

Study Guide:

Questions to assist in comprehension and to stimulate thought.

Last updated 2/19/18

Week 1 Readings

Sebastian Junger, *Tribe*

My purpose in assigning this book is to provide a well-written, and insightful diagnosis of what ails us in contemporary American Society. The goal of the course is to trace out a genealogy that traces how we arrived where we are.

- Who are his heroes? Villains?
- What does Junger think about modernity?
- What does he see as the key problem?
- Does he offer a solution?
- Is tribal unity desirable? What are the pros and cons?
- What is his interpretive frame (his sense-making narrative)?
- Is there a room for the sacred in Junger's narrative?
- What does Junger think about war and violence? Does he have a clear moral position on them?

Introduction

- Why did Junger decide to hitchhike across the country? Can you relate?
- Can you relate the lunch box story to the rest of the book?

“The Men and the Dogs”

- Why the title?
- Why did so many white men join the Indians?
- Why do you think Western life was so unappealing then? Do you think that much has changed?
- Why is there less suicide in tribal societies?
- Why are lawyers so unhappy?
- What are the intrinsic values that he contrasts with extrinsic values?
- Does capitalism make anybody happy?
- Why is there an inverse relationship between community and the need for authority?
- Is group pressure the only thing that motivates moral behavior?
- Why does he bring in Thomas Paine at the end?

“Calling Home from Mars”

- Point of the Viking Helmet story? What was the fight really about?
- Pros and cons of modernity?
- Do you agree with his scorn for the No Blood for Oil bumper sticker?
- What does littering say about the perpetrator? How does it relate to fraud?
- What does Junger think is the mainstream American equivalent of Skinwalkers?

- What does Junger think is the cause of rampage shootings?
- Why do American veterans suffer from higher rates of long-term PTSD than other societies?
- Junger expressed contempt for the contempt expressed in our political sphere. Why does he see it as such a problem?
- What do Bowe Bergdahl, Joseph Cassano, and Robert Rubin share as villains in his story?
- Why is Martin Bauman a hero by contrast?

“Postscript”

- Connection with the Introduction?

Charles Taylor, “What Is a Social Imaginary?”

- What’s the difference between an imaginary and a theory?
- How does the map metaphor help in understanding the difference between imaginary and theory?
- How do theories become part of the social imaginary?
- Do all theories achieve that?
- Is Einstein’s relativity theory part of the American social and cosmic imaginary. Bohr’s uncertainty principle? Do they play any role in shaping our sense of the real?
- Why does ‘practice’ constitute an essential aspect of what shapes an imaginary?
- What is the relationship between changes in the imaginary and practice?
- How do changing practices change the imaginary?
- What does he mean by “background”?
- Does an imaginary have revolutionary possibilities?
- Why did the American Revolution take hold in a way that the French Revolution was not able to do?

Is *Whale Rider* a Comedy?

- What are the three basic phases of comedy?
- Can you plot out the *Whale Rider* story using them?
- What is the goal toward which the comedy builds?
- When does this happen in *Whale Rider*?
- What are typical dramatic techniques for establishing the twilight or fog that envelopes the characters in the early part of story?
- There are two main types of Comedy. What are they? Which is *Whale Rider*?
- What does ‘above the line’ and ‘below the line’ mean?
- Why is there often a “descent” into a “shadowy other world”? Can you relate this to our discussion of background and foreground with regard to social imaginaries?
- How is below the line symbolized in *Whale Rider*?

Day 1 Lecture

- What do I mean by “The Age of Whatever”? Pros & cons?
- Why is it important for us to make the attempt to learn what the ancestors understood?
- What are symptoms of hypertrophied brains and hypotrophied souls? Is this a problem, or is this just what we are for better or worse?
- What does Heidegger mean when he says we’ve “forgotten Being”?
- What does the Greek word ‘*aletheia*’ mean? Does that jibe with your natural sense about what’s true and what isn’t?
- What does his phrase “language is the house of Being” suggest to you?
- What is Jean-Francois Lyotard’s point about narratives and legitimacy?
- What does the phrase ‘epistemically privileged’ mean?
- What is the relationship between Logos and Mythos?
- What do I mean when I say whoever tells the best story wins?
- Why did the stories that worked for ancestors stop working for us? Does the Enlightenment story work better than the Judeo-Christian story?
- What’s the distinction between enchanted and disenchanted

Day 2 Lecture

- Is science cause or effect? Can you answer this question with reference to the explanation Taylor gives in the handout “What Is a Social Imaginary?”
- What the distinction between sacred and profane?
- What is the essential characteristic that distinguishes modern societies from premodern societies?
- What are the three variable that give us a picture of reality?
- What do I mean when I describe the social imaginary as the foreground the provides the interface between the individual and the under-the-line, mostly invisible background?
- Why are important artists, saints, and thinkers agents of *aletheia*?
- What do I mean by ontological dizziness?
- Why do different aspects of the real show up for scientists, artists, and buddhas?
- Is it necessary that they be operating in a way that disconnected from one another?

Week Two Readings

Taylor, “Buffered and Porous Selves”

- What does Taylor mean by ‘enchanted’ and disenchanted? What is the origin of the word?
- What does he mean by ‘subtraction story’?
- Do you think the world can be re-enchanted? Would that be unambiguously a good thing? Should it be avoided altogether?
- Why do you think there is a longing for it, or a sense of the loss of it? Can you think of some examples of attempts to do it?
- What you think he means when he says that Latin Christendom has privileged belief instead of unthinking practice? How does this translate to a secular ethics of belief?

- Moderns have a clear boundary between what is in the mind and what is in the world. How is it different for premoderns?
- What are the advantages of having a porous self if any? What are the advantages of having a buffered self, if any? The disadvantages for both?

Taylor, “The Great Disembedding”

- Why do you think that buffered selves are more disciplined and reform minded?
- What are the three characteristics of a group or person who is ‘embedded’?
- What does Taylor mean when he says, “we all acquire [language] from the language-groups we grow up in, and can only transcend what we are given by leaning on it.”
- Do you think our capacity for experience is expanded or limited by the quality of our language?
- How does an individual’s identity differ in a embedded vs. disembedded society?
- What does Taylor understand by ordinary human flourishing?
- Are the gods always well disposed toward humans? What are the other attitudes?
- How did early religions manages the “gods economy”?
- What is the Axial Age?
- What is the significance of the Jewish idea of creation *ex nihilo*?
- In pre-Axial religions the divine can be ambiguously ‘good’. Is this true of the post Axial transcendent divine?
- How does this affect the idea of the human good?
- What is the difference in the pre- and post-axial ideas about evil?
- How does post-Axial religion cause a change in the way the individual sees him or herself embedded in society and the natural world?
- Is there a tension between the new monastic communities and the societies they leave? How is it resolved?
- Do you think modern secular society has completely lost any sense of a transcendent grounding for its idea of the good?
- What, in Taylor’s opinion, corrupted the Christian Church?

Barrett, Chapter One: The Advent of Existentialism

- Does Barrett think that philosophy has fared well in the academy? What are some of the problems with being a ‘professional philosopher’?
- How does it contrast with the role philosophers played in ancient Greece?
- Why was existentialism considered such a breath for fresh air in the post WWII era?
- What are some of the central themes developed by the post-war existentialists?
- What was at the core of their concern?
- What doe existentialists think about ‘systems’?
- What does he mean by Positivist Man?
- Why is there a tension between Positivist Man and Existentialist Man?

Barrett, Chapter Two: The Encounter with Nothingness

- What role has religion played in the life of most societies? Does it play that role now? Why or Why not?
- Why is a Dante no longer possible?
- Was the medieval period mostly a celebration of the irrational?
- What meaning difference does Reason have for modern elites when compared to medieval elites.
- Was Protestantism a secularizing cultural force? Did it emphasize the rational or the irrational?
- What role did nature play in Protestant thinking?
- What relationship does Protestantism have to science and capitalism?
- How does the relationship between the human being and the cosmos change for Protestants?
- What would you call such a human being without faith?
- What does 'alienation' mean for the existentialists? What are some of the causes of modern alienation?
- Why is August 1914 a historical benchmark, especially for European thought?
- Why does it take disaster for human beings to learn something?
- What changes occurred in math and science that undermined Enlightenment rationalist optimism?
- What does WB mean when he says that the labor of modern culture where it has been authentic, has been a labor of denudation?

Lecture Day 3: The Great Disembedding 1

- What does it mean to say that the social imaginary is a social construct of the Real and not the Real itself? Where is the Real if it's not the social imaginary?
- Can the social imaginary and the Real get out of alignment? Have you ever personally had an experience of something like that?
- What happens when a large society gets out of alignment? Can you give me an example of a society that could be described that way?
- How does this relate to the phrase "ontological dizziness"?
- What is 'naïve consciousness'? Can you give examples. Can you relate this to experiences in your own life or the life of people you know?
- What was the Socratic project? Was his goal simply to debunk?
- What are the Platonic transcendentals. Why are they called transcendentals? Do you think they exist as separate realities, or are they 'intrapsychic projections'? Or is there some other possibility to explain them?
- What is the Enlightenment project. How does it relate to the Socratic project?
- What is what Taylor calls the "The Great Disembedding?" When did it begin? Has it ended?
- Do you think that the shift to alphabetic literacy may have been a contributing factor? (This is a big topic and might work as a final project for some students.)
- Do you think there was a connection between the invention of moveable type printing press in the 1450s and the Renaissance and the Reformation? Why or why not?
- Can you give me some examples of embedded societies? What kind of people live in them—porous or buffered selves?

- What are the three dimensions of embeddedness in premodern societies?
- Can you relate Taylor's ideas about embeddedness to Junger's ideas about tribe?
- What are the pros and cons of living in an embedded society? In living in a disembedded society?
- What does 'going native' mean? Can you give me some examples of it?

Lecture Day 4: The Great Disembedding 2

- What is the immanent frame. What are the concerns of people who live exclusively within the immanent frame? How does it define the Good?
- What is the transcendent. Can you give me some examples of philosophies or religions that point to transcendence as the central focus of their practices and beliefs?
- How did the 'axial turn' disrupt the immanent frame?
- What are the two central axial traditions that have shaped Western societies and cultures? Did they get along? Why did they split up?
- How did they define the relationship between the immanent and the transcendent?
- Why did the axial religions look at pre-axial religions as superstitious?
- How did the post axial religions define human flourishing or the human 'good' differently than pre-axial societies did?
- How did religious or spiritual practices change?
- Why do you think that axial religions tend to be other worldly and austere?
- What is hierarchical complementarity as Taylor talks about it in Buddhist and Christian societies?
- What happened to the dyadic structure of hierarchical complementarity in the Christian west at the time of the Reformation?
- What were the pros and cons of this move?
- How Christianized were the ordinary people in European societies until around the 1200s?
- Why did the Protestant reformers ban festivals, colorful liturgical practices, the use of images in churches, etc.?
- What were the pros and cons of this?
- Can you see how this contributed to increased secularity and to an increase in buffering?
- Can you see how it cleared the way for doing science and for the development of capitalism? (It's ok if you don't yet. But that's a theme that will be developed in coming weeks.)
- Do you think that this kind of disembedding is a net positive whatever the cost might have been for it?

Lecture 5: Matrix Discussion

- How do the themes developed in the Matrix relate to our discussion of social imaginaries, transcendence and immanence, embedded and disembedded. In what way is the matrix simulation a cultural-linguistic download?
- What does the film say about the nature of the Real? Reference Morpheus's conversation with Neo in the red/blue pill scene, scene where Cypher is making his deal with Agent Smith, and the scene where Mouse is talking about Tasty Wheat?
- How does the film develop the idea of freedom and fate? Bring in a discussion of the Oracle?

Week 3 Readings

Roman de la Rose Excerpts

- What does the author want us to believe about dreams?
- To whom is the ‘romance’ dedicated?
- How is the natural world described? What is nature’s mood?
- What do you think of his descriptions of the images of Hate, Cruelty, Covetousness? Why do you think they are painted on the outside of the wall?
- Who owns the garden?
- Is the mood inside the garden different from the world outside of it? Role of birds?
- Who are the beings that the narrator first encounters? (Watch out for similar characters in *The Tempest*.)
- Who is Pleasure paired with? Who the God of Love?
- Ambivalence about the God of Love. Is he a predator? Why two sets of arrows?
- Can you recount the story of Narcissus? Why was the narrator afraid to look into the spring? Was he right to be afraid? Was he foolish to look into it?
- How many levels of reality are we exposed to in this story?
- What do you think the two crystals that the narrator sees in the spring symbolize?
- What does the rosebud symbolize?
- What does the God of Love demand of the narrator? Does he give it willingly or unwillingly (Look for this theme in *The Tempest* as well)
- Why is there such an emphasis on pain?
- I didn’t ask you to read the God of Love’s commandments starting on p. 32, but scan them to get a feel for them. To whom are these commandments directed?
- Can you all relate to the frustrations described in the lines starting at 2313 on p. 36?
- What is he saying about reality and delusion? (Relate this to what happens in Act 4 in *The Tempest*.)
- Who are Shame’s parents?
- What was the narrator’s mistake?
- How is Reason described? What is her attitude toward love?

Barrett, Chapter 5: Christian Sources

If themes developed in this chapter are too difficult, don’t worry about it until I lecture on it. What I have to say in class about existence and essence, I hope, will be clearer and more relevant. I have a different understanding about what ‘essence’ means for people like Aquinas and Ficino, even if this understanding was forgotten by subsequent generations of philosophers.

- Why does Christianity have a fraught relationship with Reason?
- What does Barrett say is the connection between Tertullian and Kierkegaard?
- The Greeks ask, Who is man?; Augustine ask, “ ? “

- Why was the synthesis between faith and reason effected by Aquinas so fragile, according to Barrett?
- Which comes first, do you think: knowledge or will? How does this relate to brain and heart metaphors?
- Distinction between essence and existence is important. Are they different, or are they two different ways of looking at the same thing? What did Plato think? What did Aquinas think? What did Sartre think? What do you think?
- Why does Barrett think of Pascal closer to the existentialists than to the Enlightenment rationalists? What is the role of 'habit' in Pascal's thought? How does this relate to our discussion of the social imaginary?
- What's the difference for Pascal between *l'esprit de geometrie* and *l'esprit de finesse*?

Lecture 6: The Medieval Imaginary

- Are you familiar with the broad differences between right brain and left brain functions?
- Do you see the connection between discussion of porous and buffered and right and left brain functions? Between how one favors mythos and the other ideology?
- Do you think it provides a model for balance and imbalance?
- Do you think postmodern societies are moving more toward a right-brain emphasis? If so, what are the pros and cons?
- Do you see how you can use it as a tool for understanding character types in Shakespeare and other literature?
- What are the two kinds of enchantment?
- Is the modern imaginary hospitable or hostile to either form of enchantment?
- Which one still has more of a presence in modern and contemporary societies? Where do you find traces of it?
- Do you think the great religious figures of the past were delusional if not schizophrenic? Why or Why not?
- Do you see them as agents of disembedding or embedding? Why?

Lecture 7: Romance of the Rose and Tempest

- What do I mean by the phrase 'genealogy of disenchantment'?
- What is the origin of the Courtly Love Tradition? Who were its main contributors?
- What was the purpose of the stories told in the medieval romances?
- In what way is the *Romance of the Rose* an allegory? In what ways can we relate this to modern depth psychology?
- Is there a unifying center for all the allegorical personae?
- What do the two crystals in the Spring of Narcissus represent?
- What do Eros's five arrows symbolize?
- In the Tempest, what were Prospero's three primary goals?
- Do you think that Prospero's taking vengeance on Antonio and Alonso was still a possibility before the scene where Ariel talks about the tears on Gonzalo's beard?

- What does Caliban represent? Do you think he's educable? Do you think he was treated justly by Prospero? What does Caliban's linguistic virtuosity say about him? What is the significance of his standing up straight when Prospero gives him his broken staff?
- Why do you think Prospero gave up his magic? I wrote my thoughts about it on the course website, but what do you think?

Lecture 8: Medieval Cosmology

- Do you understand the correlation between my typology regarding Serpents and Doves and Left and Right brain functions? Does that make sense to you, or does it seem too simplistic?
- Do you understand why I think that evil or destructive behaviors result from too much of one or the other? Why can being too idealistic be a problem? What limitations do people who are overly shrewd have? Can you relate these characteristics to characters in the movies that we've been viewing?
- What does Paul Ricoeur's phrase "second naiveté" mean?
- What does the Yiddish word '*mensch*' mean? What spin have I given the word in class?
- How do you think that great prophetic or religious figures would be accepted today if they presented themselves to contemporary society the way that they presented themselves to their premodern societies? Do you think that figures like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Pope Francis have some of that prophetic charisma? Why or why not?
- Why does the wilderness play such an important role in religious texts and in the lives of many important religious figures?
- What is the difference between the attitudes of premodern elites and modern elites to the enchantment of eternity?
- What aspect of the enchantment of eternity still lingers in the modern imaginary?
- Before Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy*, he wrote *La Vita Nuova*. What is the significance of that title? What does it refer to?
- What is the significance of the cult of the Virgin in medieval society? Where did it "show up"?
- Why do you think the radical Protestant Reformers rejected the cult of the Virgin? What are the pros and cons?
- Do you think that the courtly love tradition had a positive or negative effect on medieval society? What were pros and cons?
- What was the role that Beatrice played in Dante's life? How did it influence what he chose to write about? Do you think this was kind of crazy? If so, crazy good or crazy bad?
- What does Eros mean in the courtly love traditions? To what extent do you think this was influenced, especially later during the Renaissance the discovery of Platonic dialogues like the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*?
- Why was medieval society more 'personal' than contemporary modern society?
- What is the original meaning of the word 'revolt'? How does this relate to the idea of society as a living, organic "form"? Bring Machiavelli into your answer of this question.
- Does justice for premoderns mean fairness? Why or why not?

Lecture 9: Cosmic and Moral Imaginaries

- Why do you think a society's moral imaginary depends on its cosmic imaginary?
- How were the two interrelated in Medieval and Renaissance era societies.
- What are the sources of the Great Chain of Being in the Latin West?
- What is the basic concept of Plotinian Emanationism?
- How does this provide a framework for premodern understandings of Good and Evil?
- What does this mean for human beings and how they frame for themselves the moral or ethical project?
- How does this imaginary play a role in shaping the character arc of protagonists in Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies?
- What is Aristotle's idea of the entelechy? How does this relate to his idea of final causation or teleology?
- How does this in turn influence what it means to be a moral or virtuous human being?
- How does this idea of morality contrast with the two major contemporary ethical systems? (We'll develop this idea later in the course, but you should at least have a general idea now.)
- Do you think there is a difference between being moral and moralistic? On what grounds can you make such a distinction?
- What was the goal for a healthy morality in the premodern Latin West? Without such a goal is it possible for humans to be anything but moralistic? Why or why not?
- Can you relate to the idea of spiritual love being symbolized by figures of the Divine Feminine as Beatrice was for Dante or as Jesus was for Catholic nuns who see themselves as *Sponsa Christi*, the spouses of Christ? Again—use your empathic imagination.
- How does the word 'dissolute' as a description of moral character relate to the premodern moral imaginary?
- In what way was the Renaissance a seed moment? What were the two different branches that grew out of that seed?
- Those two branches become increasingly estranged from one another. Why at this point in your thinking do you think that happened? Was it necessary?
- Do you think it's accurate to describe one of those branches as having pushed the other to the sidelines?

Lecture 10: Much Ado Discussion

Appearance and Reality

- How does the 15/16th-century social imaginary shape perceptions of reality?
- Are some of the characters able to transcend that?
- What enables them to do so?

Naiveté and Shrewdness

- Do you agree with my characterizations in the handout? (some are debatable)
- Which characters are the fools? Which are not? Is it ok to be a fool?
- If characters are unbalanced, what does it take to get them more balanced?

Vengeance, Repentance, Forgiveness

- Was Benedick right to challenge Claudio at Beatrice's behest?
- Were Leonato and Hero too easy in forgiving Claudio (and Don Pedro)?
- Is there a difference between Don Pedro's forgiveness of Don John at beginning of play and Hero/Leonato's forgiveness of Claudio at end?

Lecture 11: Florentine Neoplatonism

- What happened historically that made Plato all the rage in Renaissance Florence?
- What did Ficino do that was similar to what Aquinas did?
- Are you able to explain how Neoplatonic Emanationism works to inseminate the ideas in the Divine mind in the sense world?
- In what way does the Great Chain of Being shape the moral imaginary of this period?
- How is evil understood? What does corruption mean in this social/moral imaginary?
- How is goodness understood? What does it mean to be truly good? Is it the same as just following a moral code?
- For someone like Ficino, is the Platonic form/idea an abstraction? Explain.
- What is the original meaning of the word revolt?
- For the Renaissance Neoplatonists, what make something beautiful or ugly?
- Why is it possible for something to appear good or beautiful and not be?
- Why does this understanding of the essence in things lead the Renaissance artists to pay more attention to the sense?
- Why do people like Leonardo seem themselves as divine or as aspiring to divinity? How is that possible in the Renaissance moral imaginary in a way that it's not in our contemporary secular imaginary?
- Is art holding up a mirror to nature? Explain.
- Can anybody see the true essence of a thing? What does it take to see truly?
- Does it make sense to you that it's not possible to truly know something unless you love it? What about knowing evil things? Should evil things be loved?
- Can external beauty cover up internal corruption? Explain with some examples.
- Do you think that beauty is in the eye of the beholder? Do you think that the Renaissance Neoplatonists thought that? Why or why not?

Lecture 12: Renaissance Synthesis

- What do I mean when I say that for some of the Renaissance artists, the way down was the way up?
- What does it take to see the divine essences?
- What do Renaissance art, magic, and natural philosophy (science) all have in common?
- Why do art and science go their separate ways in the post-Renaissance period?
- What is the key to Renaissance epistemology that distinguishes it from modern epistemologies?
- Why did the Renaissance artist think that they could perfect what was in nature?

- What is the source of artistic genius? How does this relate to our ideas of buffered and porous selves?
- If evil is privation of the Good, what does that mean ugliness is?
- Why did the Renaissance devotees of the Religion of Love believe they were intoxicated in the presence of the beloved?
- What is the Renaissance understanding of Eros?
- Do you think there's a way you can be confident about what you know in matters where there's no scientific proof?

Lecture 13: Love's Labor Lost Discussion

Act 1: What is the issue/question to be resolved: Oath taking scene

- What do you think the fundamental question the play wants to resolve?
- What is the king's position? What is Berowne's?
- Why the asceticism?
- What is the significance of the oaths and of the use of words in general in this play

Act 2: Preliminary maneuvers: Women are barred from entering the court

- Who or what do the women represent?
- Have they been successfully repelled?

Act 3: Anti-life forces make some gains: Confusion about the letters with Costard; Berowne's speech about Rosaline's pitch-ball eyes and one that will do the deed.

- Is Berowne intoxicated by Rosaline or by his own verbal grandiosity?
- Why is he so frustrated with himself? What's he fighting?
- What does Berowne's speech say about his attitude toward women in general and to Rosaline in particular?
- Do you think this is the real truth about Berowne—that he is a narcissist incapable of sincerity?

Act 4: Life forces push back: Library scene

- Does Berowne have a change of heart?
- Why does he hypocritically mock the others for breaking their oaths?
- Difference in tone of speech at beginning and end of this act? Why?

Act 5: Resolution?: The Song and Dance scenes

- What's significance of the masked dance scene?
- What's the purpose of all the women's mocking?
- What effect does it have on the men?
- Do you sense at a certain point that the men move to another level of sincerity? What does it take to get them there?
- What effect does the "death shock" have on everyone?
- What's the significance of the penances for Ferdinand and Berowne?
- What's the meaning of the play's title?

Lecture 14: Disembedding the Forms

- What's the purpose of the women's mocking in LLL?
- Why the penances at the end?
- Can you think of some examples of healthy forms of asceticism?
- What does 'theosis' mean?
- Why does Shakespeare focus on 'constancy' so much in LLL and Much Ado?
- What is the significance of the doctrine of the eyes in LLL and how does it relate to other themes developed about the Religion of Love?
- What is the effect of the death shock in LLL and in Much Ado. What effect does Alonzo's thinking that his son Ferdinand has drowned in the shipwreck have on him?
- Do you see a connection from the experience of artistic inspiration and the intoxication people feel when they fall in love?
- What is the artist's role with regard to his society's social imaginary? How does this relate to the development of a living tradition? Can you relate this to the story told in *Whale Rider*?
- Can you see how Pai is to Koro as Cordelia is to Lear?
- What's the difference between a Realist and a Nominalist as they were understood in the late medieval period?
- How did the Renaissance humanists think of the human being? How did it change after the Reformation?
- Why did the idea of 'theosis' fall out of the imaginary in societies shaped by the radical Reformation?
- How does growing hegemony of Nominalist thinking help lay the foundation for the development of Western Science?
- What was the theological reason that supported Nominalism and undermined the Realism of Aquinas and Ficino?
- How does Nominalism work to support disenchantment?

Lecture 15: From Sacred Mater to Profane Matter

- What's the difference between a Realist and a Nominalist?
- Why did the growing hegemony of Nominalist ideas on the educated elite play a role in setting up the scientific revolution?
- How does the idea of knowledge change from that promoted by someone like Ficino and those who were Nominalists?
- How does Descartes' philosophy contribute to buffering and increasingly disengaged, i.e., disembedded thinking?
- Why do the Reformation thinkers dovetail and support Nominalism and Voluntarism of the scholastics?
- What happens to the Renaissance ideals of ascent to divine goodness and beauty?
- What happens to the Divine Feminine?

- What happens to theosis?
- Why do you think this new way of thinking is appealing at this moment in European history?
- What does *fides quaerens intellectum* mean? Can you relate it to our discussion of artistic truth?
- What were the implications for the divorce of Athens and Jerusalem in the post-Reformation period?
- How is secularization a natural development of the post-axial spiritual project?
- What are the social political implications of the deconstruction of the Great Chain of Being for the elite social imaginary?
- How is the idea of moral order changed by this shift in imagination?
- How does this post-axial change in the imaginary influence the experience of the sacred in Protestant societies?
- What role does the Bible play for many Protestants at this time and continuing into the future? How does this relate to our discussion of mythos and ideology?
- What is fideism?
- Why do spiritual concerns become decreasingly important in the public spheres of politics and the economy?
- What impact does this disconnect have on material welfare of Europe?

Taylor reading on the Mechanization of the World picture: TK

Lecture 16: King Lear Discussion

- What is the play's central issue or question?
- Are there any thematic parallels with *Love's Labor's Lost*?
- What blinds Lear?
- Is there a connection between Cordelia and the Fool?
- Why does Lear suffer the fool, but not Cordelia?
- What is the role of the heath and the storm in this story?
- What are the principal moments of *anagnorisis*?
- What is Gloucester's reaction when Regan tells him that Edmund betrayed him?
- What is Edgar's character arc?
- What does Edgar's saying "Ripeness is all mean"?
- What does Edgar mean when he says "He [Lear] childed as I fathered."
- Who are the extreme doves and who the extreme serpents?
- Is any character balanced?
- Does anybody move toward greater balance?
- Why is the use of negatives so prominent in this play? What is the issue that the play seeks to address? Do you know what the issues are for the three previous Shakespeare plays we watched? Think about it as an answer to this question: Shakespeare wrote this play to resolve what problem or to ask and answer what question?
- Are there any patterns in this drama that echo what is dramatically represented in *Love's Labor's Lost*?

- Daughters and father figures: similarities and differences—Koro and Pai, Prospero and Miranda, Leonato and Hero, Lear and Cordelia.
- Is this a nihilistic statement by Shakespeare?
- Is this a tragedy? Why or why not?
- Are there similarities between the death of Lear and the death of Gloucester (See Edgar's speech in Act 5.3 that begins at line 3340.)
- In the last moment before Lear dies, what does Lear see? Why do you think Shakespeare put that in there?
- What is the endpoint of Lear's character arc? Is he better or worse than when the play began?
- In what way worse? In what way better?
- Who sees clearly? Who speaks truthfully? Do people who see clearly always speak truthfully?
- Name all the key moments of '*anagnorisis*'. What provoked them? What effect did they have on those who experienced them?
- How do emotions/passions shape perceptions? Relate especially to Lear, Edgar, Edmund, Cordelia.
- Who are the doves? Who the serpents? Is there anyone who is balanced? Does anybody move to a greater level of balance?
- The fool and Cordelia never appear on stage at the same time. Is there a reason for that?
- Some critics have called Edgar the second most important character in the play after Lear. Why do you agree or disagree?

Lecture 17: Wars of Religion

- In what way do Cordelia in Lear and the women in LLL play similar roles in relationship to the men they love?
- In what way is Cordelia the same as her sisters? In what way different?
- In what way does understanding Shakespeare as a man of his times help us to understand what he was trying to do in the plays that we have studied in this class?
- What is the significance of the Peace of Augsburg, the Edict of Nantes, and the Treaty of Westphalia?
- After the Protestant Catholic problems died down in England after the failure of the Spanish Armada in 1588, was this the end of religious turmoil in England?
- What were some of the more significant drivers of the English Civil War in the 1640s?
- Did the American colonists have an interest in who won the English Civil War? How did they feel about the Restoration of the Stuart Dynasty in 1660?
- Is there a difference in the social imaginaries of the New England colonists, the Tidewater colonists, the South Carolina colonists, and the backcountry colonists that settled in Appalachia.
- What Christian denomination has shaped the American social imaginary more than any other?
- Why were the Radical Reformers able to imagine making changes to their respective societies that were largely unimaginable before the Reformation?

- What does Taylor argue are the two ways in which the Radical Reformers had the largest impact on European society?
- Do you agree with my point about how the social experiment in Geneva paved the way for what happened in Paris in the 1790s—as well as elsewhere?
- What do I mean when I say that the new model for politics as well as morality was the engineer who replaced the gardener?
- Where was the exclusive locus of the sacred for the Reformers?
- How did this contribute to a rapid increase in disenchantment?
- Were the Radical Reformers completely buffered?
- Why did elites in Calvinist societies start to liberalize? What effect did this have on the process of secularization?

Lecture 18: Enlightenment Reaction

- What is instrumental reason?
- What's the main difference between the “normative order” of Nature for Aquinas and the order that shapes the European social imaginary starting in the late 1500s?
- What consequences does this have for reforming society?
- What are the consequences for ethics or moral philosophy?
- Why do you think that some thinkers see this as setting the stage for the development of the police state?
- What does this shift do to change the way humans think about their freedom?
- What is the root meaning of Liberalism as it began to emerge as an ideology in the 17th century? What group did this ideology benefit most? Who were its chief theorists?
- What effects did this new ideology have on the way elites came to see tradition and the influence of the past?
- Why was Liberalism so powerful during in overcoming traditionalist entrenched interests during this period?
- What effect did this new thinking increasingly have on religion and public morality?
- What effect did this in turn increasingly have on the values shaping politics, particularly in Anglo American societies?
- If Liberalism was an ideology of optimism and progress based on the idea that science and rationality would solve all human problems, what event all but destroyed this optimism in Europe? What event all but destroyed it in the U.S.?
- Do you think that this form of classical Liberalism is still influential in shaping the American social imaginary? Which parts of American society are most influenced by its persistence? Which are least influenced by it?
- What were the two most significant wars of religion that tore Europe apart in the 17th century. When did each end?
- How did this influence thinkers who wanted to avoid confessional (religious) conflict in the future?
- Why did civil authorities feel compelled to bring a new level of discipline—law and order—to the entire society, especially to the lower classes? What effect did these reforms have on traditional customs and practices?

- How did these reforms promote higher levels of secularism and disembedding?
- Why was Justus Lipsius the man for his time?
- In the new idea of natural law, what is the central concern that all rational beings care about and which they expect the state to preserve? How is this different from natural law as the medievals saw it?
- How does this idea of natural law combined with the Protestant sanctification of ordinary life help to shape a social imaginary that is very amenable to the rapid development of capitalism in this period?
- Why is the basic premise of social contract theory, especially as theorized by Hobbes, historically wrong?
- Why did the transcendental ideals as guides for human and political conduct lose their legitimacy in the public sphere?

Lecture 19: Enlightenment Loose Ends and *The Big Lebowski*

- Generally speaking, what is the difference in emphasis that distinguishes Anglo American thought from Continental thought in the modern period?
- With this distinction in mind, why was the American revolution so different from the French Revolution? Why could Edmund Burke be for the American Revolution but horrified by the French Revolution?
- Why is it easier during the modern period for the emerging bourgeoisie to talk about tearing down the old social hierarchies?
- What's the difference between Theism and Deism?
- What are the chief characteristics of Deism?
- Why does Deism an idea of God that works well in a disenchanted society?
- What does 'deus absconditus' mean?
- Why is revelation no longer needed for people who are Deists?
- Did everybody among the educated elite love the new rationalist social imaginary that emerged during the Enlightenment period?
- We'll be talking more about this in Week 8, but why is it significant that the English Romantics got their inspiration from the German Idealist philosophy and the German Romantic literary figures?
- What are the implications for the American social imaginary in the 20th century of the victory of utilitarianism over romanticism?
- How does this shape the conflict between the student protesters and the corporate and governmental bureaucracies they opposed starting in the early 1960s?
- How do you think that this conflict plays a role in shaping the historical context for *The Big Lebowski*?

The Big Lebowski Discussion Questions:

The Movie:

- What is the movie's central issue to be resolved (if any)?
- What does the movie say about the American post-Vietnam social imaginary?
- Why do you think that the First Iraq War was used as a backdrop for this movie?
- Which character is the driving force in the movie?

- What is this movie saying about American white males and masculinity in general in the Post-Vietnam era?
- Do the Big Lebowski and Quintana (Jesus) have anything in common?
- What other role does Quintana play, especially in Walter's imagination?
- Do Donnie, Smokey, Allan (landlord dancer) have anything in common?
- What about Larry Sellers (the kid who stole the car) and his dad, Arthur Digby Sellers, who was in the iron lung?
- What's the Stranger (cowboy) all about? Why the tumbleweed symbol and song?
- Are the Coen brothers sincerely or ironically telling us what they think about the Dude in the voice of the Stranger? What do you think they think about the Dude?
- The Dude has become a cult figure compared to Jesus or Buddha. Do you see him this way? Why or why not?
- The movie focuses on only three women—Maude, Bunny, and the Nihilist woman. Do these women tell us anything about women and femininity in the Post-Vietnam era?
- Do you think the German nihilists play an allegorical role in the movie?

Philosophy:

- Does Taylor's "The Malaise of Modernity" shed any light on what's happening in this movie? Do you think the Coen brothers would be sympathetic to the theme that Taylor is developing regarding the Ethics of Authenticity?
- Do you see any connections between what you've been reading in Barrett and Berlin and what the Coens are doing in this movie?
- **Mythos/Metaphysics:** Does the Dude have one? What about Walter and Maude? The Nihilists?
- **Ethics:** How do the mythos/metaphysics of these characters play or not play a role in shaping the characters' ethical choices? What governs the Dude's moral choices? What governs Walters? What governs Maude's? The Nihilists?
- **Epistemology:** Identify all the misinterpretations and misjudgments made by the characters in the movie? Does any character make good judgments?
- **Aesthetics and the Role of Art:** Anything stand out? Does it help us to understand what's going on?

Berlin, The Roots of Romanticism

Chapter 1: In Search of a Definition

- Why is it hard to define Romanticism?
- Why does he think it's possible to do?
- What makes it different from other similar expressions, say in the Renaissance or the ancient world?
- What does Romanticism do that establishes a fundamental break with what came before it?
- What is it that Romantics seem to hate most about the Enlightenment that preceded it?
- What does IB describe as the central animating principle of Romanticism? Why is it different for instance from the passionate Protestant or Catholic of the 1600s?

Chapter 2: First Attack on the Enlightenment

- What are the three assumptions about questions and answers that were assumed in the Western tradition until Romanticism?
- If the world is like a jigsaw puzzle for the Enlightenment thinkers, what is it for the Romantics?

Chapter 3: The True Fathers of Romanticism

- In what way was the Enlightenment's idea of the artist's task similar to the task as understood during the Renaissance, and how did that change during Romanticism?
- What made the German thinkers different from the French thinkers that they despised? How is J.G. Hamann exemplary in this respect?
- Rousseau is often thought of as a predecessor of Romanticism, but what assumptions did he share with the Enlightenment philosophes?
- How did the ideas about history and culture change with the German Romantics?
- What was the Romantic idea about peace and conflict?
- What was the Romantic idea about law and conventions? Is it a virtue to be a man or woman of good sense?
- What is the significance of Herder's ideas about expressionism. Can you relate that to the Taylor "Malaise" talks?
- How does the importance of the Volk shape Herder's idea of expressionism?
- Why is 'Belonging' important for Herder? What implications does this have for the development of nationalism in the future?

Chapter 4: The Restrained Romantics

- What is the significance of freedom and individuality for Kant's moral philosophy and how does this influence the thinkers like Schelling and Fichte who follow him?
- What is the worst evil that one human can do to another for Kant?
- What kind of free act creates value for Kant?
- Why does Kant think generosity and pity are a vice?
- Why is it important for Kant to think of humans as transcending nature?
- Why does Kant support the French Revolution even after the terror and its failure?
- How does Schiller's idea about freedom and Nature develop from Kant's?
- How does Schiller's idea of morality critique Kant's and what does he offer as an alternative?
- What is the 'superfluous man' for Schilling?
- In what way is Schiller's philosophy foreshadowing Nietzsche's idea of the superman and the Last Man?
- What are Schiller's three stages of human development?
- Can you explain *Spieltrieb* is the key to Schiller's moral philosophy and how this differs from Kant's moral philosophy?
- What would a Schillerian utopia look like?
- How does the Romantic idea of the ideal differ from the Greek and Renaissance ideal?
- What is the key element that Fichte adds to this progression and give it an even more dynamic character?
- How does Fichte's thought contribute to what becomes toxic nationalism?

Chapter 5: Unbridled Romanticism

- What role does ‘resistance’ play in Fichte’s philosophy?
- How does one become aware of oneself in Fichte’s philosophy, and what in turn does this mean for how one must behave in the world?
- What is Schelling’s ‘mystical vitalism’? How does his idea of Nature depart from that of Kant and Fichte?
- Can you relate Schelling’s philosophy of art to the way I’ve been talking about it this quarter?
- How does idea of inspiration change, and what does this owe to Kant’s ideas about interiorization?
- What is an ‘expressive symbol’? How does it relate to our discussion of mythos this quarter?
- Why is so much Romantic stuff nostalgic?
- If Romantics are about continuous movement, do they see any arrival point that functions as a telos or goal?
- Why is there such fear and anxiety—if not paranoia—that seems to pervade Romantic thinking? How does this set up someone like Kafka and the existentialist ideas of the absurd in the 20th century?
- What relationship did Goethe have to the Romantics? What were the key differences?
- Why was Schlegel’s stuff so shocking?

Chapter 6: Lasting Effects

- What was the relationship of Romantic thought to science? Why?
- What for the Romantics was the only way to obtain insight into the Real?
- What did Herder think about Greek myth and the role of myth in his own time?
- Why did Romantics reject laissez-faire economics?
- If Romantics could be either progressive or reactionary in their politics, what was it that they shared as common ground?
- How did ideas about music change during this period?
- How did Byron contribute to Romantic thought?
- Can you see how Romanticism sets up the themes that were developed later by the Existentialists?
- What attitude did the Romantics have toward instrumental reason and practical solutions?
- What matters more for Romantics—consequences or motive?
- Why would the idea of essence be repugnant to the Romantics?
- How does the Fichtean idea of the will set up Schopenhauer, then Nietzsche, then Nazism?

Barrett, Chapter 6: “The Flight from Laputa

- In what way did Swift predict the Romantics? What does Laputa symbolize?
- Blake was a critic of industrialism, but more than that the kind of mind that produced it. How would you describe the character of that mind?
- Do you see a connection between Wordsworth and Heidegger?

- Can you relate Barrett's discussion of Coleridge's "Ode" to our discussion of the buffered self?
- Do you see a connection between Goethe's Faust and Nietzsche's '*uebermensch*'?
- What is the source of Romantic melancholy and nostalgia?
- How does poetry become a religion substitute for Baudelaire?
- Do you see a connection between Rimbaud and Fichte?
- Why did the Russian intellectuals feel both superior and inferior to the intellectuals in the West?
- Is there a similarity between the 19th century Russians and the late 18th century German intellectuals? Why did they too feel so alienated?
- Was Dostoyevski's grasp of nihilism nihilistic?
- What does truth mean for Tolstoy, and how do the characters Pierre in War and Peace and Levin in Anna Karenina represent the realization of that truth?
- Can you relate the theme developed in the Death of Ivan Illich as Barrett talks about it to the theme of the idea of the 'death shock' in Shakespeare as we discussed it?
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Barrett, Chapter 7: Kierkegaard

- Whether or not you are interested in Christianity, what does K tell you about what it means for him to be a Christian?
- In what ways does K. follow from the Romantics? What does K. owe to Hamann and Herder?
- Why would making things hard again fit with what Fichte called for? What did he think of Socrates?
- What did he think of Hegel? Why did he think that Hegel was a threat to Christianity despite Hegel's profession he was Christian?
- What are the three stages of development for K? Can you explain how they work?
- Importance of choice and its connection to Kant and Rousseau?
- What is K's attitude toward conventional morality?
- What role do rules play for K in making ethical choices?
- What's the difference between K's teleological suspension of the ethical and Nietzsche's will to power beyond good and evil?
- Which is more important the individual or the universal?
- What's the difference between knowing the truth and appropriating it?
- For K the religious person is the one who has found his or her center. Does that require belief in God?

Taylor, The Malaise of Modernity

Lecture 1: Contra the View from Dover Beach

- What does CT say are the three worries that are at the heart of the modern malaise?
- What is the conservative critique of people like Allan Bloom and Christopher Lasch regarding contemporary forms of individualism?
- What does CT think is right and wrong about these critiques?
- What does CT mean by the 'view from Dover Beach'? Why does he think it's wrong?
- Why are attacks against the self-fulfillment idea so hard defend?
- What role has social science played in reinforcing facile relativism?
- Why is it so hard to discuss in a public way what makes the good life? And why does this make defending the virtues of individualism against conservative attack more difficult?
- How does CT propose to defend the attacks against the self-fulfillment ideal against conservative attacks?
- What are the three assumptions that he makes that justifies such a defence?

Lecture 2: The Ethic of Authenticity

- What is the contribution of Rousseau to this ethic?
- What is Herder's contribution?
- Why do conservatives have a problem with this ethic?
- What is required to have a productive moral argument?
- What constitutes significance in a moral argument?
- What does CT mean that there are thing that we don't decide, that are already given? Can you relate that to our discussion of the social imaginary?
- Do you agree with CT that it's possible to have transcultural moral arguments?
- Can you see a connection between what CT is saying about the foundations of any moral argument and what I've been calling 'mythos'?
- Do you agree with CT that any moral position is open to criticism?
- What's the difference between self-determining choice and authenticity?
- Why does the first without the second lead to problems?

Lecture 3 TK

Lecture 4 TK

Lecture 5 TK