great web of life or block the data flow. "What is death, if not a condition in which information doesn't flow?":

The next section, "Record, Upload, Share!" mentions the other costs of data flow: loss of privacy, autonomy, and individuality along with ceaseless collaboration. "The individual is becoming a tiny chip inside a giant system that nobody really understands". As the global data-processing system becomes all-knowing, all-powerful, such that connecting to the system becomes the source of all meaning....

"And value lies not in having experiences, but in turning these experiences into free-flowing data".

Perusing through section "Know Thyself", Harari suggests that dataism is neither liberal nor humanist, though not anti-humanist. It is also noted that "Sapiens evolved in African savannah tens of thousands of years ago, and their algorithms are just not built to handle twenty-first-century data flows...".

Finally, a critique, "A Ripple in the Data Flow", grabs the floor with questions of merit but little success. Accordingly, we have no idea how or why data flows could produce consciousness and subjective experiences. But, maybe we'll discover that organisms aren't algorithms after all. Also, doubtful that life boils down to mere decision-making.

Instead of narrowing our horizons by forecasting a single definitive scenario, the book aims to broaden our horizons and make us aware of a much wider spectrum of options. The book ends by considering three interlinked processes and the three following questions: 1) Are organisms really just algorithms and life just data processing?; 2) What's more valuable - intelligence or consciousness?; 3) What will happen to society, politics, daily life when non-conscious but highly intelligent algorithms know us better than we know ourselves? Try to answer these questions and address other quandaries and insights to take home from *Homo Deus*.

For further information, contact Sue R. Rosner, e-mail, rosnersue@gmail.com.

General Relativity

Over the last several months, a small group of SDIS members have been meeting once a month at John Alexander's home to learn some General Relativity. To date SDIS participants have included Alvin Halpern, Jim Alexander, and Don Bamber. In addition, a guest (a physicist friend of John's) has participated. The group is by nature limited to those with a substantial math background and with a solid grounding in classical physics at the undergraduate level.

The book we are using is: Gravity by James Hartle (Addison Wesley). This is a book that works its way toward Einstein's Equations from the bottom up. Whatever can be deduced with limited mathematical structure is done first. Hartle develops the math as needed as he marches along. This approach had appeal because it is easier to see the physical phenomenon explained in simple and intuitive terms, without the weight of the whole formalism obscuring the same. It has negative aspects, because you have to be careful that earlier assumptions indeed hold in the broader formalism, and

there is an inevitable amount of hand waving – albeit it can all be ultimately demonstrated via the fuller formalism.

We are presently studying Chapter 9 (Schwarzschild Geometry). This Chapter presupposes the solution of Einstein's equations for a spherical mass distribution, and then derives observable things from the geometry. The following chapter then looks in detail at the observational verifications of the predictions deduced from this special, but very useful, solution to Einstein's equations.

While we are already deep into the book, anyone who has the needed background and is interested, is welcome to join. Our next meeting is on Tues., Oct. 30, in John Alexander's Home – so there is plenty of time for someone interested to play catch-up. (The first few chapters are a review of special relativity.). If you are interested, or want more information, please contact me at: alvin.halpern@gmail.com, or call at: 619 756 6006.
Alvin Halpern

Film

We will meet Wednesday, September 5th at 10 am to watch *Gore Vidal: The United States of Amnesia*. Vidal (1925-2012) was essayist, novelist, playwright and political critic. In interviews shortly before his death, Vidal made dramatic predictions about the fate of America.

Our last film was the 2016 documentary, *When Two Worlds Collide*, about the demonstrations and fighting between native activists and the Peruvian government over oil drilling in the Amazon. The activists were determined to prevent the destruction of the rain forest. Dozens of deaths occurred, and although a permissive drilling law was rescinded, oil drilling continues today in spite of over \$1 billion of damage over decades to the environment.

Barbara Heckler

Neuroscience

The Neuroscience Study Group continued to focus and base discussions on three sources: 1) Michio Kaku, *The Future of the Mind*; 2) Sy Montgomery, *The Soul of an Octopus*; and Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds, the Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness*. Starting in late spring, we were concerned with “dreams as omens of the future,” Einstein’s brain, mind control, and cuttlefish able to change color at will. Continuing our quest

for the origin of consciousness, we moved on to study artificial intelligence and robots, utilizing current newspaper articles and scientific publications. Sy Montgomery’s emotional attachment was evident as she communicated with, worried about, and eventually lost her dear friends among the octopuses. At our September meeting, we will be studying Kaku’s chapter on “Reverse Engineering the Brain.”
Bea Rose

Just Lunch

Save the date: We’ll meet Friday, October 12 at noon at Kaiserhof in Ocean Beach. This German restaurant has remained popular year after year and October is the perfect time to visit. You can read their menu at [Kaiserhof Lunch Menu](#). You’ll receive an email about two weeks ahead of October 12 so you can make a reservation.
Barbara Heckler

Supper With Scholars

We are meeting on the first Thursday of each month, at 6 pm. Thus, we will meet next on Thursday, September 6. If you plan to attend, please RSVP, stating whether you are coming alone or bringing friend(s).

We meet at Humphreys La Jolla Restaurant, 3299 Holiday Court. Meals from the menu (www.humphreyslajolla.com) are Dutch Treat. Group discussion is based on suggested topics that have particularly interested the attendees in the last month. If possible, we select a question that can be addressed from the viewpoints of various diverse areas of expertise.
Dave Parker

GWEN ALEXANDER, SDIS PRESIDENT 1994-1997

Only recently did SDIS become aware of the death earlier this year of a former president. Gwen Alexander, who led our organization for three years, was influential in securing UCSD library privileges for members and had earlier served as program chairman. She succumbed in March to an exceptionally long illness, and we regret her absence.
Gerry Horwitz

UPDATED SDIS MEMBER PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

In 2012 I surveyed our membership about their books, papers and presentations. The results were published in the April 2012 issue of Scholar's Notebook, and a subheading was added to our website (Publications) that listed only books published. I'd like to update that information by inviting members to email me with information about presentations to scholarly groups, books and papers from 2012 to 2018.

DON BAMBER: 2 presentations, 2 papers

Bamber D (April, 2016) Two interpretations of Bayesian statistical analyses. Unpublished talk given at the 54th meeting of the Edwards Bayesian Research Conference, Fullerton, California.

Bamber D (August, 2016) Bayes without beliefs: Mimetic interpretations of Bayesian statistics in science. Unpublished talk given at the 49th meeting of the Society for Mathematical Psychology, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Bamber D (submitted for publication) Safeguarding against bad luck when attempting to discredit a state-trace model.

Bamber D, Goodman IR, Nguyen HT (2016) High-probability logic and inheritance. In JW Houpt & LM Blaha (Eds.), *Mathematical Models of Perception and Cognition: A Festschrift for James T. Townsend*. New York: Psychology Press. Vol. 1, pp. 13{36.

WAYNE FANEPUST: 2 books

Chasing Frank and Jesse James: The Bungled Northfield Bank Robbery and the Long Manhunt (2018)

Outlaw Dakota: The Murderous Times and Criminal Trials of Frontier Judge Peter C. Shannon (2016)

PAUL NUNEZ: 1 article and 1 book

Nunez PL, Can science crack consciousness? *The Scientist*, Nov 1, 2016. <http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/47282/title/Can-Science-Crack-Consciousness/>

The New Science of Consciousness: Exploring the Complexity of Brain, Mind, and Self (2016)

TOM SAMARAS: 3 articles

Samaras TT.(2018) Hidden benefits of shorter, smaller bodies. *Journal of Scientific Research & Reports*. 19(2):1-7, 2018: Article no.JSRR.40878

Samaras TT. (2018) Harmful ramifications of secular growth. *Cardiological Disorders and Medicine*. Doi: 10.15761/CDM.1000161

Samaras TT. (2018) What's good about being shorter. *SOJ Psychology*. 5(1):1-4 <https://symbiosisonlinepublishing.com/psychology/psychology46.pdf>

MICHAEL SAGE: 1 book

The Army of the Roman Republic: From the Regal Period to the Army of Julius Caesar (2016)

SDIS CALENDAR

Colloquy Café

No September Meeting
Next Meeting
October 17, 2018
1:30 pm
At the Vi
Contact: M.E. Stratthaus
strattme@san.rr.com

Culture One

April 22, 2018
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
At the Vi - Signature Room
Contact: Sue Rosner
rosnersue@gmail.com

Film Group

September 5, 2018
10 am
At Barbara's home
Contact: Barbara Heckler
bheckler@san.rr.com

General Relativity

October 30, 2018
10 am
At John Alexander's home
Contact: Alvin Halpern
alvin.halpern@gmail.com

Neuroscience Group

September 18, 2018
2:00 pm
At Bea's home at the Vi
Contact: Bea Rose
beabe@me.com

Just Lunch

October 12, 2018
12 noon
Kaiserhof
Sunset Cliffs Blvd, Ocean Beach
Contact: Barbara Heckler
bheckler@san.rr.com

Supper with Scholars

September 6, 2018
6 pm
Humphreys
In the Sheraton La Jolla
Contact: Dave Parker
parkerd1954@gmail.com

General Meetings

September 15, 2018
October 20, 2018
November 17, 2018 at Vi
January 19, 2019
February 16, 2019
March 16, 2019
April 20, 2019
May 18, 2019

President
Barbara Heckler
Send information for
SDIS Notebook to bheckler@san.rr.com