

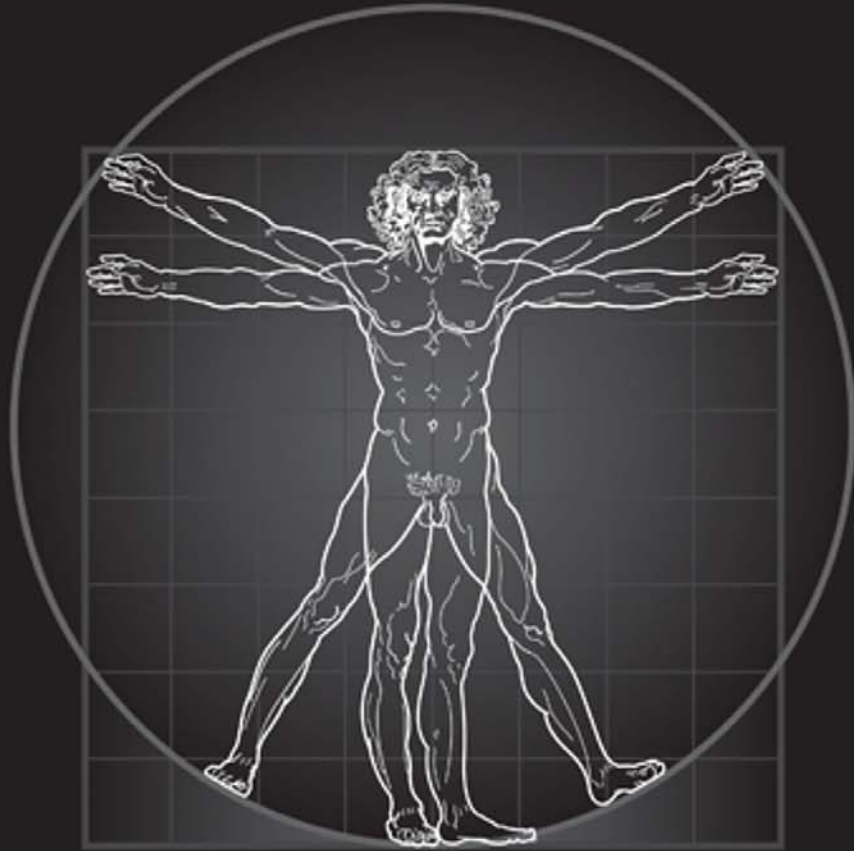


wgst 409.3

understanding western patriarchy

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term 2, 2011



Introduction

This is an image you will confront frequently throughout the course. It's a fanciful reproduction of Leonardo's sketch "Vitruvian Man." He made it to illustrate the proportional perfection of the human (read "male") body. It came to represent the Western philosophy of Humanism as it was recovered from Greco-Roman culture during the Renaissance. Today, in this age of globalism, it has come to signify even more—namely, the glorious heritage of Western culture. It is such an important image that it appears on the flipside of the 1 Euro coin that is produced in Italy, where the Renaissance began in the closing years of the 15th century CE.

In this course, the image is used to represent the modern revival of ancient patriarchy after its near collapse during the early Middle Ages. In other words, it signifies the continuity—the staying power—of patriarchal culture over the last 5000 years. Patriarchy is the default setting—the ideology we always return to after periods of great upheaval. In this course, we will investigate why and how that is.



Mesopotamians

The **Mesopotamians**: Mesopotamia is that geographical space between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers currently called Iraq, often called “the cradle of civilization.” Here, around 3000 BCE, war became a more important survival strategy than fertility, and patriarchy went from being one of several ways a tribe might choose to order its human relationships to a universal imperative. Its myths and laws and other cultural artefacts—still in the process of transformation throughout the fourth and third millennia—bear traces of earlier, more egalitarian, less violent traditions.



the Israelites

The Israelites: Several empires had risen and fallen by the time a band of dispossessed hill-dwellers in the Levant, together with assorted stragglers from various places around the eastern end of the Mediterranean formed a coalition under the sign of One God. Over the space of a thousand years, they settled down on a narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river and invented identity politics. They pooled their various tribal stories, revised some prevailing patriarchal laws, wrote some new ones, and brought them all together as a body of texts which would eventually become Western culture's most important book—the Bible, a veritable handbook of patriarchy.



the Greeks

Over the last half of the first millennium BCE, the ancient Greeks invented patriarchal democracy—democracy of, by, and for privileged men, who represented ideal *form*, while women were *inferior substance*. Indeed, it was the Greeks who perfected this whole new way of organizing reality—the binary way, and our way ever since. From our perspective, their greatest legacy was their influence on a breakaway group of Jews who formed a new sect around a Galilean prophet called Jesus.



the
Church Fathers

Ecclesia and Synagoga

This is a fifteenth-century painting, but it is an accurate interpolation of the way in which the Church Fathers of late antiquity theorized the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. The Christian Ecclesia (left) is upright and clear-eyed, and she holds the chalice and the cross with firmness and grace. She is dressed in regal robes, which signify her universalism. The Jewish Synagoga is blinded, her staff bearing tribal insignia is broken, and the laws of Moses (the Ten commandments) are slipping out of her hand. She wears a turban and tunic to signify her narrow regionalism.



The new Europeans—descendants of the barbarian waves that had brought ancient Rome to its knees and intermarried with the indigenous population of the western half of the continent—militarized Christianity at the onset of the second millennium as conquerors and eradicators of the highly refined Muslim cultures of the Holy Land. Thus was established the tradition of Holy War and persecution that would help to define the character of Europe through the High Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the birth of a system of patriarchal states fueled by imperialist ambitions. Addicted to war, these empires destroyed each other in the two biggest conflagrations in human history: the Great War and its even more destructive encore, World War II.

WGSt 409.3 Tuesday 2:30 - 6:20, T2, 2011

For prerequisite waivers and permission to register email diana.relke@usask.ca

PS: **There are no books to buy for this course. All readings will be available online.**