



Fixated Hauntological Views do Not Respond to Scientific Knowledge

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Abstract

In the case of earth's glacial-interglacial cycle, not paying attention to knowledge originating in the distant past corresponds to hauntological behavior that will make humankind go extinct.

Opinion

In theory, the continuity and connectedness of the flow of knowledge between the past, present, and future should be relevant to any aspect of human existence. Yet, individuals and societies tend to pay little attention to knowledge from distant past, thus the notion of past “haunting” the present. If knowledge of past is ignored, as characterized by Jacques Derrida, the hauntologically-oriented present would become a “disjointed or disadjusted now” [1]. Derrida applies his theory of “hauntology” within the context of Marxism as an ignored past influencing today's capitalism, but the theory becomes even more prominent when the forgotten knowledge of the distant past originates in thousands of years ago [2]. The psychology of hauntological behavior is deep-rooted in that all disciplines are reluctant to trace their knowledgebase to ancient sources. This deficiency is amplified when inflated or misdirected homage is selectively given only to certain ancient sources [3]. Whether it is John Stuart Mill arguing that the falsity and partiality of knowledge can be avoided through critical discussion [4], or Charles S. Peirce pointing at the operational reality that knowledge is whatever a community of knowledge seekers converges on in the long run [5], or Karl Popper defining the knowledge inadequacies through identifying observational and conceptual shortcomings and inconsistencies [6,7], the fact remains that knowledge develops in a social setting and has an inherent dimension of sociality [8]. As such the flow of societal knowledge is susceptible to hauntological behavior as it would perceive the knowledge coming from the distant past as a ghost to be avoided than faced and clarified.

There are many examples one can use to demonstrate hauntological behavior. The best examples, however, are the ones that would make humankind go extinct. I will start with the knowledge of the glacial earth. The story of the glacial earth's knowledge haunting today's societies begins with the fact that it

is not common knowledge that earth comes in two versions. The first, named glacial, lasts about 85,000 years, the second, named interglacial, lasts about 15,000 years. Together, the glacial and interglacial create a 100,000-year cycle that repeats regularly. Science has detailed records of the past eight cycles [9,10]. Since the last glacial earth ended around 15,000 years ago, the current interglacial earth will soon transition into the glacial earth, making the knowledge of the glacial earth crucial for societal existence and survival. The current scientific understanding of the earth's two versions is based on the knowledge developed during the past century and it sets the difference primarily in the extent and intensity of earth's ice sheets [11]. Extended ice sheets: glacial; not extended ice sheets: interglacial. This view goes against many pieces of the glacial earth's knowledge transmitted from distant past. As one example, Herodotus reports that an ancient population, the Egyptians, had observed and recorded four reversals in the direction of sunrise and sunset in a time period having a duration of about 14,000 years before present [12]. This period covers short-term and long-term glacial-interglacial transitions. The sunrise and sunset reversal knowledge is simple and concise, and it specifies the time period, the event type, and the number of events, thus quite precise as to what is happening in a time period that corresponds to the last glacial-interglacial transition.

There is no scientific problem with explaining the sunrise and sunset reversal. The reversal happens when a thin “shell” of ice and debris surrounds earth. The process for creating a thin shell is known and would resemble that which creates the meteor showers—earth passing through tiny fragments of debris left behind by disintegrated comets. The meteor showers create a brief show of light and color in the skies as they fall into the atmosphere and burn. In contrast, the earth's passage through a

comet's larger fragments [13,14] can create a "shell" [15]. When the shell exists, earth would be glacial. When the shell collapses, earth would be interglacial. The key here is not that we know the science. The key: this is the science of a "ghost story." Knowing its science does not reduce its hauntological aspect. Even with its science revealed, it remains a ghost of distant past haunting the present societies and as such engenders little interest in facing and addressing it in the present. When the shell is initially formed, the shell would be chaotic. It would envelope the whole earth in darkness. The physics of transformation of a thin chaotic shell is known. The transformation from chaotic to ordered takes place in a short time [16-18]. With loss of chaotic energy and formation of an ordered shell, the material in shell's polar areas becomes unstable and collapses, opening the polar areas to sunlight that will reflect earthward from the interior of the shell, thus a reversed direction compared to the interglacial earth which does not have a shell. The science is straightforward, but the fact remains that this scientific information not only comes from a distant past, but the carrier of the story is a sacred text. Thus, not only this is a ghost story from distant past, and thus has to break through hauntological barrier, but in today's societal mindset, it also has to face another knowledge-dam. That knowledge-dam originates at the social conditioning that declares the knowledge embedded in sacred texts irrelevant to scientific thought [19-22]. Many other ancient pieces of the glacial earth's knowledge are analysed elsewhere and reveal that living in the glacial earth is radically different from living in today's earth, and humankind, unprepared to live in the glacial earth will go extinct [15,23,24]. Yet all such observations fall into the category of scary ghost stories. While one may argue that such response to the glacial earth's hauntology would not be rational given its known science, it is easy to demonstrate that hauntology is the "normal" mode of human behavior. One does not need to go back to thousands of years ago to scare humans with being haunted by the glacial earth's ghost. One can provide a similar scary ghost through a story of humans getting vaporized in a shower of exploding nuclear bombs. In early 1980s, a time distance of a few decades from nuclear weapons that exploded on cities, there were massive protests to stop a nuclear war. At that moment many understood the urgency of the need to prevent a nuclear war that would destroy human civilization and end human life on earth [25]. At that time many had a pragmatic understanding of the exposure to nuclear weapons, and the issue was strengthened when studies showed that the dust and smoke thrown into the upper atmosphere by nuclear explosions would block the sun, lower temperatures and create a "nuclear winter" that would bring human societies close to extinction [26]. Then the time distance increased and today any story about the nuclear arsenals has become a ghost story ignored-the same lack of interest exhibited whether the ghost is the nuclear arsenals or the glacial earth. No different than the glacial earth, the reality of the nuclear arsenals is perceived as a ghost story that should be ignored in the present.

As a typical individual I know a lot about my current life-situation, know little about my parents' life-situation, know almost

nothing about my grandparents' life-situation, and know absolutely nothing about those coming previously. The ghosts of the knowledge they carried are dead and no longer haunting. The same pattern takes shape in the societal setting. In general the societal entities only act on issues, concerns, and needs that take place within a time horizon of less than five years [27]. Anything longer is ignored. With that pattern the past quickly becomes a ghost, and many ghosts die as the time distance increases. Only in rare situations, as in the sacred texts, do the ghosts haunt longer. Tens of thousands of years ago, human populations, living under the glacial earth's extremely difficult conditions, struggling to survive, remained nonetheless committed to informing today's humans about both the glacial earth and the hauntological behavior. They must have transmitted multiple messages about the hazards of hauntological behavior, but at present I am aware of only two that have reached the present time to warn humans about the perils of ignoring the glacial-interglacial transition and the consequence-the extinction of the unprepared humankind when the glacial earth arrives.

The two messages are:

The millennial message: All humankind only 144,000 will survive the initial stage of arrival of the glacial earth [28].

The Noah message: Among humankind, those surviving the glacial earth's arrival would number the occupants of a ship [29].

Both exhibit a sliver of optimism in the fate of the unprepared humankind facing the glacial earth. Both imply that a small group will survive to become the seed for bringing humankind back. I don't share that optimism. In short, hauntological behavior remains a very serious problem in human societies. The psychology community, the business world, the political structure, and the education system have to address its implication and find ways of altering it. Otherwise humans would remain utterly vulnerable to the past knowledge they ignore.

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