

PROLOGUE

Network Cosmologies & Emanationist Traps

The history books tell us that, sometime between the English Civil War and the French Revolution, the tradition of the Royal court jester fell out of favor. Exactly when is unclear, but the Facebook post from whoever runs the account of Berkeley Castle (the site of many intrigues and conspiracies of British Royal History) tells the story of an unlucky character that they claim won the mantle, there at the dawn of Modernity, as the last jester. “The last court jester in England was Dicky Pearce [sic] he was the Earl of Suffolk’s fool, born in 1665 he eventually entered the service of the Berkeley family here at Berkeley castle... In 1728 during a performance he overbalanced from the minstrels gallery in the Great Hall and fell to his death.” The entry ends with a hint of mystery: “The question has been raised - did he fall or was he pushed he had apparently made fun of one of Lord Berkeley’s guests who had taken offence, the truth will never be known.”

On January 3rd, 2009, the genesis block of bitcoin was mined. In the context of a banking crisis that laid bare the self-serving collusion and callous extraction behind the Western financial systems’ facade of credible neutrality, bitcoin asked the question: could we construct [belief network effects](#) without hierarchies? Could we erase the parlors of collusion, the administrative bloating, the white supremacy and the war games and use programming code and mathematical laws to construct a noncoercive, networked legitimacy - a scalable thermodynamic argument of credibility?

There remains the question of what forces and actions caused this crisis (who killed the jester?). Its unwinding will probably take decades, if there are still such things¹. We’re network philosophers, not economists or anthropologists - or economic apologists, for that matter - so please allow us the liberty of an abstract provocation over a direct answer: The bankers, the regulators, the politicians all fucked up, got too greedy and showed their (weird, cosmologically perverse) cards. Their arguments of [legitimacy by process, performance, credible neutrality](#), etc, were crowded over by the archaic, magical belief system that cradles them, a millennia-old doctrine of mystical supremacy that uses symbol and psyche to give incidental power the claim of Divine Right. It’s even possible that this temporary unveiling was deliberate, a taunting message to the crowds meant to say: What are you gonna do? There is no other way.

1 For a good start, you might try Colin Drumm’s dissertation [The Difference that Money Makes: Sovereignty, Indecision and the Politics of Liquidity](#).