Point of this lecture and next Tuesday’s:

to set up the highly-ordered world
that the
Black Plague [1347-48] will destroy.

It is an Aristotelian world:
a “great chain of being”
held firmly in place by fixed essences
which human knowledge can access;
a world in which your social place
is fixed by blood inheritance
and unchanging.

I. History
as
Archeology

The present is built on the past…
but we don’t see it ☹ …

Hence: the need to
dig deep!!!!!

Circa 1150: Aristotle’s Children

Greece / Persia / Cordoba / Paris / Oxford

6 September 2007
Week 01-Lecture 02

Anti-SAT History:
Make the familiar
UN-familiar!
1. Post-linguistic turn: language is a hammer, not a mirror
2. Psychoanalysis / Genealogy / History v. Memory
3. Trauma theory – encounter w/ chaos = loss of meaning system
4. Anthropology (purity and danger)
5. Hybridity/hybridization (post-colonialism)
6. Base-Superstructure (post-Marxism / structuralism)

III. Recapitulation:

History as Archeology →

*Against Ideology*

(History as *a moral project…*)

The function of ideology is to cover up origins . . .

History is against ideology …

History uncovers what has been covered; rediscovers what has been purposely repressed.

...and origins are bloody.

6. [Post-] structuralism of the 1960s (from Marxism)

SUPERSTRUCTURE
[culture]

BASE
[material realities]

My father told the we was all born
Of blood and tribulation.

And so then too was our great city….
But for those of us who lived and died in those furious days, it was like... no matter what they did to build this city up again...

The function of ideology is to cover up origins...

Aristotle: 384-322 BC
“Essentialism” imported 1400 years later (after Aristotle for a reason: an ideology that sustains medieval societal organization.

...and all origins are bloody.

Our own ideology: “All men are created equal.”

6. [Post-] structuralism of the 1960s (from Marxism)

SUPERSTRUCTURE
[culture]  
BASE
[material realities]  

KEY FOR MIDDLE AGES: “Essentialism” is an ideology.
It justifies the social distribution: 3% own land; 97% work it.

USA distribution of wealth by quintile, 1998

KEY FOR MIDDLE AGES: “Essentialism” is an ideology.
It justifies the social distribution: 3% own land; 97% work it.
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Leona Helmsley's former housekeeper said yesterday the Queen of Mean's pampered $12 million pooch made life miserable for the hired help. "We had so much trouble with Trouble," Zamfira Sfara told the Daily News. "I was bitten dozens of times."

The Romanian housekeeper, who worked in Helmsley's posh apartment in the Helmsley Park Lane Hotel, described the lavish life the 8-year-old Maltese shared with the hotel queen, who died last week at age 87, shortly after leaving her $12 million to her late husband, Harry, who she believed communicated with her through their dog.

"I never saw a human being so in love with an animal," said Sfara, 48. "They were always together everywhere." Helmsley even shared her double king-size bed with Trouble, Sfara said, and lots of kisses.

"She would lick the dog tongue to tongue," she said. "It was unnatural. It was unhealthy."

USA distribution of wealth by quintile, 1998

KEY FOR MIDDLE AGES: "Essentialism" is an ideology. It justifies the social distribution: 3% own land; 97% work it.

I. How Aristotle survived the “Dark Ages”
Even “the School of Athens” -- Plato and Aristotle! -- seems to be in the “East” ...

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Late 400s CE/AD: Visigoths (“Germanic Migrations”) conquer Iberian Peninsula from Romans
Weak unstable governments, infighting

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Early 600s:
Muhammad the Prophet: proclaims a radical monotheism in the Arabian desert:

There is no god but God.

NB: Menocal’s usage: not “Allah” --- i.e., implying another “God” [polytheism]
We don’t say “YHWH” or “Deus” or “Dieu”

Quran = “recitation” of this revelation

Dies in 632 in Mecca [“Saudi Arabia”]
caliph = “successor” = problem of legitimacy
How close are you in blood marriage? [contrast Xty: bishops --- how close to the apostles?]

---

Late 600s: conquered Berbers embrace Islam
NB: Berbers are non-Arab Muslims
Herbs led by Syrian Arabs across Straits of Gibralter
Mercenaries don’t leave! 720: “Conquest” complete.
Establish a Muslim kingdom loyal to Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus [Syria]
732: Battle of Poitiers
- 720: Muslim conquest of Spain complete
- Cross Pyrénées into “Gaul” [France]
- 732: Battle of Poitiers
- Charles Martel “the Hammer”
- [grandfather of Charlemagne] turns invaders back at Poitier
- Muslims retreat back to Iberian Peninsula

750 --- Abassids massacre whole Umayyad family in Damascus [“Syria”]
Transfer capital of Islamic Empire to Baghdad [“Iraq”]
→ Saudi Arabia
→ Syria
→ Iraq
NB: Problem of legitimacy

750: One survivor! Abd al-Rahman; Arab father/Berber mother
755: He appears in the Maghrib, i.e., “Far West”
756: Defeats the Abbasid governor of Cordoba
929: Declaration that Abd al-Rahman III is true Defender of the Faith
Cordoba in Spain --not Baghdad-- is true center of Islam
Again NB: Problem of legitimacy: Saudi Arabia ➔ Syria ➔ Iraq ➔ Spain

CORDOBA [Umayyad] vs. BAGHDAD [Abbasid]:
- rival visions / versions of Islam:
  1) “People of the Book” = dhimmī
     -- Quran says: all who share Abraham’s monotheism get special protection.
  2) Umayyads: a multi-lingual/religious/culture
  3) Abassids are “assimilationists” — like Romans before them,
     borrow and recycle everything they can [cf. Zeus ➔ Jupiter]

al-Andalusia ("Spain"): ca. 720 - 1492
Islamic ["Moorish"] kingdom + co-existing Christians and Jews
Ancient texts (Plato/ Aristotle) introduced back into "West" via Islamic libraries

- Arabic -> Spanish -> Latin
- e.g., Pope Sylvester II: "Spanish," fluent in Hebrew, Arabic, Greek and Latin
II. What is the Intellectual-Religious Problem with Aristotle???

The three “religions of the Book” are all “radical monotheisms”
“God” is absolutely other than all other “beings.”
First [or second] commandment:
prohibition against images of God as idolatrous.
God is beyond representation / imagination.
An optimistic view of human knowledge.

Plato thought concepts ["ideas"] had an independent "pure" existence outside of the material world. Aristotle did not. Concepts are the "formal causes" that shape things in the material world as well as in our minds. That's how we can know things "as they are in reality."

Monothelism ["religion" or "revelation"]: our minds are absolutely incapable of knowing "God."

Empiricism ["science"]: I can know what things are as they really are through observation.

**CAN THESE BE PUT TOGETHER??**

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Avicenna

Ibn Sina, Abū 'Alī al-Husayn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā

Persian: أبو علي المسن بن عبد الله بن سينا

Arabic: أبو علي المتن بن عبد الله بن السن

Averroes

Abū Walid Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn

Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd

محمد بن أحمد بن محمد بن أحمد بن رشيد

Maimonides

Moshe ben Maimon (Hebrew: משה בן מימון)

Moshe ben Maimon (Arabic: موسى بن ميمن)

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**Concept = Thing:**
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