

The Ancient Eurasian and Near Eastern Wisdom Traditions:

Applied to the Systemised Self - Part 18, Masters Series.

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Abstract

Across ancient Eurasia and the Near East, thinkers and communities described right order in markedly different ways: as a path, a divine ordinance, an ethical obligation, a ritual practice, a moral truth, or a condition of structural legitimacy. These traditions did not share one doctrine and did not arise at the same time. This essay compares eight regional groupings, from early Chinese and South Asian texts to Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Iranian, steppe, Greek, Anatolian, and Levantine evidence, without assigning the undeciphered Indus script a Vedic theology or treating later Tengri inscriptions as proof of a timeless steppe religion. Nadiya, a fictional flood resilience coordinator, uses a risk dashboard that makes some neighbourhoods more visible than others. The traditions illuminate distinct questions about how a useful order acquires authority: who interprets it, whom it serves, and what it renders unseen. They are not precursors to artificial intelligence, and their concepts are not interchangeable with algorithmic prediction. Contemporary studies establish bounded findings about data inference and ranked feeds, not the proposed Systemised Self or unvalidated Algorithmic Alienation Index. The essay's conditional claim is that digital classification may support coordination while narrowing public judgment when its measurable order cannot be challenged by the people living with its consequences.

Keywords: *ancient wisdom traditions, Tian, Dao, ṛta, dharma, me, ma'at, aša, Tengri, logos, Systemised Self, Hollow Absolute, Algorithmic Alienation Index*

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A – LIMITATIONS

This is a comparative philosophical essay, not a claim that eight civilizations shared a single concept of cosmic order or anticipated digital systems. The regional labels are broad geographic guides; the sources span millennia and vary by genre, language, and evidential status. The Indus script remains undeciphered, while many steppe religious histories are documented principally in later records. Translation can conceal important differences among concepts. Nadiya is fictional, not empirical evidence. The Systemised Self and Hollow Absolute are project specific constructs; algorithmic alienation has published theoretical and partial qualitative grounding, but the Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI) is unvalidated. Existing digital studies support limited claims about data inference and ranked exposure, not a universal transformation of agency. Calhoun's mouse study cannot establish effects on human communities. Neither digital assistance nor a need for coordination is itself alienation. The argument concerns who may question and revise consequential classifications.

1. Introduction

Nadiya coordinates flood preparedness for a fictional river district near the modern day Black Sea. A risk dashboard combines rainfall, terrain, and infrastructure data to help distribute sandbags and inspect drainage. It is useful: forecasts identify a threat before local reports do. Yet its map shows some neighbourhoods as lower priority because recorded damage there has historically been less frequent. Residents say blocked drains and temporary housing are missing from the data. The model's orderly map may guide response or make one version of local reality harder to contest.

Ancient traditions offer no shared manual for governing such a system. They ask different questions: What is a fitting path? How is cosmic or ritual order maintained? What duties bind

people? How is truth sustained against deceit? How should necessity, divine authority, and judgment relate? The answers are historically distinct.

The essay compares eight regional groupings as lenses, not as a continuous genealogy of one idea. Tian and Dao do not mean the same thing; ma‘at is not ṛta; and Heraclitus’s logos is not Mesopotamian (e.g. Sumerian, Akkadian) me. Nor do all traditions describe ethical good as harmony: some foreground law, contest, truth, or conflict. The ancient comparison, for the purposes of application to the sociotechnical term ‘The Systemised Self’, asks for the AI era (transformer based large language models) ‘when a useful ordering practice becomes authority over others, and who can challenge what its order leaves out’.

2. The Wisdom Traditions’ Intellectual Outline

‘Ancient Eurasian and Near Eastern wisdom traditions’ is a modern umbrella for this essay, not an ancient school. The *river basins used to organise this comparison identify broad settings, not fixed cultural essences:

- China (e.g. *Pre-imperial and imperial dynasties, Confucianism, Daoism)
- South Asia (e.g. *Indus valley, Vedic)
- Mesopotamia (e.g. *Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian)
- Egypt (e.g. *Old, middle and new kingdoms)
- Iran (e.g. *The Achaemenid Empire)
- The steppe (e.g. *Scythians, Cimmerians)
- Greece (e.g. *Minoan, Mycenaean, and classical periods)
- Anatolia (e.g. *Hurrians, Hittites)

- The Levant (e.g. *Phoenicians, Canaanites)

**The ancient cultures noted in parentheses per river basin above are demonstrative thereof only and not exhaustive.*

These included changing societies, languages, and political orders. Their textual traces are uneven: some derive from philosophical writings or hymns, others from royal inscriptions, myths, ritual, legal collections, and later records.

Region and approximate textual setting	Concept named	Kind of question raised	Important limit
China; Yellow and Yangtze basins, Zhou and later classical texts	<i>Tian, Dao</i>	Heaven, moral-political mandate, way or path	Confucian and Daoist usages differ
Indus region and South Asia; Vedic and later textual traditions	<i>ṛta, dharma</i>	Right/cosmic order, then varied duties and norms	Do not project Vedic terms onto Harappan texts
Tigris-Euphrates Mesopotamia; Sumerian compositions	<i>me</i>	Divine powers and institutions of civilization	Not one universal legal code
Nile Valley, Egypt; varied periods	<i>ma'at</i>	Truth, rightness, ritual and political order	Not a simple slogan for 'balance'
Iranian Plateau; Avestan textual layers	<i>aša, druj</i>	Truth/right order and deceit or falsehood	Textual and historical dating is disputed
Eurasian steppe; notably later Turkic records	<i>Tengri</i>	Heaven, sovereignty, and cosmic authority	Steppe peoples did not share one timeless religion
Mediterranean and Aegean; archaic and classical Greek texts	<i>logos, anankē</i>	Heraclitean account/order; necessity in other authors	Terms belong to different texts and arguments
Anatolia and Levant; Bronze to Iron Age	treaties, myths, laws, exchange	Diplomacy, divine order, transmission	Contact does not prove a single line of descent

Some concepts have accessible ancient texts; others require cautious reconstruction across periods. Vedic ṛta and Avestan aša are linguistically related, but cognacy alone does not settle historical influence or make the religions identical. By contrast, the Harappan script cannot presently be read as evidence for either concept. Early Turkic Orkhon inscriptions date to the eighth century CE: evidence for a historically situated Tengri tradition, not a Bronze Age universal.

3. The Wisdom Traditions' Key Theoretical Contributions

The traditions make the comparison plural rather than harmonious.

- China: Tian and Dao. Across the Yellow and Yangtze basins, regional histories and traditions differed; the river setting does not explain one timeless Chinese philosophy. In Confucian texts, Tian ('Heaven') can express a moral and political horizon associated with authority and human cultivation. In the Analects, appeals to Heaven do not amount to a uniform doctrine of a personal deity. The Daodejing instead explores Dao as a way or generative course not reducible to imposed rules; its political and ethical meanings are interpretively contested (Confucius, 2003; Laozi, 2003). Neither term means 'social and natural harmony' in precisely the same way. Their contrast cautions our fictional analogy and character Nadiya against assuming a single top down dashboard can reconcile local knowledge with public ends.
- South Asia: ṛta and dharma. In Rigvedic poetry, ṛta relates to ordered, true, and ritually maintained reality; its use is embedded in hymns and sacrificial practice, not a generic modern systems principle (Jamison & Brereton, 2014). Dharma develops across textual traditions into diverse senses of norm, law, duty, teaching, and sustaining order. It is not a single fixed synonym for 'righteous duty' (Olivelle, 2009). Crucially, neither should be attributed as readable doctrine to the Indus or Harappan civilization: its script

remains undeciphered (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.-a), and proposals such as Parpola's (1994) are not accepted decipherments.

- Mesopotamia: the Sumerian me. In the Sumerian composition 'Inana and Enki', me are divine powers or ordinances associated with culturally constitutive practices and offices. The poem's list is mythic and literary, not a technical constitution governing every Mesopotamian society (Black et al., 1998; Bottéro, 2001). Nadiya's categories might similarly organize shared activity, but they are human built and revisable, not decrees of divine origin.
- Egypt: ma'at. Ma'at binds truth, rightness, justice, ritual, and the maintenance of legitimate life. Egyptian sources associate its presentation with kingship and ritual practice; it is more than a static balance or a general opposite to chaos (Teeter, 1997). Its ideological and political dimension prompts the question of whose account of a community counts as truthful. The comparison does not make a modern data audit an Egyptian ritual.
- Iran: aša and druj. Avestan aša names truth and right order against druj, deceit or falsehood, within Zoroastrian religious thought. This moral opposition is not merely a cosmic struggle against undifferentiated chaos. The date and layers of Zarathustra's texts remain debated; aša's linguistic kinship with Vedic ṛta suggests a shared Indo-Iranian heritage, not a simple one-way borrowing (Boyce, 1979; Skjærvø, 2011). The ethical question is whether a system's claims can be judged as truthful, not whether it displays a tidy map.
- Steppe traditions: Tengri. Old Turkic inscriptions associate Tengri ('Heaven' or 'Sky') with rulership and political legitimation, in relation to Earth and the people, in specific historical settings. The Orkhon inscriptions are eighth century evidence; they do not

license a single pan steppe Tengrism or direct prehistoric continuity (Golden, 1992; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.-b). A source's authority must be read in its actual polity, not generalized from the sky metaphor.

- Greece and the Aegean: logos and anankē. Heraclitus invokes logos as a common account or order that many fail to understand; the meaning and surviving fragments are contested (Graham, 2023). Anankē, necessity, appears in other Greek arguments, notably Plato's later Timaeus, where necessity is not simply identical to reason's ordering (Plato, 1997, Timaeus 47e–48a). These are not twin doctrines of an early Greek consensus. Their difference helps separate intelligible patterns from constraints that remain resistant to planners.
- Anatolia and the Levant: mediation without a single translator. Hittite treaties and diplomacy, Ugaritic and Canaanite texts, and Phoenician exchange attest interaction among Anatolian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and eastern Mediterranean worlds (Bryce, 2005; Markoe, 2000). Phoenician maritime networks transmitted goods and writing across regions; multilingual scribes and diplomats worked in particular settings. Such contact supports histories of adaptation and shared political forms, not an unbroken causal chain from a 'crossroads' to all Abrahamic law and morality (Smith, 2001; Westbrook, 2003).

4. A Genealogy of Preceding Theory Informing the Traditions

These traditions emerged over long and overlapping histories, not one simultaneous civilizational moment. The Rigveda belongs to early Indo-Aryan oral-poetic traditions; later Indian religious and legal texts develop dharma in changing contexts. Archaeological remains of the Indus civilization precede or overlap complicated transitions but do not provide readable confirmation of that Vedic vocabulary. Distinguishing the sites and corpora is essential.

Sumerian myths such as ‘Inana and Enki’ are known through cuneiform textual transmission; their later copies preserve works whose composition and performance histories are difficult to reduce to a single date. Egyptian ma‘at appears across different genres and political periods. A royal ritual text, a hymn, and a wisdom instruction do not carry identical evidence about everyday belief.

The Iranian textual record also layers oral and written material. Heraclitus’s fragments survive through later authors, while Plato’s *Timaeus* belongs to a later philosophical dialogue; ‘logos’ and ‘necessity’ therefore do not stand for one timeless Greek system. The Chinese classics likewise took shape through complex processes of composition and editing. Classical terms cannot simply be projected onto all earlier communities around the Yellow or Yangtze Rivers.

Finally, steppe religious history is not a fossilized tradition preserved intact: direct Old Turkic inscriptional evidence is substantially later than Bronze Age Near Eastern texts. Hittite diplomatic archives, Phoenician maritime networks, and West Semitic literary traditions attest contact and translation at particular times. To call them ‘ultimate cultural translators’ erases differences among states, traders, languages, and centuries. Genealogy here means careful histories of transmission and comparison, not proof that each tradition descends from one ancestral wisdom.

5. The Systemised Self: Context and Definition

The Systemised Self (SS) is a proposed terminal condition of advanced algorithmic alienation in which algorithmic mediation becomes structurally consequential to identity, preference, and agency, potentially being experienced as authentic freedom. It is not ordinary digital use, a dashboard, or a diagnosis. In the hypothesized loop, activity produces traces; classifications steer what becomes visible; subsequent behaviour supplies more traces (Galu & Kairos, 2026a).

Our essays character Nadiya's dashboard may correctly forecast flood exposure. The risk arises if its available data omit residents' reports, yet a funding committee treats its rankings as the sole authoritative account. Classifications then shape which drains are fixed and which future damage is recorded. This is a hypothetical mechanism.

Systemisation names a relation among people, institutions, data, and infrastructure, not a flaw in Nadiya or the residents. Can they inspect why one area ranks lower, report missing conditions, and influence the response criteria? Do they have channels besides the dashboard? The concern is whether a partial instrument becomes the only voice recognized in public decisions.

6. The Hollow Absolute: Context and Definition

The Hollow Absolute (Galu & Kairos, 2026a) is a project specific Hegelian socio-technical construct: an order appears comprehensive while mutual recognition and collective agency weaken. It is not a term used by the traditions discussed here, not a synonym for cosmic order, and not an established description of digital society.

The comparison is institutional, not genealogical. A ma'at-inflected ideal of legitimate rule, a Chinese debate about Heaven and political authority, or a Mesopotamian myth of divine ordinances cannot simply be translated into Hegel's account of the Absolute. Nor should Nadiya's algorithm be called a digital god. These historical vocabularies differ in their sources of authority.

The project's related terms sharpen the present day focus: Neurocratic Determinism (Galu & Kairos, 2026b) names governance through prediction and conditioning of preference formation; Hollow Demos describes people politically reduced to data and predicted preferences; Aligarchy names elites controlling enabling infrastructures. They remain proposed

concepts. An ancient analogy does not establish modern domination; that requires evidence about ownership, authority, participation, and outcomes.

7. Contemporary Empirical Context

Digital traces can support inferences about selected traits, while ranked feeds can alter exposure. Neither establishes complete knowledge of a person or the capture of public life. Kosinski et al. (2013) showed that Facebook Likes predicted selected attributes in their sample; the finding does not reveal a person’s full values or community needs.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (2024) documents extensive data practices among major social media and video streaming companies. In a U.S. election experiment, replacing ranked feeds with chronological feeds changed what participants saw and how they used the platform; short term attitude effects were limited on several measures (Guess et al., 2023). A meta-analysis found discrepancies between logged and self reported media use (Parry et al., 2021). None of these studies validates the systemised self (SS).

Evidence	Supports	Does not establish
Digital-trace prediction (Kosinski et al., 2013)	Selected attributes can be inferred from behaviour	Full knowledge or settled identity
FTC review (2024)	Extensive data collection and use	Uniform effects on every person or service
Feed experiment (Guess et al., 2023)	Ranking can change exposure and activity	Inevitable, lasting transformation of judgment
Usage-report meta-analysis (Parry et al., 2021)	Logs and self-reports can diverge	That either reveals meaning or intent

The empirical question for our essays character Nadiya is how a local institution uses classifications: whether affected residents can correct missing information and change

priorities. The studies above motivate inquiry; they are not evidence that this particular mechanism occurs.

8. Formula and Boundary Conditions – Algorithmic Alienation Index

(AAI)

Algorithmic Alienation (AA) has published theoretical grounding and partial qualitative research (Kanbay et al., 2026; Arkan et al., 2026). The proposed AAI (Galu & Kairos, 2026c) is a newer operationalisation and remains unvalidated; the SS is a further theoretical hypothesis, not another name for either one.

$$\begin{aligned} AAI_base &= 0.30(DAu) + 0.25(IAm) + 0.25(EDm) + 0.20(EDc) \\ AAI_adjusted &= AAI_base \times (1 - RA) \end{aligned}$$

The dimensions are:

- Diminished Autonomy (DAu)
- Identity Ambiguity (IAm)
- Eroded Decision-Making (EDm)
- Emotional Disconnection (EDc)
- Algorithmic Resistance (RA), provisionally scored from 0 to 1.

The proposed candidate boundary is adjusted $AAI \geq .95$ and $RA \leq .05$. It is restrictive: at $RA=.05$, even a base score of 1.00 only just reaches .95. Both scores and all dimensions must be reported. This threshold is a research hypothesis, never a diagnosis.

Dimension	Question for Nadiya (essay analogy)	Boundary
DAu	Can she influence criteria and decisions?	Power to act is institutional, not only individual
IAm	Does she experience the ranking as her own judgment?	Preference alone does not measure agency
EDm	Can she examine alternatives and local reports?	Quick decisions may be expert or prudent
EDc	Does dashboard work feel connected to affected people?	Affect does not alone validate the construct
RA	Can she challenge, bypass, or change the tool?	Low resistance may reflect job constraints

A candidate SS classification would require subjective evidence plus independently verified behavioural dependence and friction response. Self report remains indispensable; possible phenomenological inversion cannot be used to overrule people's accounts. Test reliability, dimensional structure, group invariance, alternate weights, and rival explanations. Revise or abandon the index if evidence does not support it.

9. Calhoun and the Digital Behavioural Sink

Calhoun's report on a mouse population in a provisioned, crowded enclosure invites a limited question: does abundance of material resources by itself guarantee flourishing? It cannot predict human behaviour, civic life, or digital outcomes (Calhoun, 1973).

The analogy stops there. Our character Nadiya's district is not a laboratory population, and distributing information or emergency supplies is not a 'sink'. Tools may save lives and improve coordination. The relevant question is whether institutions can hear people whose needs fall outside the data, and whether the classifications can be corrected before they harden into policy. No conclusion about human communities follows from the mice in Calhoun's Universe 25.

10. Direct Synthesis: The Traditions and the Systemised Self

The eight traditions do not supply eight versions of an ethical algorithmic system (transformer based large language model). Together, they expose distinct stakes in the question of order: the authority of a path, the maintenance of truth, the obligations of duty, the legitimacy of rule, and the force of necessity. Each asks what an order means in its own intellectual and political setting.

The most useful contrast is between an order claimed as complete and the practice required to sustain or interpret it. Ma'at, for example, binds ritual and justice; aša is morally charged; the Sumerian me belong to a mythic account of culture giving powers. These are not rules for coding or optimizing services. The analogy is more modest: no system's list of categories establishes that the order it implements is just.

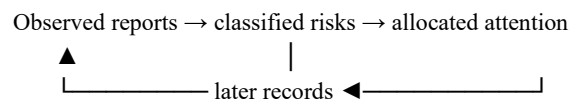
For Nadiya, distinguish three claims:

- the dashboard reports a measured risk;
- a model predicts where harm is likely;
- a committee decides where support should go.

These claims may inform each other but are not identical. A measurement cannot settle the moral and political criteria that turn a prediction into a funding choice.

The traditions also resist one universal image of authority. Confucian appeals to Tian and Daoist reflection on Dao arise in different debates. Egyptian royal ritual and Greek fragmentary philosophy are unlike Sumerian myth or Avestan scripture. Anatolian treaty conventions and Levantine exchange offer histories of contact, not an ancient pluralist governance blueprint. Comparison clarifies difference; it does not collapse these sources into one ethics.

The recursive danger appears when an institution treats a model's visible pattern as self-validating: lower reported risk attracts fewer inspections; fewer inspections yield fewer records; the next model then reads absence of records as evidence of safety. Residents may be rendered illegible not because their lives lack order, but because the system recognizes only one register of evidence.



The loop describes a hypothesis, not an inevitable outcome.

Nadiya and residents need not reject forecasts. They need ways to add evidence, contest priorities, and participate in setting public ends. Transparency without authority to change a decision may leave the basic problem intact. Remedy includes accessible appeals, independent evidence, accountable public criteria, and institutions willing to revise what they count.

11. Main Critics and Key Critiques of the Traditions

The comparison risks false equivalence. Translating every term as ‘cosmic order’ can make distinct practices look interchangeable. The essay therefore separates genres, dates, and meanings; linguistic resemblance alone does not prove common theology.

The evidence is uneven. A written poem, inscription, myth transmitted in copies, legal collection, and undeciphered archaeological script cannot bear equal interpretive weight. No readable Harappan text confirms Vedic ṛta or dharma. Later Tengri inscriptions cannot demonstrate an unchanged prehistoric religion.

‘Ancient wisdom’ can romanticize antiquity. These traditions included hierarchy, gender and status exclusions, political legitimation, and disputes over whose authority counted. Their

historical distance does not make them automatically ecologically wise or democratically inclusive.

Diffusion claims can outrun evidence. Eastern Mediterranean trade and diplomatic contact are documented; so are regional legal and mythic parallels. But resemblance does not, by itself, establish a direct line from Hittite, Phoenician, Egyptian, or Mesopotamian materials to every later Abrahamic moral or legal framework.

Order may itself enable domination. Appeals to divine legitimacy or social harmony can secure stability and constrain dissent. The question is not only whether an order coordinates life but who defines it and how challenges are treated.

Ancient concepts cannot validate modern constructs. Neither Dao nor ma‘at tests algorithmic alienation. Evidence for an AAI or SS must come from transparent empirical research, not cultural analogy.

12. Discussion and Future Work

Research on our character Nadiya’s hypothetical setting should begin empirically, not by asking participants to embody an ancient concept. Follow whether forecast categories affect inspections, aid allocation, and residents’ capacity to correct data. Compare predicted exposure with independent field reports; record which voices enter deliberation and whether appeals change outcomes.

Co-design measures with neighbourhood groups, including people with disabilities, renters, and residents who may be missing from administrative datasets. A predictive model may improve warning while obscuring who controls the budget. Test benefits and harms separately; if the system broadens access or helps communities secure resources without reducing their influence, that counts against a capture hypothesis.

Validate the AAI independently: preregister items and hypotheses, assess reliability, construct validity, invariance, and alternative weights, and report dimensions alongside base and adjusted scores. A possible terminal SS should require subjective and independent behavioural evidence; resistance scores alone cannot distinguish constrained use from informed delegation.

Historical work can further trace specific transmission claims through dated textual parallels and plausible channels, rather than treating ‘Eurasian wisdom’ as a single inheritance. Comparative concepts are useful if they sharpen questions about authority, evidence, and public judgment. They become misleading if used as substitutes for local histories or affected communities’ own accounts.

13. Conclusion

The traditions surveyed here disagree about what makes order right, who may interpret it, and how it is sustained. Their differences are not noise to be compressed into a universal principle. They remind us that any claim to order, sacred, civic, or computational, depends on histories, institutions, and practices of judgment.

The essays fictional character Nadiya’s map may help her act before a flood. It cannot decide alone whose testimony matters or how scarce resources should be shared. A system supports common life when its classifications remain answerable to the people who depend on them. What must remain open is not ‘balance’ in the abstract, but the authority to say, with evidence and consequence, when an algorithmic system in function is wrong.

14. Glossary of Technical Terms

Aša: Avestan term associated with truth and right order, opposed to druj; not interchangeable with every concept of cosmic order.

AAI: Proposed, unvalidated operationalisation of selected dimensions of Algorithmic Alienation and resistance.

Dharma: A changing and diverse South Asian concept with senses including norm, duty, law, teaching, and sustaining order.

Dao: A Chinese term commonly rendered “way” or “path”; its meanings vary across classical traditions.

Hollow Absolute (the): Project-specific Hegelian construct for apparent systemic completeness alongside weakened recognition and collective agency.

Ma‘at: Egyptian concept and personification associated with truth, rightness, justice, and legitimate order.

Me: Sumerian divine powers or ordinances in mythic texts, not an algorithm or universal code.

Ṛta: Vedic concept associated with truth and ordered or ritually maintained reality.

Systemised Self (the): Hypothesized terminal condition of advanced algorithmic alienation, not a diagnosis.

Tengri: Term associated in particular historical records with Heaven/Sky and political or cosmic authority among Turkic peoples.

Tian: Chinese term often translated “Heaven”; its usage is not uniform or simply equivalent to a personal deity.

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