

Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: BELIEFS

DESTINY/FATALISM: *You believe there is no control over what happens.*

Fatalism is the belief that all events are predetermined and therefore inevitable. It is the belief in fate, which is another name for destiny: the forces that (some believe) control what happens in the future, and crucially, are outside human control.

Though the word "fatalism" is commonly used to refer to an attitude of resignation in the face of some future event or events which are thought to be inevitable, philosophers usually use the word to refer to the view that we are powerless to do anything other than what we actually do. This view may be argued for in various ways: by appeal to logical laws and metaphysical necessities; by appeal to the existence and nature of God; by appeal to causal determinism (SEP).

An important approach to destiny and fate is found in the philosophy of the Stoics (Greece, early 3rd century BC). In the Stoic cosmology everything is determined and there is a reason for everything. They are therefore deterministic. At the same time they also believe in free will. By postulating a many-dimensional network of events (cause-effects), rather than one single chain they imagine a 'swarm' of causes interacting with each other and humans freely participate in the determined chain of events independently of external conditions and are therefore responsible for their own actions, modulating the apparent arbitrariness of fate.

For Freud the father of psychoanalysis anatomy is destiny, referring specifically to how female biology informs her social and cultural status, and her mode of living. Against this, some feminist and new materialist theorists postulate that posthuman is a what overcomes these limitations thanks to technological hybridisation (Haraway, Braidotti). Contemplating the blossoming of an apple tree, polymath Vilem Flusser describes the process as the tree waking up to its destiny, so that not only the 'virtual' in it became manifest, but 'necessity' too was added to create the tangible reality of the buds.

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DIVINATION: *You extract meaning from an encounter with chance.*

Divination is a way to extract knowledge about the future from signs that are interpreted by a 'diviner' who is able to read them, for instance, the flight of birds or the interior organs of animals, the patterns of tea leaves, or of coffee grounds. Divination can be described as an ongoing inquiry into the unknown that uses chance as an opportunity to make meaning. Divination presupposes a knowledge hidden in signs; a knowledge that cannot be known but only recognized by observing traces and by making conjectures; ultimately a knowledge without a subject (Agamben, 2015). From the 17th century onwards, modern science expels divinatory sciences from the pursuit of knowledge. The subject of science becomes the only subject of knowledge, denying existence to knowledge without subject. However, as Agamben remarks, the apparent demise of divinatory sciences, far from signalling the end of the knowledge of the unknown, has ensured its distribution to other fields somehow attuned to forms of speculative knowledge-making: psychoanalysis, arts, finance, literature, design fiction. It is worth pointing out that for the ancient Greeks the conjectural method was the domain of the goddess Metis, who not only represented divination by means of water but was also the goddess of cunning intelligence. Metis was Zeus's first wife. Zeus swallows her as soon as she conceives Athena, and in doing so he makes Metis part of his own body of sovereignty and control, eliminating any element of unpredictability and disorder from the establishment of logos (Detienne & Vernant, 1978).

Divinatory practices are significant not because they offer definitive answers, or a clear-cut decision-making technique, but because they are a process of speculating into uncertainty that can accommodate enigmatic, equivocal, or even opposed and conflicting meanings: this ambiguity of knowledge-making must be treasured if we want to inhabit the contingency of the world (Ramey 2016).

For Deleuze, who writes about divination in his discussion of the event in Stoic philosophy, divination is 'the relation between the pure event (not yet actualized) and the depth of bodies, the corporeal actions and passions whence it results' (Deleuze, 1990: 163). Put differently, divination sets the ground for creation by seeking in the emergent forms the seeds of forms yet to come, of future actualizations and differentiations. In this sense divination - 'the art of surfaces, lines, and singular points appearing on the surface' (ibid.) - is a diagram that connects the known to the unknown. Any diagrammatic operation of divination captures (and wills) possible events by impacting on how present responses are selected, designed and implemented. The relationship between divination and diagrams is a significant one: like divination, diagrams articulate the conditions that make possible conceptual creation and the manifestation of new expressions; like divination, they do not determine directly the outcome in advance. Again, indeterminacy is key.

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HYPERSTITION: You trust a fictional meme to alter your reality.

Hyperstition is a neologism that combines the words 'hyper' and 'superstition' to describe the action of successful ideas in the arena of culture. Akin to memes, hyperstitions work at the deeper evolutionary level of social organisation impacting on its patterns of cultural evolution. Unlike memes, however, hyperstitions describe a specific category of ideas. Coined by renegade academics, the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU), hyperstition builds narratives able to effectuate their own reality through the workings of feedback loops, generating new socio-political attractors. Functioning as magical sigils or engineering diagrams hyperstitions are ideas that, once 'downloaded' into the cultural mainframe, engender apocalyptic positive feedback cycles. Whether couched as religious mystery teaching, or as secular credo, hyperstitions act as catalysts, engendering further (and faster) change and subversion. Describing the effect of very real cultural anxieties about the future, hyperstitions refer to exponentially accelerating social transformations.

For instance, the very real socio-economic makeover of western (and increasingly global) society by the hyperstitions of Judeo-Christianity and free-market capitalism are good examples of hyperstitional feedback cycles. As Nick Land explains: "capitalism incarnates hyperstitional dynamics at an unprecedented and unsurpassable level of intensity, turning mundane economic 'speculation' into an effective world-historical force" (email interview). Not only do the ideas themselves function as hyperstitions, but the trauma and fear engendered by their cultural 'makeovers' (whether in the form of crusade, jihad, secular war, industrial revolution or economic reform) merely serve to further empower the basic premise. In their book *Inventing the Future*, Srnicek and Williams postulate that progress itself must be understood as hyperstitional, in other words, "as a kind of fiction, but one that aims to transform itself into a truth. Hyperstitions operate by catalysing dispersed sentiment into a historical force that brings the future into existence. They have the temporal form of 'will have been'. Such hyperstitions of progress form orienting narratives with which to navigate forward, rather than being an established or necessary property of the world" (2016: 75).

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SUPERSTITION: You expect something to jeopardize your chances.

Superstition is an umbrella term that has been used to describe what is not rational, objective or scientific. Coloured by irrationality, false credence, and credulous belief in the supernatural (when not backward attitude), the label of superstition has been used to demean systems of belief that are other to the established creed. In particular, early anthropology practitioners and theorists construed the beliefs and practices of primitives as superstition (e.g. (e.g. J. G. Frazer's 1910 volume *Totemism and Exogamy* is subtitled: "a treatise on certain early forms of superstition and society."). Put differently, superstition cannot be discussed without framing it historically within systems of beliefs that belong to different cosmologies: for early anthropologists, what was religion to the "primitive" people who were objects of observation was labelled superstition (see for instance animism and shamanism). Anthropological tradition rooted in the primacy of Western ontology has explained other ontologies as superstition, folklore, or fantasies. The entire enterprise of modern science can be characterized as a knowledge-making practice that is rational, objective, empirical, experimental, and evidence-based, in order to distinguish itself from superstition (but also metaphysics, religion, and folklore). Philosopher Isabelle Stengers has written extensively about this spurious separation between the natural and the supernatural as foundational to the invention of science itself. In discussing alleged 'miracles' she warns that we should not "mobilize the categories of superstition, belief, or symbolic efficacy in an attempt to explain away what pilgrims claim to experience. Instead, we must conclude that the Virgin Mary requires a milieu that does not answer to scientific demands." (Stengers, 2012).

Superstition can be considered a conscious strategy to control the environment. Spinoza writes that superstition arises spontaneously in the human heart from uncertainty, fear, and the need to exorcize the ever-pending natural and social dangers. In his 1741 essay 'Of Superstition and Enthusiasm' the Enlightenment empiricist philosopher David Hume identifies two pathologies of religion: 'superstition' and 'enthusiasm', both with the power to stimulate certain passion and behaviours. Superstition emerges from 'weakness, fear, melancholy' and 'terror', it thrives through habitual thinking about imagined threats and dangers. It can help to frame superstition as "a little science, inspired by the

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desire to understand, to foresee or to control the real world." (Santayana Reason in Religion, p. 22). Consider for instance the clash of belief systems that happens in certain circumstances, for instance when decision-making in a business environment (expected to be rational and objective) is influenced by factors that (for some) are irrational and unsupported by scientific evidence (e.g the use of feng shui by Chinese businesspeople).

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