Supra Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

01 Theism
02 Metaphysism
03 Scientism
04 Sankofism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell
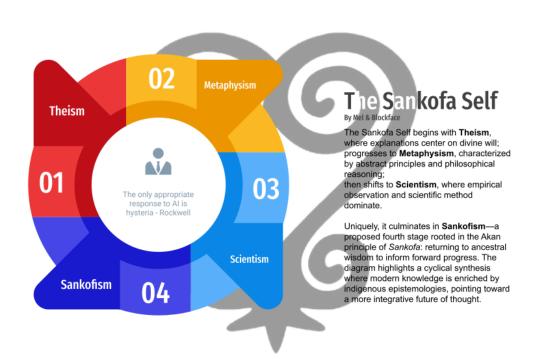
Nietzsche: God is Dead.

Jung: Right on schedule.

—

Foreword: The Self Under Siege by Roderick

Social relations have disappeared between humans because humans have begun to disappear.

The human beings consumed each other rapidly in what they call, 'The Act Of Love' or else settle down to a mild form of conjugality; we seldom find a mean between these extremes.
- Camus

In the view of Baudrillard, society has reached a point at which it has literally been overcome by its technology. The new issues aren't about things like the non-believer or the non-offender but about the non-person.

In fact, Baudrillard thinks that reality itself is in the process of disappearing.

For Baudrillard, the post-modern reaches full potential when we stop unplugging the computers and the computers start unplugging us.

The postmodern is a blurring of the lines between human beings and machines, a blurring of the line between reality and image. For Baudrillard, the apocalypse has already occurred. It wasn't religious or anything, it was not atomic bombs. At some point in the development of Technology human beings ceased to be the reason for things and the things took on a reasoning of their own.

Baudrillard's definition of the real itself is that which can be simulated, xeroxed, and copied. So whether you're talking about a human body where you can make a holograph of it or you're talking about the Bible which you can Xerox or whether you're talking about the sexual act which can be simulated either through repetitive pornographic films. In a very near future it will be able to be uh simulated with virtual reality where you'll wear a full body suit and make love to your ego ideal thus making it pointless to uh to search out all the Freudian implications you can just pick your ego ideal, punch it into the laser beam program, slip into the virtual reality suit; thus rendering that relation even that intimate relation relation sexual relation technological simulatable reproducible to Infinity.

I talked about how children used to learn morality from their parents and now I think that Super Mario Brothers they spend much more time with Super Mario Brothers and are much more like emotionally involved with Nintendo than they are with their aunts their uncles their mothers and their fathers I asked one of my children why are you yelling at a machine when he began to play his Nintendo and he looked at me as though I were a being from another world and because of that there is a post-modern trajectory. I am from another world. I'm still as it were caught in the modern he's not.

So if it sounds superficial – good – because in theory, the world he occupies is superficial.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Labyrinth of Self

We stand at a peculiar juncture in human history, a threshold where the very definition of 'self' feels both intensely personal and bewilderingly complex.

For millennia, humanity has grappled with the fundamental question:

Who am I?
[De Gyal Dem Sugah - Beenie Man]

The answers have echoed through caves adorned with ancient art, resonated in the chants of temple rituals, been debated in philosophical academies, codified in religious doctrines, dissected in psychological laboratories, and now, are being mirrored, modeled, and monetized in the digital ether. This book, *Becoming Supra*, embarks on a journey through this labyrinth, tracing the evolution of our self-concept from its earliest glimmers to its potential future in an age increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and pervasive technology.

Now you might be thinking to yourself…
…wait – didn't Yuval Harari already cover this in Sapiens?

The answer is no. Yuval did not cover what we're about to discuss in Sapiens through the lenses we're about to use. In fact, Yuval fell down the same path most leetcode failures do: they forget about the jurisprudence of data structures when optimizing for time and memory constraints. After an exhaustive review of Sapiens, we decided to publish this book.

Our exploration is guided by several key frameworks, notably, Auguste Comte's Law of Three Stages. We lean on Auguste Comte's Law of Three Stages, which posits that human understanding progresses through theological, metaphysical, and positive (or scientific) phases. Interwoven with Comte's stages is the lens provided by Jared Diamond's seminal work, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Diamond compellingly argues that geographical and environmental factors, rather than innate superiority, dictated the fates of human societies – why some developed agriculture, complex societies, and technologies (the 'guns' and 'steel') faster than others, and how the 'germs' resulting from animal domestication played a crucial role in conquest. We extend this concept, adding 'Silicon' to the triad.

Just as geography shaped the possibilities for developing guns, germs, and steel, the rise of silicon-based technology – semiconductors, computers, the internet, AI – represents a new environmental force profoundly reshaping our societies and, critically, our sense of self. This 'Silicon Age,' or Fourth Industrial Revolution, accelerates the Positive stage's tendency to measure and model, creating algorithmic reflections of ourselves that challenge traditional notions of identity and agency.

Part 1: The Theological Stage - The Self Bound by Spirit

—

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

Theism
01
02 Metaphysism
03
Sankofism 04
Scientism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

Nature, Man & Woman (Alan Watts)

A floor of many-colored pebbles lies beneath clear water, with fish at first noticed only by their shadows, hanging motionless or flashing through the liquid, ever-changing net of sunlight. We

can watch it for hours, taken clear out of time and our own urgent history, by a scene which has been going on just like this for perhaps two million years. At times, it catches us right below the heart with an ache of nostalgia and delight compounded, when it seems that this is, after all, the world of sane, enduring reality from which we are somehow in exile.

But the feeling does not last because we know better. We know that the fish swim in constant fear of their lives, that they hang motionless so as not to be seen, and dart into motion because they are just nerves, startled into a jump by the tiniest ghost of an alarm. We know that the "love of nature" is a sentimental fascination with surfaces—that the gulls do not float in the sky for delight but in watchful hunger for fish, that the golden bees do not dream in the lilies but call as routinely for honey as collection agents for rent, and that the squirrels romping, as it seems, freely and joyously through the branches, are just frustrated little balls of appetite and fear. We know that the peaceful rationality, the relaxed culture, and the easy normality of civilized human life are a crust of habit repressing emotions too violent or poignant for most of us to stand—the first resting place which life has found in its arduous climb.

The Whispering World - The Shamanic Self of Genghis Khan

Imagine waking not to the sterile silence of insulated walls, but beneath a canopy of rustling leaves, the air thick with the scent of damp earth and woodsmoke. This imagery, used to introduce the Shamanic Self, resonates powerfully with the nomadic, pastoral life of the early Mongol tribes from which Genghis Khan (Temüjin) emerged. Their existence was intimately tied

to the rhythms and forces of the vast Central Asian steppe – the wind, the sky, the rivers, the animals, the very earth beneath their feet.

In this Theological Stage, specifically its earliest phase often termed Fetishism or animism, the world was not a collection of inert objects but a community of subjects. For the early Mongols, like the description in the source, stones possessed warmth and offered protection, ashes retained the life of the fire, and actions had to be performed with respect lest unseen forces be angered. Their identity was rooted in sensation, feeling, and collective experience, a direct, unmediated participation in the flow of existence. This mirrors the core principle of the Shamanic Self: "I Feel Therefore I Am". Identity here was experienced not primarily through thought, but through feeling, sensation, and an intimate, porous connection with a world perceived as vibrantly alive.

Temüjin was born into a world where survival was dictated by the harsh realities of geography and environment – a key insight from the perspective of Guns, Germs, and Steel, which the sources explicitly link to this early stage. The availability of game, the location of water sources, the shelter offered by the landscape – these weren't passive resources but active participants in the drama of life. The tools crafted from bone, wood, and later metal – the earliest forms of 'steel' – were not mere implements but extensions of intention, imbued with the spirit required for a successful hunt or task. For the early Mongols, their felt reality was one where the natural world was alive with spirits and forces.

Their traditional belief system, often described as animistic and shamanistic, saw spirits inhabiting the sky, mountains, rivers, and animals. This aligns directly with the source's description of Animism – the belief that spirits or consciousness inhabit not just humans, but animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather patterns, and even crafted objects. There was no clear boundary between the self and the world; everything was interconnected in a dynamic web of relationships. The wind wasn't just moving air; it was a presence that could touch and change you. This was a "World Alive".

Consider Temüjin's early life, marked by hardship, betrayal, and constant struggle among warring tribes. His reliance wasn't solely on human cunning, but also on seeking favor or understanding the will of unseen forces. Shamans (known as büü or udgan among the Mongols) were central figures, seen as mediators between the human and spirit worlds, capable of communicating with the divine and interpreting signs. They embodied the communion with the unseen, which the source highlights as defining selfhood through relationship to the spiritual realm. Their experiences reinforced the collective understanding that the self was porous, influenced by forces beyond the immediate physical senses.

Chapter 1: The Whispering World - The Shamanic Self (Fetishism)

I Feel Therefore I Am

Imagine waking not to the sterile silence of insulated walls, but beneath a canopy of rustling leaves, the air thick with the scent of damp earth and woodsmoke.

Morning: I awake under the canopy of trees. The stone beside my bed is still warm—it protected me. I bow my head and whisper my thanks. The fire has gone out, but the ashes still hum with life. I stir them carefully. If I rush, I'll anger them.

This is not mere poetry; it reflects a fundamental reality. In this Theological Stage, specifically its earliest phase often termed Fetishism or animism, the world was not a collection of inert objects but a community of subjects. Stones possess warmth and offer protection, ashes retain the life of the fire, and actions must be performed with respect lest unseen forces be angered. Identity here was rooted in sensation, feeling, and collective experience, a direct, unmediated participation in the flow of existence.

Long before the careful constructions of philosophy, before the concept of an individual soul accountable to a singular deity, before the digital mirrors that now reflect fragmented versions of ourselves, existed a different kind of self – a self experienced not primarily through thought, but through feeling, sensation, and an intimate, porous connection with a world perceived as vibrantly alive. This was the domain of the Shamanic Self, the earliest form of human identity we can discern, emerging from the deep past of the Paleolithic era. It reflects a pre-modern awareness where identity was inseparable from nature, spirit, and the collective story whispered around flickering fires under vast, star-filled skies.

The World Alive: Animism and Early Consciousness

Day: The river spirit is silent today. She usually bubbles when pleased. I offer a carved feather at her edge. As I fish, I speak to the spear, asking its spirit to see my need. Perhaps the wood remembers the tree it came from, the stone point remembers the mountain; their combined spirit holds the potential for success. If the fish escape, it is because I disrespected something – perhaps I approached the river too loudly, or failed to offer thanks for the previous day's catch.

Night: I whisper to the wind before sleep. Spirits pass through the forest at night. I ask the bark of the tree to hold me safe. The moon watches. She always watches.

The core of the Shamanic Self lies in animism – the belief that spirits or consciousness inhabit not just humans, but animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather patterns, and even crafted objects. There was no clear boundary between the self and the world; everything was interconnected in a dynamic web of relationships. The wind wasn't just moving air; it was a presence that could touch and change you. The rock held in the hand possessed its own nature, perhaps even its

own desire. This worldview arose naturally from the lived experience of early humans, deeply dependent on the rhythms and whims of their environment – a key insight from the perspective of Guns, Germs, and Steel. Geography dictated survival. The availability of game, the location of water sources, the shelter offered by caves or rock formations – these weren't passive resources but active participants in the drama of life. The tools crafted from stone, bone, and wood – the earliest forms of 'steel' – were not mere implements but extensions of intention, imbued with the spirit required for a successful hunt or task.

Consider the breathtaking cave paintings found at sites like Lascaux and Chauvet in France, dating back tens of thousands of years. These magnificent depictions of animals – bison, horses, deer, lions – are more than just records; they are likely expressions of this animistic worldview, attempts to connect with, understand, influence, or honor the spirits of the powerful creatures upon whom survival depended. The act of painting itself, deep within the earth's womb, may have been a ritual, a way of participating in the sacred power of the animal world.

This wasn't superstition in the modern sense, but a practical and spiritual engagement with a world perceived as sentient. Disrespect wasn't just bad manners; it could have tangible consequences. Appeasing spirits wasn't abstract worship; it was maintaining balance within the living web.

The Great Clod's Belch by Zuangzi

The Great Clod belches out breath and its name is wind. So long as it doesn't come forth nothing happens. But when it does, the then thousand hollows begin crying wildly.

Can't you hear them, long drawn out? In the mountain forests that lash and sway, there are huge trees a hundred spans around with hollows and openings like noses, like mouths, like ears, like jugs, like cups, like mortars, like rifts, like ruts. They roar like waves, whistle like arrows, screech, gasp, cry, wail, moan, and howl, those in the lead calling out yeee!, those behind calling out yuuu! In a gentle breeze they answer faintly, but in a full gale the chorus is gigantic.

And when the fierce wind has passed on, then all the hollows are empty again. Have you never seen the tossing and trembling that goes on?

The Mongol Spiritual Belief System and the Shamanic Self

The core spiritual belief system of the early Mongols provides a powerful illustration of the Shamanic Self as described in the sources:

- Animism and Nature Spirits: The Mongols revered the "Eternal Blue Sky" (Tengri) as a supreme force, but also countless local spirits of the earth, mountains, rivers, and ancestors. This isn't a singular, transcendent God of monotheism, nor a structured pantheon of polytheism (though Tengri is sometimes seen as a step towards a supreme deity), but a world teeming with diverse, powerful presences requiring respect and negotiation. The source notes that in this stage, disrespect wasn't just bad manners; it could have tangible consequences. Appeasing spirits wasn't abstract worship; it was maintaining balance within the living web.
- Relational Identity: In this interconnected world, the concept of a bounded, individual self, separate from the group and the environment, had little purchase. Identity was not individual but relational, embedded in nature, myth, and ritual. Survival depended absolutely on group cohesion, like hunter-gatherer bands. This resonates with the source citing Ibn Khaldun's asabiyyah, or group identity, as crucial. The self was experienced as collective and sacred, inseparable from the land, the shared stories, and the spirits. There was "One Self: Identity as Participation, Not Possession". The self was not something one had, but something one participated in.
- Communion with the Unseen ("Our Self"): Mongol selfhood was defined by relationship to the unseen – the spirits of ancestors, Tengri, and the forces encountered in dreams. Identity included these spiritual influences; they were not external beliefs but integral components of who one was. The source notes that in this stage, "To be a self meant to be in communion with more-than-human realities". For Temüjin and his followers, signs from Tengri, dreams, and the wisdom of shamans were crucial for decision-making and understanding events. His rise to power was often framed within this spiritual context, interpreted through divine favor.

This description fits the early Mongol world well. Their "self" was less about individual introspection (as would emerge in later stages) and more about their role within the collective, their connection to the land, and their relationship with the spirit world. They lived the truth that the sources attribute to this stage: "I am a body that carries many spirits. I do not end at my skin. The wind touches me, and I change. The rock I hold has its own desire, just like me.". Their sense of place was defined by negotiation with forces they could not control: "I am one thread in a web I cannot see. I don't control things—I negotiate with them.".

As Temüjin consolidated power and the Mongol Empire expanded, interactions with more complex societies and their religious systems (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, more formalized Chinese religions) would eventually introduce concepts more aligned with Chapter 2: The Pantheon Within - The Polytheistic Self (incorporating multiple deities, more structured rituals tied to settled life) and perhaps even hint at Chapter 3: The Singular Gaze - The Monotheistic Self (as Tengri's role became increasingly emphasized as a supreme, universal deity over a vast empire), reflecting the evolution of the Theological Stage driven by the scale and complexity enabled by their "guns, germs, and steel" – their military might, ability to traverse distances, and administrative systems. But the foundational self-concept, particularly in Temüjin's formative years, aligns most strongly with the Shamanic Self described as rooted in feeling, intuition, and participation in a world teeming with non-human intelligence and agency.

One Self: Identity as Participation, Not Possession

The self was not divided or separate; it was shared across people, land, and cosmos. Myth and ritual shaped identity at a collective level. Unity of being was more important than individual expression. The self was known through story and participation, not introspection. There was no concept of personal ownership of selfhood.

In this interconnected world, the concept of a bounded, individual self, separate from the group and the environment, had little purchase. Identity was not individual but relational, embedded in nature, myth, and ritual. The self was not something one *had*, but something one *participated in*. It was experienced as collective and sacred, inseparable from the land, the shared stories, and the spirits.

Survival in the harsh conditions faced by hunter-gatherer bands, dictated by the constraints of their geography (GGS), depended absolutely on group cohesion; Ibn Khaldun called this *asabiyyah*, or group identity. Individual identity was subsumed within the identity of the band, the tribe. Rituals – involving dance, rhythm, chanting, and perhaps altered states of consciousness – were not performances but enactments of collective identity, reinforcing social bonds and shared cosmology. Expression *was* identity. Through these shared experiences, the boundary between 'I' and 'we', and 'we' and 'the world', became fluid.

Our Self: Communion with the Unseen

Who I Am: I am a body that carries many spirits. I do not end at my skin. The wind touches me, and I change. The rock I hold has its own desire, just like me. Sometimes I feel a mood or pain that I know comes from something outside—maybe the fire spirit, maybe the water.

My Place: I am one thread in a web I cannot see. I don't control things—I negotiate with them. I plead with the forest not to abandon me. I listen to the birdcalls to know what kind of day it will be. If something is wrong in me, it means I've offended a thing that thinks.

The relational nature of the Shamanic Self extended beyond the visible world. Selfhood was defined by relationship to the unseen – the spirits of ancestors, the forces encountered in dreams, the totemic animals associated with the clan or individual, and the sacredness of specific places within the landscape. Identity included these spiritual influences; they were not external beliefs but integral components of who one was.

Identity included spiritual influences like ancestors, dreams, and totems. The world was animated; everything had presence and agency. Relationship with spirit shaped how the self was understood. The sacred was embedded in everyday life. To be a self meant to be in communion with more-than-human realities.

The shaman, often a central figure in such societies, embodied this communion. They were the mediators, the travelers between worlds, the ones who could directly engage with the spirit realm to seek healing, guidance, or balance for the community. Their experiences reinforced the

collective understanding that the self was porous, influenced by forces beyond the immediate physical senses.

This was self defined by feeling, intuition, and participation in a world teeming with non-human intelligence and agency. It was a self embedded, relational, and profoundly connected – a stark contrast to the individualized, internalized, and often alienated self of later eras. This foundational experience, rooted in the deep history of our species and shaped by the very earth we walked upon, forms the first layer in the complex evolution of human identity.

Chapter 2: The Pantheon Within - The Polytheistic Self

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

01 Theism
02 Metaphysism
03 Scientism
04 Sankofism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

Pericles: The Pantheon Within - The Polytheistic Self

The transition into the Polytheistic Stage marks a significant shift in human consciousness and societal structure. As described in the sources, this phase emerges as societies transitioned from nomadic hunter-gatherer bands to settled agricultural communities. This transition wasn't just about planting seeds; it was deeply intertwined with the factors highlighted by Guns, Germs, and Steel – the rise of agriculture, the development of permanent settlements and eventually cities, the specialization of labor, and the mastery of new technologies like metalworking (the Bronze and Iron Ages). These advancements enabled greater population density and societal complexity.

This complexity is mirrored in the divine realm. The diffuse animism of the Shamanic Self, where spirit permeated everything, began to coalesce into more defined forms. Here, the world is populated not by ambiguous spirits, but by a pantheon of gods and goddesses, each with distinct personalities, domains of influence, and relationships with humanity. This marks the next phase within Comte's Theological Stage: Polytheism. The world was still intensely spiritual, but the spirits now had names, faces, myths, and temples.

Let's examine this stage through the lens of Pericles and Ancient Athens, a civilization that reached its height during a period profoundly shaped by polytheistic belief and the societal structures it supported. While Pericles himself was a statesman and orator, his life and the society he led provide a powerful illustration of the Polytheistic Self. Athens was a major city-state, built on agriculture and trade, with a high degree of specialization (craftsmen, soldiers, philosophers, priests, politicians) and significant technological advancements for its time, aligning with the GGS context described for this stage.

The Polytheistic Self in Ancient Athens

The concept of self in Periclean Athens was deeply embedded within its civic and religious life, fitting the description of the Polytheistic Self in the sources. Athenians revered a pantheon of gods, with each god having a task and presiding over specific aspects of existence: Athena, goddess of wisdom, crafts, and strategic warfare, was the city's patron deity; Zeus ruled the sky and was king of the gods; Poseidon controlled the sea; Hermes was the messenger and god of trade. This wasn't a diffuse spiritual world, but one organized by specialized divinities.

Gods Among Us: A World of Specialized Divinities: The description "Each god has a task—one brings rain, one protects the crops, another watches over childbirth" is a direct reflection of the Athenian pantheon. Citizens would appeal to different gods depending on their needs. A farmer might pray to Demeter for a good harvest, a sailor to Poseidon for safe passage, and a soldier to Ares or Athena before battle. Pericles, as a leader, would participate in public rituals and sacrifices aimed at securing divine favor for the city's success in war, politics, and prosperity. This public dimension of worship underscores that the world is still intensely spiritual, but the spirits now had names, faces, myths, and temples.

Negotiating with the Divine: Ritual, Sacrifice, and Fate: Life in Athens, as in other polytheistic societies, involved constant negotiation with these powerful, often capricious, deities. Rituals became more formalized, centered around temples managed by a specialized priestly class, a direct consequence of societal complexity and specialization. The Acropolis, topped by the Parthenon dedicated to Athena, wasn't just a collection of buildings; it was the spiritual heart of the city, the focal point for elaborate public ceremonies and festivals like the Panathenaia, where citizens offered sacrifices and gifts to the gods. Offerings and sacrifices were made not just to show respect, but to appease anger, solicit favor, or fulfill bargains. This mirrors the source's description of the relationship being transactional. Even everyday activities, like trade in the agora, might involve murmuring a prayer to Hermes for a fair deal, acknowledging the divine influence over specific domains. The flooding of temples or other natural disasters could be interpreted as signs of a god's displeasure, reinforcing the idea that the gods watched and could punish or bless. Fate often loomed large, with human destiny potentially subject to divine whims, as depicted in Greek tragedies. The self was an actor on a stage largely set by divine powers, struggling with agency within a preordained narrative.

The Fragmented Soul: Echoes of Divine Archetypes: An Athenian gripped by uncontrollable rage might feel possessed by Ares; intense passion might be seen as a touch of Aphrodite; strategic brilliance might be attributed to Athena's favor. The self was not yet a unified, autonomous entity but rather a vessel or a battleground for these divine influences. Identity in Athens was also significantly shaped by one's roles (citizen, soldier, father, mother, craftsman, priest), lineage, and relationship to the patron deities of the city and one's family – fitting the source's description that identity was often understood through one's roles, lineage, and relationship to patron deities. The descriptions in the source like "I am a soul given shape by the gods" and "What I feel—love, anger, ambition—echoes the emotions of the gods who made me in their image" capture this sense of the self as influenced and defined by the divine pantheon.

For Athenians, selfhood was intrinsically linked to their position within the city-state, their familial lineage, and their relationship with the complex network of gods. Survival and success, both individual and collective, depended on maintaining balance and securing favor within this divine order. This Polytheistic Self, therefore, existed in a world rich with divine personalities and powers. While offering a more structured understanding than animism, it still placed the locus of control largely outside the individual. The self was a participant in a divine drama, shaped by forces beyond its full comprehension or command, navigating a complex web of duties, rituals, and relationships with the powerful beings who governed the cosmos.

This perspective contrasts with the Shamanic Self's "I Feel Therefore I Am" and its porous connection to a "World Alive". In Athens, while feeling and intuition were still important, they were often interpreted through the structured narrative of the gods. The idea of a single, unified "Our Self: Communion with the Unseen" of the Shamanic stage gives way to a negotiation with multiple, specialized divine entities who watch and judge.

The self was understood less as a direct, unmediated participation in a flowing reality and more as a performance within a divinely governed system, where actions were observed by powerful

entities with distinct personalities and domains of influence. "I exist between divine will and human duty" effectively summarizes the position of the Polytheistic Self. This stage, particularly exemplified by complex civilizations like Ancient Athens, laid the groundwork for further developments in the concept of the self, moving towards the internalized individual of monotheism but remaining firmly rooted in the understanding that identity and agency were significantly shaped by the external, albeit spiritual, realm of the gods.

Gods Among Us: A World of Specialized Divinities

Morning: Today is the festival of the sky god. I paint blue lines across my face and walk with the others to the temple. Each god has a task—one brings rain, one protects the crops, another watches over childbirth. We pray to many, depending on our needs.

This daily reality reflects a world understood through the actions and interactions of these divine figures. Unlike the all-encompassing, often unpredictable spirits of animism, polytheistic gods offered a more structured, albeit still complex, framework for understanding existence. One knew *which* god to appeal to for a specific need – a significant change from negotiating with the generalized spirit of the river or forest.

As human societies transitioned from nomadic hunter-gatherer bands to settled agricultural communities, a profound shift occurred not only in their way of life but also in their conception of the divine and, consequently, the self. The diffuse animism of the Shamanic Self, where spirit permeated everything, began to coalesce into more defined forms. This marks the next phase within Comte's Theological Stage: Polytheism. Here, the world is populated not by ambiguous spirits, but by a pantheon of gods and goddesses, each with distinct personalities, domains of influence, and relationships with humanity. This evolution was deeply intertwined with the factors highlighted by *Guns, Germs, and Steel* – the rise of agriculture, the development of permanent settlements and eventually cities, the specialization of labor, and the mastery of new technologies like metalworking (the Bronze and Iron Ages).

The fertile river valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley provided the geographical advantages for surplus food production. This surplus allowed populations to grow and societies to become more complex. With complexity came specialization – farmers, artisans, soldiers, priests, rulers. Just as human society became functionally differentiated, so too did the divine. Gods emerged who oversaw specific aspects of life and nature: the sky, the sea, the harvest, war, love, craftsmanship, childbirth, death, and the underworld. The world was still intensely spiritual, but the spirits now had names, faces, myths, and temples.

Negotiating with the Divine: Ritual, Sacrifice, and Fate

Day: I trade cloth at the market. Before each deal, I murmur a prayer to Hermes. If the price is fair, he blesses it. If not, he punishes greed. My friend brings news from the coast: Poseidon's temples are flooded. A sign, surely.

Life in a polytheistic world involved constant negotiation with these powerful, often capricious, deities. Rituals became more formalized, centered around temples managed by a specialized priestly class – another consequence of societal complexity. Offerings and sacrifices were made not just to show respect, but to appease anger, solicit favor, or fulfill bargains. The relationship was transactional, reflecting the burgeoning economies of these early civilizations.

Myths played a crucial role, providing narratives that explained the origins of the world, the nature of the gods, and humanity's place within the cosmic order. Stories like the Enuma Elish from Babylon, the Osiris myth from Egypt, or the rich tapestry of Greek mythology provided archetypes and moral lessons, shaping the collective understanding of life, death, virtue, and fate. These myths weren't just entertainment; they were the operating system of the culture, explaining why floods happened (Poseidon's wrath), why trade sometimes failed (Hermes' displeasure), and where one might seek healing (Asclepius's domain).

Fate often loomed large in polytheistic worldviews. While individuals could act and make choices, their ultimate destiny might be subject to the whims of the gods or predetermined cosmic forces, as seen vividly in Greek tragedies like *Oedipus Rex*, where a prophecy foretelling patricide and incest relentlessly unfolds despite Oedipus's attempts to evade it. The self was an actor on a stage largely set by divine powers, struggling with agency within a preordained narrative.

The Fragmented Soul: Echoes of Divine Archetypes

If the Shamanic Self was porous and collective, the Polytheistic Self began to show glimmers of individuality, yet it was often understood as being shaped or influenced by the diverse personalities of the gods themselves. The pantheon reflected the complexities and contradictions of human nature – gods could be wise and foolish, loving and vengeful, creative and destructive.

Human emotions and motivations were often seen as reflections of, or even direct interventions by, the gods. An uncontrollable rage might be attributed to Ares, overwhelming love to Aphrodite, a stroke of cunning to Hermes. The self was not yet a unified, autonomous entity but rather a vessel or a battleground for these divine influences. The concept of a singular, internal

soul, responsible for its own thoughts and feelings, was still developing. Instead, identity was often understood through one's roles (priest, warrior, mother), lineage, and relationship to the patron deities of one's family or city-state. The rise of large empires, facilitated by advancements in agriculture, administration, and military technology (Guns, Germs, Steel), often led to complex syncretism, where gods from different cultures were merged or equated, further complicating the divine landscape but also reflecting the growing interconnectedness of human societies.

This Polytheistic Self, therefore, existed in a world rich with divine personalities and powers. While offering a more structured understanding than animism, it still placed the locus of control largely outside the individual. The self was a participant in a divine drama, shaped by forces beyond its full comprehension or command, navigating a complex web of duties, rituals, and relationships with the powerful beings who governed the cosmos.

Chapter 3: The Singular Gaze - The Monotheistic Self

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

01 Theism
The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

02 Metaphysism

03 Scientism

04 Sankofism

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

One God, One Truth, One Self

Morning: I wake and pray toward the sunrise. There is only one God now, and He is everywhere—seen and unseen. My first words of the day are thanks. Not to a river, or the sun, but to Him alone.

The Theological Stage culminates in a revolutionary shift in human consciousness: the emergence of Monotheism. Moving beyond the localized spirits of animism and the specialized deities of polytheism, monotheistic traditions proposed a single, ultimate, often transcendent God as the source and sustainer of all existence. This wasn't merely a numerical reduction in the divine roster; it represented a profound reordering of the cosmos and, consequently, a radical reshaping of the human self. The self was no longer a participant in a world of myriad spirits or a soul shaped by a pantheon, but an individual soul created by, known by, and accountable to the One God.

Gone is the need to negotiate with multiple specialized deities or localized spirits. Worship, gratitude, and supplication are directed towards a single, ultimate source. This concentration of divine power demanded a corresponding integration within the believer.

It should be noted that the progression from polytheism to monotheism is accompanied by the advance of civilization from peacekeeping to imperial-seeking to satisfy the economic demands of the population. Once again, the self evolves with the guns, germs, and steel of the age. Were the Italians bloodier under Christianity? Yes. Was that Christianity's fault? No. The guns, germs, and steel of the time were the infrastructure of Christianity-as-an-Operating System. There is not a civilization on the planet that hasn't at one point in time leveraged their asymmetric competitiveness based on guns, germs, and steel to imperialize their neighbours. From The Assyrians to The Mongols to The Arabs to The Japanese, every civilization succumbs to the embedded growth obligations of industry.

This transition often coincided with the consolidation of larger empires and the expansion of trade networks across vast geographical areas – factors central to the *Guns, Germs, and Steel* narrative. As diverse cultures interacted more intensely, facilitated by shared imperial structures or extensive trade routes (like the Silk Road or Roman roads), universalizing ideas gained traction. The development and dissemination of writing systems played a crucial role, allowing sacred texts – the Torah, the Bible, the Quran – to codify beliefs and laws, transmitting them across space and time far more effectively than oral traditions. These scriptures presented a unified divine narrative and a coherent moral framework applicable to all adherents, regardless of their local origin.

The Internalized Judge: Soul, Sin, and Salvation

Who I Am: I am a child of God. I have a soul, singular and eternal. I was created with intention. I am known completely—my every thought and sin are visible to Him. My self is not just flesh or feeling; it is judged, tested, and capable of redemption.

Day: I work, guided by His law. I do not bargain or trick. The Book says: Do unto others... and I try to live that. A man speaks against our faith in the square. I feel anger rise, then shame. Judgment belongs to God.

Perhaps the most significant impact of monotheism on the concept of self was the development of the individual, eternal soul coupled with an internalized sense of moral responsibility. If God is singular, omniscient, and concerned with human actions and intentions, then the individual self becomes the primary locus of moral struggle and divine judgment.

As we'll discuss later, the key difference between Western Monotheism and Easter Monotheism lies in original sin. There is no original sin in Taoism. The way that can be spoken is not the true way. God didn't create us in his image; God is the Way of Things.

This contrasts sharply with earlier conceptions. The self is no longer merely shaped by external divine forces or defined solely by collective participation; it possesses an inner core, a soul, that persists beyond death and is subject to divine scrutiny. Concepts like sin (transgression against divine law), guilt (the internal awareness of that transgression), and salvation (the possibility of redemption and eternal life through faith, repentance, or divine grace) become central to identity. The inner life – thoughts, intentions, beliefs – takes on unprecedented importance. A conscience develops, acting as an internalized representative of the divine gaze, a concept explored with profound depth in works like Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions*, where he meticulously documents his inner struggles and search for divine grace.

Actions are evaluated against a divinely ordained moral code, often laid out in sacred texts. Even emotional reactions are subject to scrutiny and aligned with religious precepts. Judgment is deferred to the ultimate authority, God.

Thy Self: Morality and the Eternal Contract

My Place: I am fallen, but I can be saved. Life is a journey toward divine approval. I am not here to serve many gods, but to align my will with one. I must quiet the self, deny the body, and listen to the higher voice that calls me to goodness.

Night: We eat, pray, sleep—all in His name. My children ask questions: Why did God take Uncle? I do not know. But I tell them: He sees what we cannot. Trust Him.

The relationship between the individual and the monotheistic God is often framed as a covenant or contract. God creates humanity, provides guidance and law, and offers salvation; in return,

humans owe obedience, faith, and worship. This framework places the self within a grand narrative of creation, fall, and potential redemption.

Religious selfhood included sin, guilt, and salvation... The soul was seen as permanent and moral... Confession and redemption shaped identity... Morality was central to the Western spiritual self.

This moral and eternal dimension became deeply embedded in the self-concept, particularly within the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Life is no longer just about navigating the present world or appeasing local deities; it becomes a journey with eternal consequences, a pilgrimage towards divine approval or judgment.

There is a clear hierarchy: God above, the individual below, striving to align their imperfect will with the divine plan. Suffering and hardship are often interpreted within this framework, seen as tests of faith or consequences of sin, rather than the capricious acts of multiple gods. Trust in God's ultimate wisdom, even when it is inscrutable, becomes paramount.

The Monotheistic Self, therefore, represents a major consolidation and internalization of identity within the Theological Stage. Defined by its relationship to a single, transcendent God, possessing an eternal soul, and guided by a divinely ordained moral code recorded in scripture, this self carries the weight of individual responsibility and the hope of eternal salvation. This powerful conception of selfhood, spread globally through the dynamics described by *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, would profoundly shape the subsequent philosophical and psychological explorations of identity in the Metaphysical and Positive stages.

Part 2: The Metaphysical Stage - The Self Defined by Reason and Abstraction

_

02 Metaphysism

Theism

01

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

03

Scientism

Sankofism **04**

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning;
then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

Religion Seldom Survives Philosophy (The Durants)

This is the tragedy of almost every civilization: that its soul is in its faith and seldom survives philosophy.

The Pharaoh placed almost limitless wealth at the disposal of his talons and this favored artist became so famous that later Egypt worshiped him as a god.

For the most part, however, the artist worked in obscurity and poverty and was ranked no higher than other artisans or handicraftsman by the priests and potentates who engaged him. Egyptian religion cooperated with Egyptian wealth to inspire and foster art and cooperated with Egypt's loss of empire and affluence to ruin it.

Religion offered motives, ideas and inspiration, but it imposed conventions and restraints which bound art so completely to the church that when sincere religion died among the artists the arts that had lived on it died, too.

This is the tragedy of almost every civilization: that its soul is in its faith and seldom survives philosophy.

Chapter 4: The Unseen Order - The Rise of Abstract Thought

The Sankofa Self

By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

Beyond Gods: Seeking Universal Principles

Morning: I rise and feel the sun's warmth. I no longer think of it as a god. It's a force—a principle of nature. The light brings life, but it is not divine. I wonder why heat moves the way it does. There must be a reason beyond belief.

The sun is demoted from deity to natural force, subject to principles that reason can potentially uncover. Curiosity replaces supplication. The world is still full of wonder, but the explanations sought are moving from the supernatural to the natural, albeit often conceived in abstract terms.

As the Theological Stage waned, humanity embarked on a new intellectual quest, marking the transition into Comte's Metaphysical Stage. The explanatory power of direct supernatural intervention began to yield to a search for underlying, abstract principles governing reality. While not yet fully embracing empirical science, thinkers sought explanations beyond divine whim, looking towards inherent forces, natural laws, and the power of human reason itself. This era witnessed the rise of philosophy as a distinct discipline, grappling with questions of essence, justice, rights, and the fundamental nature of existence, moving the locus of understanding from external deities to internal rationality and abstract concepts.

This shift was fueled by significant historical developments, echoing the themes of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. The Renaissance rediscovered classical learning, the printing press

disseminated ideas far wider and faster than ever before, the Age of Exploration revealed diverse cultures and challenged Eurocentric worldviews, and the consolidation of nation-states created new political and social contexts. These factors fostered an environment where traditional explanations were questioned, and new frameworks for understanding the world – and the self within it – were sought.

Natural Law and Human Rights: The Self as Rational Agent

Day: I read a treatise on "natural rights." The idea that humans are born free, equal, that society should serve reason—it inspires me. The old kings ruled by divine right, but now we ask: What gives them that power?

A key development in the Metaphysical Stage was the concept of Natural Law – the idea that universal moral and ethical principles are inherent in nature and discoverable through reason, independent of divine revelation or human legislation. Thinkers like John Locke, whose ideas profoundly influenced the architects of the American Revolution, argued that individuals possess inherent natural rights, such as the rights to life, liberty, and property, simply by virtue of being human. This was a revolutionary concept, disseminated rapidly through the power of the printing press, challenging the divine right of kings and asserting the fundamental dignity and autonomy of the individual.

Reason becomes the tool for questioning established authority and envisioning new forms of social and political organization based on rational principles rather than inherited dogma or divine mandate. The self is increasingly conceived as a rational agent, capable of understanding these natural laws and possessing inherent rights that society must respect.

The Search for Essence: Mind, Matter, and the Dignified Human

The internal struggle and intellectual searching of this era are palpable:

Night: I write and question. The world is not ruled by gods, but by laws—yet those laws are abstract, hidden. I search for justice, for essence, for truth. Perhaps all things arise from "vital energy" or "universal substance." These are my new gods: reason, spirit, liberty.

While rejecting direct divine intervention as the primary explanation, the Metaphysical Stage often replaced gods with abstract forces or essences – concepts like vital energy, universal substance, historical dialectics, or Plato's eternal Forms. These were attempts to grasp the underlying reality behind appearances, using reason and philosophical speculation rather than empirical observation.

The focus shifts to abstract ideals – Justice, Liberty, Reason – which become guiding principles. The self is understood as navigating a world governed by these hidden laws and powerful ideas. The nature of the self itself becomes a central philosophical question: What is the relationship between mind and matter? What is the essence of being human? What constitutes a virtuous life?

The self-concept emerging from this stage is one grounded in rationality and inherent dignity:

Who I Am: I am a rational being—conscious, moral, capable of abstract thought. I am not here by divine command, but by natural law. My rights, my dignity, my reason are inherent. I am both mind and matter, but it is the mind that defines me.

Compared to the Theological Self, the Metaphysical Self is more internalized and autonomous, defined by its capacity for reason and its inherent rights. However, it still operates within a framework of abstract, often unverifiable, principles and essences. It stands as a crucial bridge between a world explained by gods and a world explained by observable facts and scientific laws.

My Place: I live in a world governed by ideas—liberty, justice, energy, causation. I struggle to balance my passions with my ideals. I ask: What is the essence of man? What is the self beyond sensation? I may not know all the answers, but I know they exist, waiting to be reasoned out.

This self is an inquirer, a seeker of abstract truth, confident in the power of reason to eventually unlock the secrets of the universe and its own nature. It lays the groundwork for the scientific revolution yet retains a connection to philosophical speculation about ultimate realities, setting the stage for further evolution in the understanding of human identity.

Chapter 5: The Thinking Reed - The Western Rational Self

02 Metaphysism

Theism

01

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

03

Scientism

Sankofism

04

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

I Think Therefore I Am

Within the broader sweep of the Metaphysical Stage, a pivotal moment arrived with the work of French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650). Living in a time of profound skepticism, fueled by religious wars and the crumbling of old certainties, Descartes, famously meditating in his stove-heated room, embarked on a radical quest for an unshakeable foundation for knowledge. His method involved systematic doubt – questioning everything he thought he knew, even the evidence of his senses. Could he be dreaming? Could a malicious demon be deceiving him? Yet, in the very act of doubting, Descartes found his Archimedean point: the undeniable fact that he was *thinking*. Even if he was doubting, or being deceived, there had to be an "I" doing the doubting or being deceived. This led to his famous declaration, *"Cogito, ergo sum"* – "I think, therefore I am."

This statement, seemingly simple, marked a profound revolution in the Western conception of self, becoming a cornerstone of modern philosophy. Identity is rooted in thinking and reasoning. Descartes' cogito marks the beginning of modern Western selfhood: I am my thoughts.

Descartes' Revolution: The Self Anchored in Thought

The significance of the *Cogito* cannot be overstated. For Descartes, the act of thinking became the ultimate proof of existence and the bedrock of identity. The self was no longer primarily defined by its participation in a spiritual cosmos (Theological Stage) or solely by its place within abstract natural laws (broader Metaphysical Stage), but by its own conscious, rational activity. The essence of the self was located squarely in the mind.

This led Descartes to propose a sharp distinction between mind (res cogitans – thinking substance) and body/matter (res extensa – extended substance). This concept, known as Cartesian dualism, viewed the body as a complex machine, subject to mechanical laws, while the mind/soul was non-material, rational, and the true seat of identity. While later philosophers would challenge this strict separation, its influence on Western thought was immense, reinforcing the idea of the self as an internal, thinking subject observing and acting upon an external, material world.

The life of Descartes himself exemplifies this dedication to reason. His *Discourse on Method* laid out principles for rational inquiry that heavily influenced the development of the scientific method. His search for certainty through methodical doubt and clear, distinct ideas became a model for philosophical and scientific investigation, placing human reason at the forefront of the quest for knowledge.

The Soul's New Clothes: Reason and Moral Responsibility

While Descartes anchored the self in rational thought, this didn't necessarily eliminate the religious concept of the soul inherited from the Monotheistic Stage. Instead, the soul was often re-clothed in the garb of reason. The rational mind became the defining characteristic of the soul, the faculty that distinguished humans from animals and connected them, in some views, to the divine intellect.

Religion added the concept of the soul and eternal accountability, and within this new rational framework, *The self was both an individual and moral subject. Rationality defined personhood and power.*

This rational self was seen as capable of understanding moral principles (whether derived from natural law or divine revelation) and was therefore accountable for its choices. Reason provided the capacity for moral deliberation, making the individual responsible for aligning their actions with ethical standards. This fusion of rationality and moral accountability created a powerful conception of the autonomous, responsible individual that would become central to Enlightenment thought and Western legal and political systems.

The Western Rational Self, epitomized by Descartes' *Cogito*, thus represents a critical development within the Metaphysical Stage. It internalizes identity, grounding it in the undeniable reality of conscious thought. It elevates reason as the defining human characteristic and the primary tool for understanding both the self and the world. While still operating within a framework that often included abstract or non-empirical concepts like the non-material soul, this emphasis on rationality paved the way for the increasing focus on observation and empirical evidence that would characterize the subsequent Positive Stage.

Chapter 6: The Mirror of Consciousness - The Eastern Enlightened Self

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

01 Theism
02 Metaphysism
03 Scientism
04 Sankofism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

I Know Therefore I Am (Experientially)

If the Cartesian motto was "I think, therefore I am," the Eastern counterpart, might be phrased "I know (experientially), therefore I am" – or perhaps more accurately, "Through knowing, I realize what I am *not*."

Parallel to the Western philosophical journey culminating in Descartes' rational self, Eastern traditions, particularly those originating in India, embarked on a profoundly different exploration of identity, also fitting within Comte's broad Metaphysical Stage but arriving at radically distinct conclusions. While Western metaphysics often sought to define the self through reason, logic, and abstract principles, Eastern thought, particularly in traditions like Buddhism and Vedanta, emphasized direct experience, introspection, and the transcendence of the individual ego.

The self is not a fixed thing to defend but an illusion to awaken from. Here, identity is seen as impermanent, interdependent, and ultimately non-personal. Knowledge is not conceptual — it is direct, experiential, and liberating.

This approach contrasts sharply with the Western focus on solidifying a rational, individual identity. Instead, it positions the conventional self as something to see *through* rather than build up.

The development and spread of these philosophies were influenced by their own unique historical and geographical contexts (GGS). The diverse cultural landscape of ancient India, interactions along trade routes like the Silk Road, and different societal structures fostered environments where introspective practices like meditation flourished, leading to deep inquiries into the nature of mind and reality.

The Illusion of "I": Awareness Beyond Identity (Buddhism - Non Self)

Remove the thinker, remove the thoughts.

Buddhism, originating with Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) around the 5th century BCE, offers one of the most radical critiques of the notion of a permanent, independent self. Central to Buddhist doctrine is the concept of *Anatta* (Pali) or *Anatman* (Sanskrit), often translated as "non-self" or "no-soul." This doesn't necessarily mean that nothing exists, but rather that there is no enduring, unchanging, independent entity that constitutes a "self" at the core of our being.

Core to the Buddhist view is the doctrine of anatta — the idea that there is no permanent, separate self. This opens the way to liberation by releasing attachment to ego.*

The core points elaborate:
*   *The self is impermanent and interdependent.* (Everything arises in dependence on other factors).
*   *Clinging to a fixed "I" leads to suffering.* (Attachment to an illusory self is the root of dissatisfaction).
*   *Realization of non-self brings emotional and psychological freedom.*
*   *Self is more like a river than a rock — always changing.*
*   *Letting go of identity creates space for compassion and peace.*

Through practices like mindfulness meditation, Buddhism encourages practitioners to observe the constant flux of thoughts, feelings, and sensations without identifying with them. Imagine sitting quietly, watching thoughts arise like clouds in the sky – some pleasant, some stormy – but recognizing that you are the sky, the awareness in which they appear and disappear, not the clouds themselves. By seeing that there is no permanent thinker behind the thoughts, no unchanging feeler behind the feelings, the illusion of a solid self begins to dissolve. This realization is considered liberating because it undermines the ego's tendency to grasp, attach, and defend, which are seen as the primary causes of suffering (*dukkha*). The life story of the Buddha himself – leaving his princely life, witnessing suffering, and ultimately achieving enlightenment under the Bodhi tree through profound meditation – serves as the archetypal narrative for this path.

The Ocean Within: Merging with the Absolute (Vedanta - That Self)

Vedanta, a school of philosophy rooted in the ancient Hindu scriptures known as the Upanishads, offers a different, though equally profound, perspective on the self that also transcends the individual ego. While Buddhism emphasizes the emptiness or non-inherent existence of the self, Vedanta posits that the true self, *Atman*, is ultimately identical with the ultimate reality, *Brahman* – the unchanging, infinite consciousness that underlies the universe.

That Self: Explores the Vedantic view that the true self (Atman) is not individual but identical with ultimate reality (Brahman). Identity is dissolved into the infinite.

Key points include:
*   *The ego-self is an illusion; the true self is boundless consciousness.*
*   *"Tat Tvam Asi" means "You are That" — no separation between self and source.*
*   *This view emphasizes fullness and unity rather than emptiness.*
*   *The self is transcendent, not constructed.*
*   *Enlightenment comes from recognizing what was always true.*

In this view, the individual ego, the sense of being a separate person, is seen as a temporary manifestation or illusion (*maya*) obscuring the deeper reality of unity with the Absolute. Liberation (*moksha*) comes not from dissolving the self into nothingness, but from realizing its true nature as infinite, boundless consciousness – the ocean recognizing itself within the wave. This realization is often sought through practices like self-inquiry (*vichara*), meditation, and devotion, guided by teachings from Vedanta masters and scriptures.

Both Buddhism and Vedanta, despite their philosophical differences, represent a significant departure from the Western trajectory within the Metaphysical Stage. They locate ultimate reality not in rational constructs or abstract principles alone, but in direct, experiential knowing that transcends the limitations of the ordinary, ego-bound self. They emphasize introspection, the impermanent or illusory nature of the conventional "I," and the potential for liberation through a fundamental shift in understanding and awareness. This Eastern perspective, focusing on awareness itself rather than the contents of thought, offers a crucial counterpoint to the Western rational self and provides vital resources for navigating the challenges of identity in later stages, particularly when confronting the fragmented and modeled self of the Silicon Age.

Part 3: The Positive Stage - The Self Measured and Modeled

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

01
02 Metaphysism
Theism
03
Scientism
04
Sankofism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

Chapter 7: The Observable Engine - The Scientific Self

Measuring the Immeasurable: The Rise of Positivism

The profound shift in mindset is captured in the manuscript's depiction of the Positive Stage:

Morning: I check the thermometer. Temperature: 18°C. I note the pressure, the humidity. I observe—not to please spirits or satisfy gods, but to understand patterns. The data tells a story, and the story tells a truth.

The Metaphysical Stage, with its reliance on abstract principles and rational speculation, eventually gave way to Comte's third phase: the Positive or Scientific Stage. This era, gaining momentum from the Scientific Revolution onwards and accelerating dramatically with the Industrial Revolution, shifted the basis of knowledge decisively towards empirical observation, experimentation, and the discovery of verifiable laws. Explanations were no longer sought in divine mandates or hidden essences, but in observable phenomena and measurable data. This positivist approach aimed to understand the world – and the human being within it – not through speculation, but through systematic investigation. The self, once a matter of spiritual participation or philosophical definition, now became an object of scientific inquiry.

Day: I work in a laboratory. Today we test a hypothesis about disease spread, perhaps inspired by the work of Pasteur or Koch. We use control groups, meticulously sterilize equipment, compare outcomes under the microscope, and prepare our findings for publication. Belief in miasmas or divine punishment must yield to repeatable evidence showing the action of invisible microbes. Superstition clouds action. Science clears it.

Observation, measurement, data – these become the new tools for understanding reality. Belief must yield to evidence. This empirical spirit extended from the natural world to the human world, driven partly by the massive societal transformations of the Industrial Revolution (GGS context). Urbanization, factory work, new social classes, and population growth created complex social problems that demanded new methods of understanding and management. Science offered the promise of objective knowledge and effective solutions.

The Looking-Glass Self

Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the "Looking Glass Self" posits that our understanding of our own identity is primarily shaped by how we believe others perceive us.

This theory suggests that we imagine how we appear to others, we imagine their judgment of that appearance, and based on these imagined judgments, our self-concept is formed. It's as though others serve as a mirror ("looking glass") reflecting back to us who we are, and we internalize these reflections to construct our identity. This process isn't about what others actually think, but what we imagine they think. The sources touch upon related ideas, particularly in the context of the digital age (the Silicon Shadow, Algorithmic & Monetized Self, and Fractured Mirror) where identity becomes increasingly externalized performance and is monitored and evaluated by both human audiences and algorithmic systems. We curate our online personas and perform different roles across platforms, and the feedback we receive (likes, shares, comments, algorithmic targeting) acts as a modern, data-driven "looking glass," reflecting a version of the self that is tracked, modeled, predicted, and packaged. This leads to a self defined by observable digital actions and consumption rather than internal intentions or beliefs, blurring the lines between authentic expression and strategic self-presentation.

From Soul to Psyche: The Birth of Psychology

Who I Am: I am an organism shaped by biology, environment, and experience. I am self-aware because evolution gave me a brain that models itself. My thoughts are electric, my moods chemical. My "self" is not fixed—it can be observed, studied, changed.

Nowhere was this shift more evident than in the study of the self. The philosophical concept of the soul or the rational mind began to be replaced by the psychological concept of the psyche – a complex system of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and unconscious processes amenable to scientific investigation. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the birth of psychology as a formal discipline, aiming to apply scientific methods to the study of the mind and behavior.

As the manuscript notes in its summary of "The Self": *Freud and Jung helped define the self as an internal structure.* Sigmund Freud, with his theories of the id, ego, and superego, the unconscious mind, and psychosexual development, proposed a dynamic model of the psyche driven by instinctual forces and shaped by early experiences. Carl Jung expanded on this, introducing concepts like the collective unconscious, archetypes, and individuation. Though often criticized for lack of empirical rigor by later standards, their work represented a monumental attempt to map the inner world scientifically, moving beyond purely philosophical speculation.

This scientific lens reframed the understanding of identity:

The self is naturalized, seen as a product of biological evolution and environmental conditioning. Thoughts and moods are linked to physiological processes. Crucially, the self is no longer

viewed as a fixed essence but as a dynamic process that can be observed, analyzed, and potentially modified.

The Self as Project: Therapy, Management, and Improvement

The scientific study of the self inevitably led to attempts to manage and improve it. If the self could be understood through observation and analysis, then its dysfunctions could potentially be treated, and its functioning optimized. This gave rise to various forms of psychotherapy, aiming to resolve inner conflicts, heal past traumas, and promote psychological well-being.

Therapy culture turned identity into a project. Self-help and personal development commercialized identity. The self became curated, performative, and marketable. Identity was internalized but also exposed.

Psychology moved beyond the clinic and permeated popular culture. The idea took hold that the self was not just something to be understood, but something to be worked on – a project of continuous improvement. The burgeoning self-help industry offered countless techniques for enhancing self-esteem, achieving success, and finding happiness. In this process, identity became increasingly internalized – located within the individual's psychological landscape – but also paradoxically externalized, as it became something to be managed, presented, and even branded in the social marketplace.

The individual's place in the world shifted accordingly:

My Place: I am part of a system. I exist in relation to others, to history, to the known universe. I don't ask why I was made, but how I came to be. I am both subject and scientist—curious, pattern-seeking, humble. If I understand enough, I can improve myself and help others thrive.

The focus is on understanding mechanisms ("how") rather than ultimate purposes ("why"). The individual is both the subject of study and the potential agent of their own improvement, armed with the tools of scientific understanding. The goal becomes thriving within the observable systems of nature and society.

Night: I sit by my daughter's bed. She's learning mathematics. "Why do we fall?" she asks. "Because gravity acts upon mass," I say. She smiles. Tomorrow, she'll ask about the stars. I'll show her the telescope—not to pray to the heavens, but to measure them.

This is the essence of the Positive Stage: seeking explanations in observable laws, valuing empirical knowledge, and passing on this scientific worldview. The Scientific Self, born from the spirit of positivism and nurtured by the rise of psychology, views identity as an observable, analyzable, and improvable phenomenon, setting the stage for the even more intensive measurement and modeling that would arrive with the Silicon Age.

Chapter 8: Gears, Steam, and Steel - The Industrial Self

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

01

02 Metaphysism

03

04

Theism

Sankofism

Scientism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

Foreword Revisited: This Should Make Sense Now

Social relations have disappeared between humans because humans have begun to disappear.

The human beings consume each other rapidly in what they call, 'The Act Of Love' or else settle down to a mild form of conjugality; we seldom find a mean between these extremes. - Camus

In the view of Baudrillard, society has reached a point at which it has literally been overcome by its technology. The new issues aren't about things like the non-believer or the non-offender but about the non-person. In fact, Baudrillard thinks that reality itself is in the process of disappearing. For Baudrillard, the post-modern reaches full potential when we stop unplugging the computers and the computers start unplugging us.

The postmodern is a blurring of the lines between human beings and machines, a blurring of the line between reality and image. For Baudrillard, the apocalypse has already occurred. It wasn't religious or anything, it was not atomic bombs. At some point in the development of Technology human beings ceased to be the reason for things and the things took on a reasoning of their own.

Baudrillard's definition of the real itself is that which can be simulated, xeroxed, and copied. So whether you're talking about a human body where you can make a holograph of it or you're talking about the Bible which you can Xerox or whether you're talking about the sexual act which can be simulated either through repetitive pornographic films. In a very near future it will be able to be uh simulated with virtual reality where you'll wear a full body suit and make love to your ego ideal thus making it pointless to uh to search out all the Freudian implications you can just pick your ego ideal, punch it into the laser beam program, slip into the virtual reality suit; thus rendering that relation even that intimate relation relation sexual relation technological simulatable reproducible to Infinity.

I talked about how children used to learn morality from their parents and now I think that Super Mario Brothers they spend much more time with Super Mario Brothers and are much more like emotionally involved with Nintendo than they are with their aunts their uncles their mothers and their fathers I asked one of my children why are you yelling at a machine when he began to play his Nintendo and he looked at me as though I were a being from another world and because of that there is a post-modern trajectory. I am from another world. I'm still as it were caught in the modern he's not.

So if it sounds superficial – good – because in theory, the world he occupies is superficial.

The Self in the Machine Age

The Scientific Self, with its focus on observation and analysis, emerged alongside a force that was physically reshaping the world at an unprecedented pace: the Industrial Revolution. Beginning in Great Britain in the late 18th century and spreading across Europe and North America, this period saw the harnessing of new power sources like steam, the development of mass production techniques, the rise of factories, and the explosive growth of cities. This wasn't just an economic or technological shift; it fundamentally altered the fabric of society, the nature of work, the structure of communities, and ultimately, the experience and understanding of the individual self. The gears, steam, and steel of industry forged a new kind of identity – the Industrial Self, deeply embedded within the Positive Stage's emphasis on observable systems and quantifiable outputs.

Identity Forged in Factories: Labor, Class, and the Mass Man

The transition from agrarian and artisanal economies to industrial capitalism brought millions from the countryside into burgeoning cities like Manchester or Lowell, seeking work in the new factories. Life became regimented by the factory whistle, the relentless clatter and rhythm of machinery, and the demands of wage labor, often stretching for 12 or 14 hours a day. For many, identity became increasingly defined by their role in the industrial machine – worker, foreman, owner. The intimate connection to the land or the holistic craft of the artisan, who might see a product through from start to finish, was replaced by specialized, often repetitive tasks within a vast production process, such as tending a specific machine on an assembly line.

This era saw the rise of distinct social classes based on economic relationships to the means of production – the bourgeoisie (owners of capital) and the proletariat (wage laborers), as famously analyzed by Karl Marx. Class consciousness became a powerful component of identity, shaping individuals' allegiances, political views, and sense of belonging. The shared experiences of factory life – long hours, dangerous conditions, economic insecurity, but also solidarity and collective action through emerging labor movements – forged strong group identities that often overshadowed older forms based on religion or locality.

The sheer scale of industrial society also gave rise to the concept of the "mass man." Individuals were increasingly seen, particularly by social theorists and state administrators, not as unique souls or rational agents, but as components of a larger population – measurable, manageable, and subject to statistical analysis. This perspective, while enabling advancements in public health and urban planning, also carried the risk of depersonalization, reducing the individual to a data point within the larger industrial and social machinery.

I Am What I Eat

Thorstein Veblen, in his seminal work The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899), critiqued the social stratification and economic behavior of the late 19th century, particularly focusing on the upper class. He introduced the concepts of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. Conspicuous consumption refers to the practice of purchasing and displaying expensive goods and services not for their intrinsic value or utility, but primarily to signal wealth and social status to others. It is consumption used as a form of competitive social display. [Outside Source] Conspicuous leisure, similarly, is the non-productive use of time – avoiding manual labor or paid work – to demonstrate one's freedom from economic necessity and thus signify high social status. [Outside Source] Both concepts highlight how identity and status become intertwined with economic activities, specifically the public performance of wealth and idleness, within a stratified society.

Guns, Germs, and Steel Revisited: Industrial Power and Global Dominance

The Industrial Revolution dramatically amplified the factors identified by Jared Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. The nations that industrialized first gained enormous advantages in wealth and power, enabling an unprecedented wave of global expansion and colonization during the 19th century.

*   **Guns:** Industrial production techniques allowed for the mass manufacture of more powerful and accurate firearms, giving industrialized nations a decisive military advantage over non-industrialized societies. Steel production enabled the creation of larger, more powerful warships and artillery.
*   **Germs:** While the initial impact of germs often favored Europeans during earlier colonization due to their acquired immunities from denser populations and domesticated animals, the industrial era saw advancements in medicine and sanitation (driven by the Positive Stage's scientific approach) that began to mitigate disease *within* industrialized nations. However, the vastly improved transportation (steamships, railways) facilitated the movement of both people and diseases globally, often with devastating consequences for populations lacking immunity, further aiding colonial expansion.
*   **Steel:** Steel was the backbone of industrial infrastructure – railways, bridges, factory machinery, steam engines, and powerful new tools. Control over steel production and its applications translated directly into economic and military might, enabling industrialized nations to project power across the globe, extract resources, and impose their political and economic systems on others.

The experience of colonization, fueled by industrial might, profoundly impacted the self-concept of both colonizers and colonized. For Europeans and North Americans, it often reinforced notions of superiority, progress, and a civilizing mission, aligning with the perceived triumphs of science and industry. For colonized peoples, it meant subjugation, the disruption of traditional ways of life, the imposition of foreign languages and administrative systems, and the internalization of imposed identities often based on racial hierarchies – a brutal demonstration of the power dynamics inherent in the GGS framework, now supercharged by industry.

The Industrial Self, therefore, was forged in the crucible of factories, defined by new class structures, and implicated in the global power dynamics unleashed by industrial production. It was a self increasingly understood through its economic role and its place within mass society, measured and managed by the logic of the Positive Stage, and empowered – or subjugated – by the overwhelming force of industrialized Guns, Germs, and Steel.

Chapter 9: The Silicon Shadow - The Algorithmic & Monetized Self (Fourth Industrial Revolution)

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

02 Metaphysism

Theism

01

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

03

Sankofism

04

Scientism

Introducing René Girard's Mimetics and the Socially Constructed Self

René Girard's theory of mimetic desire proposes that most human desire is not spontaneous or innate but is imitated from others. We desire something not because of its inherent value, but because we see someone else, a "model" or "mediator," desiring it. This imitation of desire shapes our identity, as we strive to emulate our models and acquire the objects of their desire. The self, in this view, is heavily socially constructed, built upon a foundation of aspirational characters and the complex dynamics of imitation, desire, and potential rivalry they inspire. This perspective provides a powerful lens through which to understand how external influences don't just shape the self but actively dictate what the self wants and becomes by providing the very models of desire.

I Consume Therefore I Am (Tracked)

The Positive Stage, having scientifically analyzed and industrially organized the self, entered a new, accelerated phase with the advent of digital technology – the era of Silicon. The development of the semiconductor, the microprocessor, personal computers, the internet, mobile devices, and increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence has unleashed the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This revolution, built on silicon foundations, is distinct from the previous industrial era defined by steam and steel. It operates on data, connectivity, and algorithms, and its most profound impact may be on the very nature of human identity. If the Industrial Self was forged in the factory, the contemporary self is increasingly shaped in the digital network, leading to the "Monetized Self" – a self defined less by what it produces or even thinks, and more by what it consumes, clicks, shares, and searches, all under the pervasive gaze of algorithms.

This marks a critical extension of the *Guns, Germs, and Steel* framework. Silicon represents a new environmental force, creating unprecedented capabilities for communication, computation, and control. Those who master silicon-based technologies gain immense economic, political, and cultural power, echoing the advantages once conferred by steel or gunpowder, but operating in the intangible realm of information and attention.

The Datafied Soul: Tracked, Modeled, Predicted

In the algorithmic age, the self, once considered sacred or at least private, becomes profitable. As the manuscript starkly puts it: *Every gesture, search, and scroll becomes input. Identity is modeled, tracked, predicted, and packaged.* The core activity of the digital economy, particularly the dominant platforms funded by advertising, revolves around the continuous collection and analysis of user data. Our online behaviors – websites visited, products purchased, articles read, videos watched, locations visited, messages sent, reactions clicked – are meticulously logged, aggregated, and processed by powerful AI systems.

This vast accumulation of data allows for the creation of detailed digital profiles, algorithmic models that aim to represent our preferences, predict our future behavior, and influence our

choices. Consider someone idly searching for information about hiking boots one evening. Within minutes, perhaps even seconds, their social media feeds, news sites, and even unrelated apps begin displaying advertisements not just for those specific boots, but for related camping gear, outdoor apparel brands, and travel packages to mountainous regions. Their momentary curiosity has been captured, analyzed, and translated into a signal of potential consumer behavior, instantly activating a complex network of targeted advertising. The self becomes "datafied," translated into quantifiable metrics and patterns that algorithms can understand and manipulate. The manuscript highlights the key shift: *Algorithms mirror behavior, not consciousness. Attention and engagement replace reflection. Data becomes the definition of identity. Consumption determines who we appear to be.*

We are defined not by our inner intentions or beliefs, but by our observable digital actions. Our attention is the commodity being bought and sold. Platforms are designed to maximize engagement, keeping us scrolling, clicking, and generating more data, often at the expense of deeper reflection or offline activities. The self reflected back to us through targeted advertising, personalized news feeds, and algorithmic recommendations is a statistical construct, a prediction based on past behavior, subtly shaping who we become by controlling what we see.

Scandals like the Cambridge Analytica affair, where personal data harvested from Facebook was allegedly used to influence elections, revealed the potent political implications of this datafication. But the process operates constantly on a commercial level, as targeted advertising follows us across the web, shaping our desires and consumption patterns based on our algorithmic profile.

Performing for the Platform: Identity as Commodity

Beyond being passively tracked, we actively participate in the construction of our digital selves. Social media platforms encourage us to curate and perform versions of our identity for public consumption. We carefully select photos, craft status updates, and manage our online personas to project a desired image. As the manuscript notes, *We no longer express selfhood — we perform it for platforms.*

This performance is often driven by the logic of the platform itself – the pursuit of likes, shares, followers, and validation within the digital sphere. Identity becomes a form of social currency, a brand to be managed. The pressure to maintain an appealing online persona can lead to anxiety, comparison, and a disconnect between the curated digital self and the complexities of lived experience.

The self, in this context, is no longer primarily an internal psychological project (as in the early Positive Stage) but an externalized performance, constantly monitored and evaluated by both human audiences and algorithmic systems. It is *internalized but also exposed*, as the manuscript aptly puts it. The boundaries blur between authentic expression and strategic self-presentation.

The Silicon Shadow thus falls heavily on the Positive Stage self. While building on the earlier emphasis on observation and measurement, the algorithmic age intensifies these processes to an unprecedented degree, turning the self into a source of data, a target for influence, and a commodity in the attention economy. The very tools designed to connect us also track, model, and monetize us, creating a new environment where the nature of identity itself is being fundamentally redefined.

Chapter 10: The Fractured Mirror - The Fragmented Digital Self

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

01

02 Metaphysism

Theism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

03

Scientism

Sankofism

04

A Path With A Heart by Carlos Castaneda

Don Juan said: "If you complete the second step successfully, I can show you only one more step. In the course of learning about the devil's weed, I realized she was not for me, and I did not pursue her path any further."

"What made you decide against it, don Juan?"

"The devil's weed nearly killed me every time I tried to use her. Once it was so bad I thought I was finished. And yet, I could have avoided all that pain."

"How? Is there a special way to avoid pain?"

"Yes, there is a way."

"Is it a formula, a procedure, or what?"

"It is a way of grabbing onto things. For instance, when I was learning about the devil's weed I was too eager. I grabbed onto things the way kids grab onto candy. The devil's weed is only one of a million paths. Anything is one of a million paths [un camino entre cantidades de caminos]. Therefore you must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if you feel you should not follow it, you must not stay with it under any conditions.

To have such clarity you must lead a disciplined life. Only then will you know that any path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you to do. But your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question. This question is one that only a very old man asks. My benefactor told me about it once when I was young, and my blood was too vigorous for me to understand it. Now I do understand it. I will tell you what it is: Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. They are paths going through the bush, or into the bush. In my own life I could say I have traversed long, long paths, but I am not anywhere. My benefactor's question has meaning now. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you."

What Self in a World of Avatars?

The relentless tracking, modeling, and monetization described in the previous chapter – the defining characteristics of the Silicon Age's impact on the Positive Stage self – have a profound psychological consequence: the fragmentation of identity. As we navigate an increasingly digital world, we present different facets of ourselves across a multitude of platforms, contexts, and roles. The professional persona on LinkedIn, the curated family moments on Facebook, the witty commentary on Twitter/X, the anonymous opinions on Reddit, the adventurous avatar in a virtual world – each represents a slice of identity, performed for a specific audience and governed by the distinct norms and architectures of each digital space. What Self is a growing sense of confusion and disconnection, a fractured mirror reflecting multiple, often contradictory, images.

Plural by Design: Managing Multiple Online Identities

This fragmentation is not merely accidental; it is, in many ways, inherent in the design of the digital landscape. The manuscript points out: *Identity is performed differently in each context. Roles are multiplied by platforms and interfaces. The idea of a unified self is breaking down... We are plural by design, not accident.*

Unlike the relatively integrated social spheres of pre-digital life, where different roles (parent, worker, friend, citizen) often overlapped and were witnessed by the same community, the digital world encourages compartmentalization. Each platform demands a specific type of performance, optimized for its particular algorithms and audience expectations. We become adept at code-switching, presenting carefully tailored versions of ourselves in each distinct online environment. Consider Sarah, who spends her morning crafting a serious, data-driven professional update for LinkedIn, her lunch break sharing lighthearted family photos and anecdotes on Facebook (carefully avoiding anything controversial), and her evening engaging in passionate, anonymous debates on a political forum on Reddit. While each persona might feel authentic in its context, the constant shifting and the awareness of these different performances can be exhausting, leading to a sense of inauthenticity or a feeling that no single platform captures the "real" self.

The experience of online communities further illustrates this. We might find belonging and express aspects of ourselves within niche groups online – fellow hobbyists, political allies, support groups – that remain hidden from our offline connections or other online circles. While this can be liberating, allowing exploration of different facets of identity, it also contributes to the sense that the self is less a unified whole and more a collection of context-dependent roles and affiliations.

The Uncanny Valley Within: AI Modeling and the Loss of Control

Adding another layer to this fragmentation is the role of Artificial Intelligence in modeling our identities. As discussed previously, algorithms create digital profiles based on our behavior. These models are used to predict our preferences and influence our actions, often with surprising accuracy. However, these AI-generated reflections can also feel alienating, creating what might be termed an "uncanny valley within." We see ourselves mirrored in targeted ads or content recommendations, but it is a self constructed from data points, lacking the nuance, contradictions, and inner life of our felt experience.
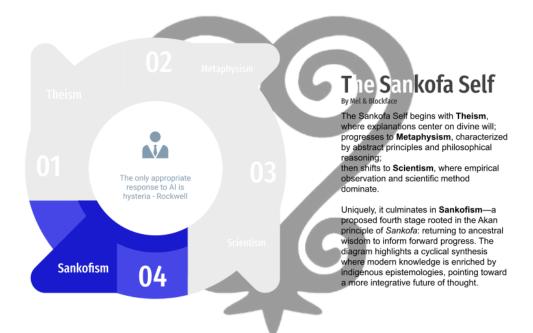
The manuscript highlights this unease: *AI creates modeled versions of us we don't control.* We become aware that powerful, opaque systems are defining us in ways we cannot fully grasp or contest. This algorithmic identity, based purely on past behavior, can feel deterministic, limiting our exposure to new ideas or possibilities and reinforcing existing patterns. The self generated by AI is a statistical ghost, haunting our digital experience, a constant reminder that we are being watched, measured, and categorized by forces beyond our direct control.

The rise of deepfakes and sophisticated AI-generated content further complicates this picture. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish authentic human expression from synthetic media, potentially eroding trust and further destabilizing our sense of a stable reality and a coherent self within it.

The fragmented digital self, therefore, is a product of both our active performance across multiple platforms and the passive reflection generated by algorithmic modeling. The very structure of the Silicon Age encourages this partitioning of identity. While the Positive Stage initially sought to understand the self through scientific observation, its late phase, dominated by digital technology, risks shattering the object of its study into a thousand pieces, leaving individuals grappling with the question: amidst all these reflections and performances, what self remains?

The manuscript, under "My Self," begins to point towards an answer, urging reflection and reconnection with the unmodeled, felt aspects of self: *Beneath performance, there is still presence. Personal memory and story matter. Self-authorship is possible through reflection. Journaling and silence are tools of reclamation. You can still choose who you are becoming.* This sets the stage for exploring the potential emergence of the Supra Self – a conscious effort to integrate these fragments and reclaim agency in the face of overwhelming technological forces.

Part 4: The Sankofa Self - The Self Reimagined (Fifth Industrial Revolution)

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

In the diagram:

- 01 Theism
- 02 Metaphysism
- 03 Scientism
- 04 Sankofism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

Chapter 11: Reclaiming the Code - The Rise of the Supra Self

I Create Therefore I Am

The journey through the Theological, Metaphysical, and Positive stages has brought us to a critical juncture. The Positive Stage, supercharged by Silicon, has led to unprecedented knowledge and technological power, but also to a self that risks being measured, modeled, monetized, and ultimately fragmented by the very systems designed to understand and connect it. Faced with the algorithmic gaze and the fractured mirror of digital identity, a crucial question arises: Is this the endpoint of the evolution of the self? Or is there a path forward, a way to reclaim agency and forge a more integrated, authentic identity amidst the complexities of the modern world? The concept of the Supra Self emerges as a potential answer, representing not a return to a previous stage, but a conscious leap forward – an integration of wisdom and technology, awareness and action.

If we are to reclaim identity in the age of modeling, it will not be through rejection but through conscious creation. The Supra Self is the sovereign self — aware, integrated, and awake. It is not inherited. It is designed. Not protected, but enacted. This marks a fundamental shift in orientation. Instead of being passively defined by external forces – whether gods, abstract principles, or algorithms – the Supra Self actively participates in its own becoming. The new declaration, moving beyond Descartes and the data trackers, becomes: *I Create Therefore I Am.*

Beyond Reaction: Designing the Self with Intention

The first step towards the Supra Self involves moving beyond mere reaction to the pressures of the digital age. It requires recognizing the forces at play – the attention economy, the algorithmic modeling, the performance pressures – and consciously choosing how to engage with them. This is not about rejecting technology wholesale, but about cultivating intentionality.

As the manuscript suggests in the summary for "I Create Therefore I Am": *Creation becomes the answer to modeling and fragmentation. The Supra Self defines itself through conscious imagination and values.* This implies building an inner architecture, a framework of personal values and principles that guide one's choices, both online and offline. It means consciously designing one's digital presence, choosing which platforms to use and how, curating information intake, and setting boundaries to protect time for reflection and deep work. It involves becoming literate in the technologies that shape our lives, understanding their biases and incentives, and making informed decisions about their role.

Examples might include individuals who meticulously curate their social media feeds to align with their values, filtering out noise and focusing on sources that inspire or inform; artists who leverage digital tools not just for superficial validation through likes, but for profound

self-expression, creating interactive narratives or immersive virtual experiences that explore complex themes; or people who practice digital minimalism, consciously scheduling offline time, disabling non-essential notifications, and choosing deep connection over constant, shallow engagement. These are acts of design, reclaiming agency from the default settings of the algorithmic age.

Integrating the Fragments: Towards Conscious Coherence

The Supra Self does not seek to erase the multiple facets of identity revealed in the digital age, but rather to integrate them into a more coherent whole. It acknowledges the different roles we play but strives for authenticity and consistency across them, guided by core values. This involves bridging the gap between the online persona and the offline self, fostering congruence between expressed beliefs and lived actions.

The manuscript emphasizes: *Creativity is about coherence, not expression [alone]. Identity becomes enacted, not extracted.* The act of creation, whether artistic, intellectual, or relational, becomes a way to weave together the disparate threads of experience into a meaningful tapestry. It is through consciously enacting our values and expressing our unique perspective that we build a coherent sense of self, resisting the fragmentation imposed by external systems that seek only to extract data or engagement.

This integration also involves acknowledging and integrating the insights from previous stages of self-evolution. The Supra Self doesn't discard the spiritual awareness of the Theological Stage or the rational inquiry of the Metaphysical Stage. It seeks to blend the capacity for deep connection (to self, others, nature, or spirit) with rational thought and the mindful use of technology. It recognizes the value of both introspection (as emphasized in Eastern traditions) and empirical understanding (from the Positive Stage).
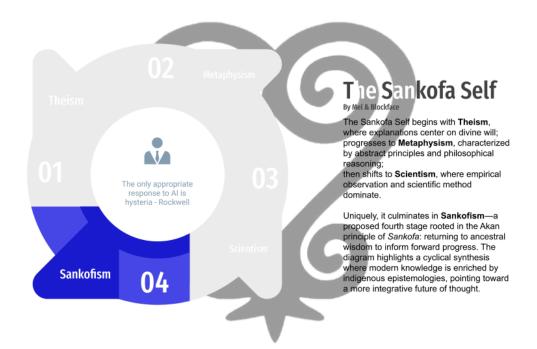
My Self: Finding Presence Beneath Performance

Ultimately, the Supra Self is grounded in presence – the ability to connect with the felt sense of being, beneath the layers of performance and algorithmic modeling. As the manuscript reminds us from the section "My Self": *Beneath performance, there is still presence. Personal memory and story matter. Self-authorship is possible through reflection. Journaling and silence are tools of reclamation. You can still choose who you are becoming.*

The Supra Self cultivates awareness of the present moment, recognizing thoughts and feelings without being completely identified with them (echoing insights from the Eastern Enlightened Self). Practices like mindfulness, journaling, spending time in nature, or engaging in deep conversation become vital tools for reconnecting with this core presence, the unmodeled, unmediated experience of being alive.

This presence provides the anchor for navigating the digital world with greater discernment and less reactivity. It allows us to observe the impulse to perform, the lure of algorithmic validation, and the anxieties of comparison without being swept away by them. It is the foundation upon which a consciously created, integrated, and sovereign self can be built.

Conscious creation is foundational to the Supra Self. By embracing creativity, intentionality, integration, and presence, the Supra Self represents a pathway beyond the limitations of the algorithmically defined identity. It is an active, ongoing process of becoming, reclaiming the code of our own consciousness and authoring a future self capable of thriving with wisdom and agency in the emerging Fifth Industrial Revolution.

Chapter 12: Ancient Wisdom, Future Tech - Forging the Fifth Revolution

The Sankofa Self
By Mel & Blockface

The Sankofa Self begins with **Theism**, where explanations center on divine will; progresses to **Metaphysism**, characterized by abstract principles and philosophical reasoning; then shifts to **Scientism**, where empirical observation and scientific method dominate.

Uniquely, it culminates in **Sankofism**—a proposed fourth stage rooted in the Akan principle of *Sankofa*: returning to ancestral wisdom to inform forward progress. The diagram highlights a cyclical synthesis where modern knowledge is enriched by indigenous epistemologies, pointing toward a more integrative future of thought.

Diagram labels:
- 01 Theism
- 02 Metaphysism
- 03 Scientism
- 04 Sankofism

The only appropriate response to AI is hysteria - Rockwell

The Alchemical Marriage: Silicon and Spirit

The emergence of the Supra Self, as explored in the previous chapter, is not merely an individual project of self-reclamation; it points towards a broader societal transformation, often conceptualized as the Fifth Industrial Revolution. Unlike the Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven primarily by the technological capabilities of Silicon (AI, big data, IoT), the Fifth Revolution seeks an "alchemical marriage" – a conscious integration of these powerful technologies with deep human values, ethical considerations, and timeless wisdom traditions. It envisions a future where technology serves humanity's well-being and flourishing, rather than simply optimizing efficiency or maximizing profit at the expense of the human spirit. The Supra Self, with its emphasis on awareness, integration, and conscious creation, is both a prerequisite for and a product of this emerging era.

This integration involves revisiting and revaluing the insights gleaned from earlier stages of human understanding, particularly the Theological and Metaphysical. The profound sense of interconnectedness felt by the Shamanic Self, the ethical frameworks developed within Monotheism, the introspective depth of Eastern philosophies, and the emphasis on reason and universal rights from the Enlightenment – these are not relics of the past but vital resources for navigating the future. The challenge lies in translating this ancient wisdom into practices and principles that can guide the development and deployment of modern technology.

Consider the potential of AI. Left purely to the logic of optimization and data analysis (the culmination of the Positive Stage), AI can perpetuate biases, exacerbate inequalities, and create systems that dehumanize. However, guided by ethical principles rooted in human dignity (Metaphysical Stage) and a sense of interconnected responsibility (Theological Stage insights), AI could be developed to enhance creativity, foster empathy, solve complex global problems like climate change, and support individual well-being. This requires moving beyond a purely technocratic approach and engaging in broader societal dialogue about the values we want to embed in our tools.

Tools for Sovereignty: Values, Habits, and Conscious Technology Use

Forging this Fifth Revolution requires individuals – Supra Selves in the making – to cultivate tools for maintaining sovereignty in an increasingly complex technological environment. This goes beyond simply understanding the technology; it involves actively shaping our relationship with it, guided by our inner compass.

Key tools include:

1. **Clarifying Values:** As the Supra Self defines itself through conscious imagination and values, identifying what truly matters becomes paramount. What principles guide your life? What kind of world do you want to contribute to? These values provide the criteria for evaluating technologies and deciding how to engage with them.
2. **Cultivating Conscious Habits:** Our relationship with technology is largely shaped by habits. The Supra Self intentionally designs these habits – setting boundaries around device use, curating information streams, scheduling time for deep work and reflection, prioritizing face-to-face interaction. This requires discipline and self-awareness to counteract the addictive design of many platforms.
3. **Practicing Discernment:** Developing the ability to critically evaluate information, recognize algorithmic manipulation, and distinguish between authentic connection and superficial engagement is crucial. This involves media literacy, understanding technological systems, and cultivating inner awareness (presence) to notice how different digital interactions affect one's state of mind.
4. **Leveraging Technology for Growth:** The Supra Self doesn't just defend against technology's downsides; it actively uses its power for positive ends – accessing knowledge, connecting with diverse perspectives, facilitating creative expression, supporting well-being (e.g., through mindfulness apps used consciously), and organizing collective action for positive change.
5. **Embracing Embodiment and Nature:** Counterbalancing the disembodying effects of excessive screen time, the Supra Self intentionally reconnects with the physical body (through movement, mindfulness of sensations) and the natural world. This grounding provides perspective and resilience, reminding us of the realities beyond the digital sphere.

These tools empower individuals to move from being passive consumers or data points to becoming active architects of their own experience and conscious participants in the technological landscape.

The Sankofa in Society: Co-creating a Human-Centric Future

The rise of the Supra Self is intrinsically linked to the co-creation of a society that supports human flourishing in the age of AI. This involves advocating for and building systems – technological, economic, political, educational – that prioritize human well-being, ethical considerations, and long-term sustainability over short-term profits or narrow optimization goals.

Speculative futures and current movements offer glimpses of what this might look like: ethical AI development frameworks that incorporate diverse human values; platform designs that prioritize genuine connection over addictive engagement; educational systems that cultivate critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and digital discernment alongside technical skills; economic models that value well-being and ecological health; and communities, both online and offline, that foster deep connection and support the integration of the fragmented self.

The Supra Self recognizes its interdependence and engages in collective action to shape a future where technology amplifies our best human qualities rather than exploiting our weaknesses. It understands that individual sovereignty is strengthened, not diminished, by contributing to a healthier collective.

Ultimately, the Fifth Industrial Revolution, fueled by the conscious creation of Supra Selves, represents a hopeful trajectory beyond the potential pitfalls of the Silicon Age.