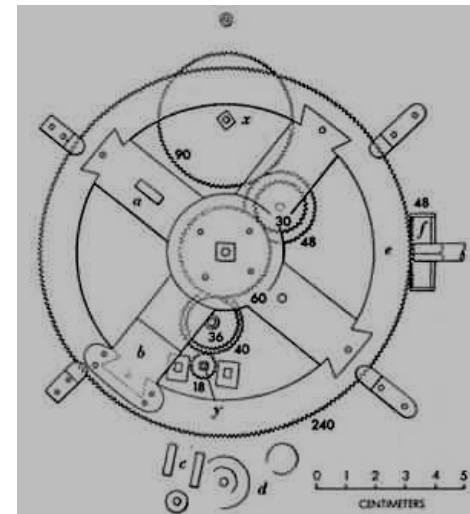
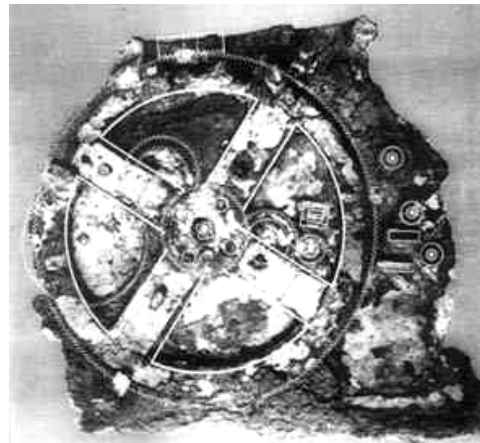
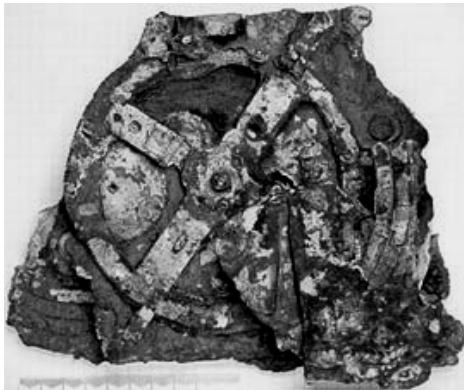


# SEMINAR

## Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

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# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

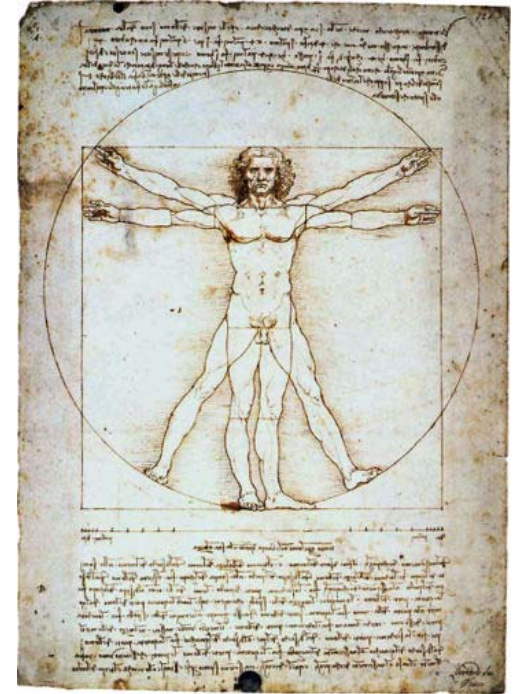
## introduction

- *scientific* thinking (i.e., analytic/systematic thinking) and the accompanying notion of modernity
- *traditional* culture
- Are we moving towards a Western analytical way of thinking and living, or a different model?

# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## scientific thinking

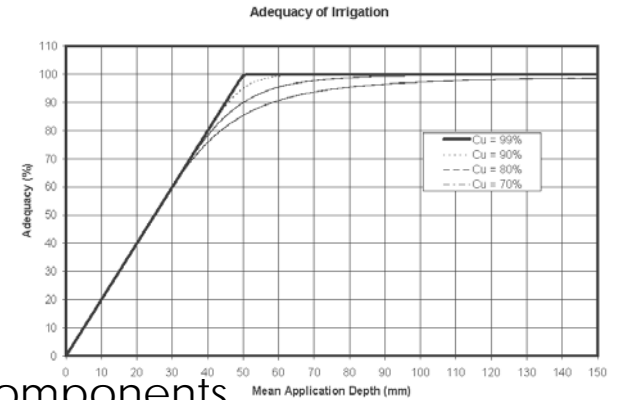
- *analytic*
  - examining evidence
  - constructing models
  - the universe and everything in it is part of a vast, knowable system...
- *systematic*
  - uniformity, meeting expectations
  - people, goods, ideas are all part of a rational system
  - new ideas fit or will be fit into this system



# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## scientific thinking: an example

- *analytic - testability, modelability*
  - physical world is made of analyzable components, to a certain level ("quanta")
  - concept of conscious and unconscious mind, and therapy design to address this model
- *systemic - reliability, repeatability, standardization*
  - mass manufacturing
  - use of credentialed education
  - belief in "human rights" as part of comprehensive rational system of rights



## Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

### traditional culture

- *time: cyclical, block, non-existent, etc. (versus linear time)*
- *communalism (versus solitude and individual actualization)*
- *family ethics and propriety + shame culture (vs. inherent rights and written rules of conduct)*



# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## traditional culture (cont.)

- *magical thinking*

- There exist abstract **forces and powers** (*qi*, ley lines, etc.).
- Everything in the cosmos is actually / potentially **interconnected** spatially and temporally (past, present, and future co-exist / block time / manifest-manifesting).
- "**Homeopathic magic**" / "law of similarity": things or actions that resemble other things or actions have a *causal* connection.
- "**Contagious magic**" / "law of contact": things that have been either in physical contact or in spatial or temporal association with other things retain a connection after they are separated.



[Adapted from Phillips Stevens, Jr., "Magical Thinking in Complementary and Alternative Medicine", *Skeptical Inquirer* (November/December 2001).]

# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## traditional culture: an example

- **magical thinking**
  - **homophony**: Chinese word for “four” (四), is pronounced *sí*. The Chinese word for “death” (死) is a homophone of this.
  - **affinity**: In Chinese medicine, organs of the body are categorized according to certain qualities; treatment for those organs is similarly categorized according to the five “flavors” of the herbal drugs

<i>Flavor</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Related Organ</i>	<i>Effects</i>	<i>Example</i>
hot	metal	lungs; large intestine	induce sweat; balance <i>qi</i>	fresh ginger
sweet	earth	stomach; spleen	digestive tonic; distribute nutrition	Chinese licorice
sour	wood	liver; gall bladder	binding; astringent	unripened plums
bitter	fire	heart; small intestine	drying; antidiysenteric	bark of amur cork tree
salty	water	kidneys; bladder	softening; laxative; diuretic	algae and seaweed

# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## traditional culture: an example (cont.)

- *magical thinking*
  - **non-analytical**: Objects and phenomena are not analyzed for constituent parts, nor fit into a larger system of classification based on scientifically-established morphology.



*Ndonganazibovana*  
*Ndonganazibovana* means that the plant has a stalk that is red like blood. It is used by a man who does not trust his girlfriend. First it is cut up and ground into a fine powder which is then mixed as a drink which the man takes before he has sex with his girlfriend. If she then tries to have sex with another man, they will not be able to because *Ndonganazibovana* will cause her blood to run immediately. Moses Khubisa.

*Drimia Robusta*  
Bulbs large, the flesh red purple. Leaves basal 3 or more. Inflorescence unbranched. Flowers greenish white or silvery. Seeds flat, often winged. *D. haworthioides* is remarkable on account of the peculiar structure of its subterranean parts. The leaves, about 4-6 in number are produced in winter, towards the summer their blades wither, but the subterranean portion of each leaf, the petiole, lengthens and its apex enlarging considerably, becomes an organ for storing water & food. Marloth 1915.

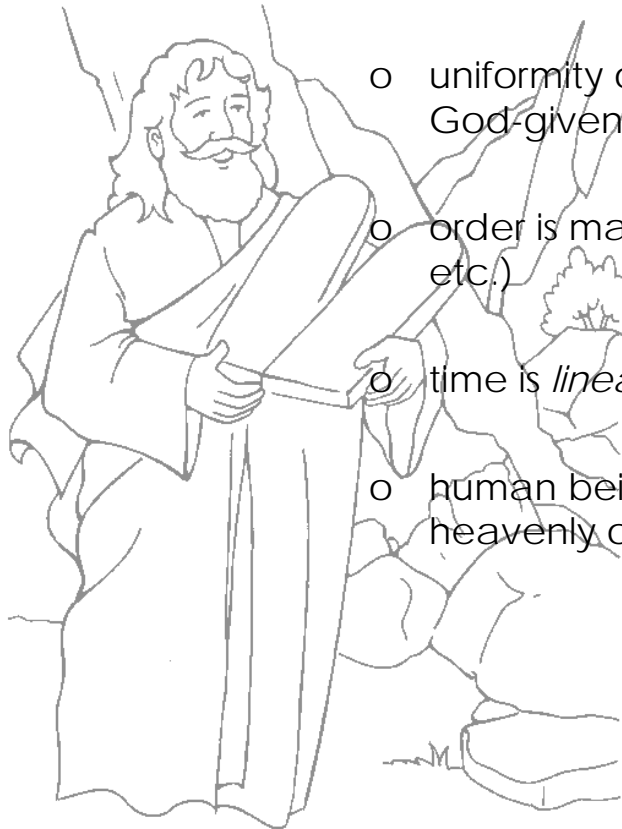


# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## rise of scientific thinking

- ***triumph of monotheism over polytheistic beliefs***

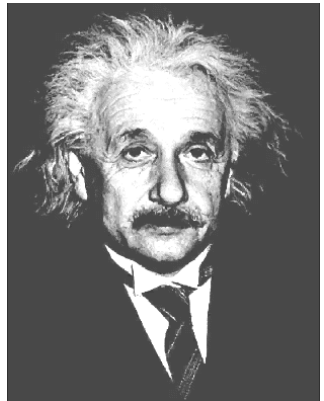
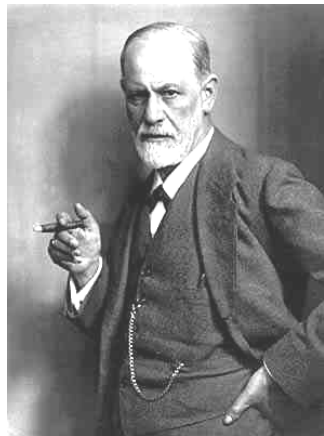
- o monotheistic universe implies that there is a *single, coherent plan*
- o uniformity of such an order meant that there were *laws* — that is, an explicit, God-given *system* for human conduct
- o order is made explicit through *written* texts (Ten Commandments, the Bible, etc.)
- o time is *linear*, and human knowledge cumulative and *progressive*
- o human beings have a "*project*" on Earth, to build societies mirroring the heavenly order



# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## rise scientific thinking

- *monotheism's results*



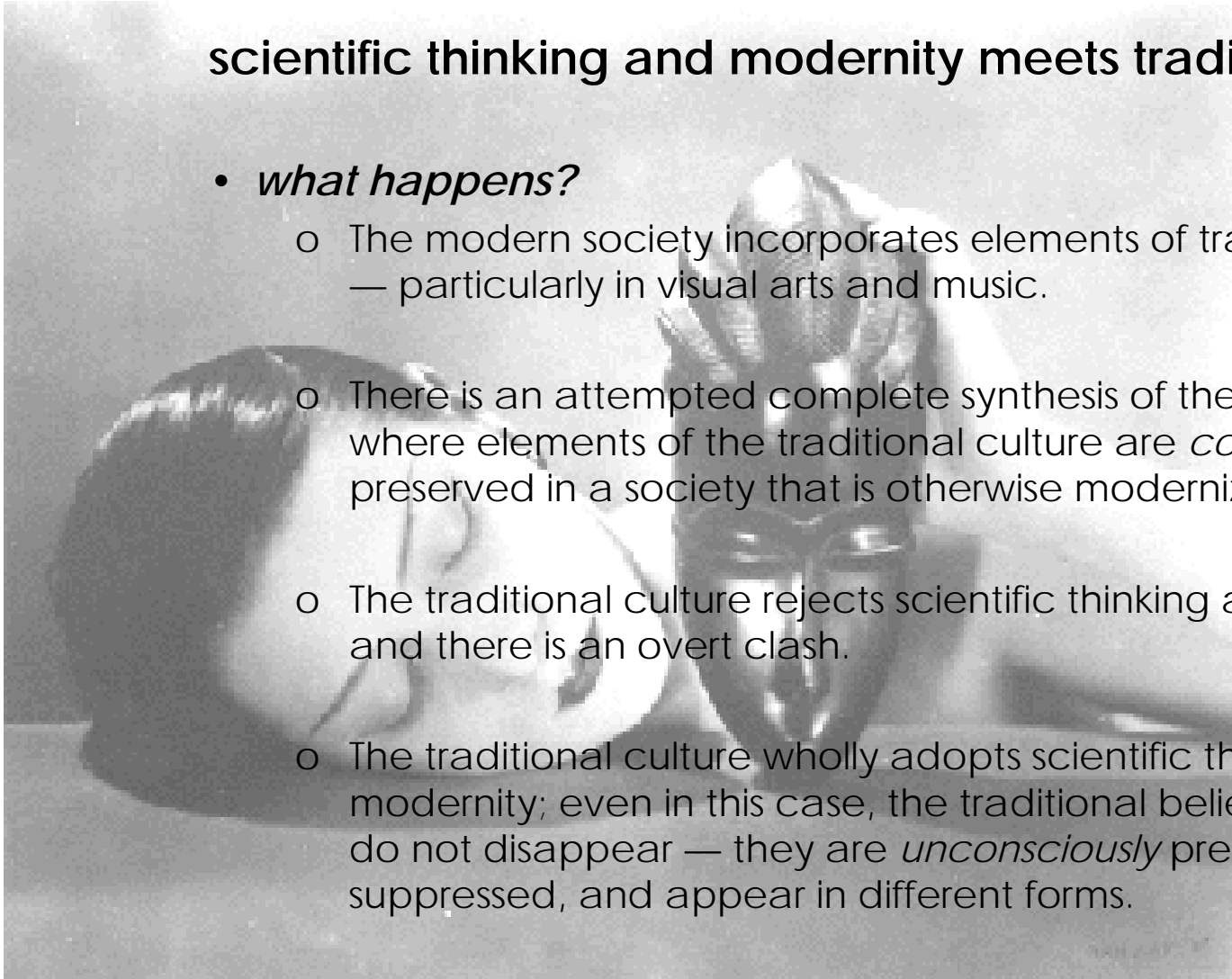
- o science functions on a certain kind of idealism, one that is grounded in this monotheistic worldview. First of all, a monotheistic universe implies that there is a single, coherent plan, and that *this plan can be discovered*.
- o Particularly in Jewish monotheism, God is, as Steiner puts it, so remote that he “does not allow imagining”.
- o Unlike the polytheistic gods of old, this new God does not play an active part in human affairs, and so mankind must rely on his intellect to explore — and explain — this vast creation.
- o The very remoteness of the monotheistic God demands *an intellectual approach*.
- o Two of the very icons of this scientific or “analytical” approach, synonymous with “the modern”, were Jewish: Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein.

## Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

### scientific thinking and modernity meets traditional culture

- *what happens?*

- o The modern society incorporates elements of traditional cultures — particularly in visual arts and music.
- o There is an attempted complete synthesis of the two systems, where elements of the traditional culture are *consciously* preserved in a society that is otherwise modernizing.
- o The traditional culture rejects scientific thinking and modernity, and there is an overt clash.
- o The traditional culture wholly adopts scientific thinking and modernity; even in this case, the traditional beliefs and practices do not disappear — they are *unconsciously* preserved and suppressed, and appear in different forms.



# Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

## conclusions

- *where are we and where are we going?*
  1. Our society is slipping through laziness “back into superstitions and darkness” (Carl Sagan) / into an “anarchic nightmare of a new Dark Age” (Niall Ferguson)
  2. Our society is purposefully going back, disturbed by the effects of science and technology (neo-Luddism, New Age-ism, etc.)
  3. The “**stratum**” of traditional culture never disappeared, with modern “stand-ins” (e.g., UFO’s) for ancient apparitions...

The Middle Ages, antiquity, and prehistory have not died out, as the enlightened suppose, but live on merrily in large sections of the population. Mythology and magic flourish as ever in our midst...

## Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

### conclusions (cont.)

- *where are we and where are we going?*

4. **Modernity never arose at all...** "Modernity" is just a playing out of the old human psyche as much as the fearsome gods, spirits, and ghosts of the traditional cultures were. ...

The nightmares and primal fears now manifest themselves not in fearsome headdresses and loud drumming, but in the massive and terrifying industrial plants that are like the dark and fearsome forests of old. The vast parking lots stretch before us like ancient *terrae incognitae*, and metropolitan skyscrapers and underground nuclear shelters are standing in for the medieval castles and Neanderthal caves of the past.

We are waking up to find that no scientific revolution ever really happened. As Jung said, the "Middle Ages, antiquity, and prehistory... live on merrily", and modernity is only an apparition. We are still in a dark age, surrounded by not by spirits, but by their frightening technological equivalents, **all spinning out into consciousness, becoming manifest, from the same deep and dark recesses of the human mind, a mind *primitive* — as it always has been.**

Scientific Thinking and Modernity Meets Traditional Culture

# DISCUSSION SESSION