

présents pour poser des questions, demander des éclaircissements et confronter des points de vue apparemment opposés ou contradictoires.

Pour le lecteur vivant hors du Québec, ce regard sur ces dimensions troubles de la politique partisane doit être mis en contexte. La dynamique au Québec est à certains points semblable à ce qui se produit, officieusement ou non, ailleurs sur le continent américain, mais avec cette particularité que le Québec a établi ses propres règles et ses lois provinciales quant aux limites permises pour le financement des partis politiques. Toutes proportions gardées, des exemples similaires se trouveraient, à une autre échelle; regardons le Mexique avec l'indélogeable Parti révolutionnaire institutionnel (PRI). L'ouvrage comprend en annexes une chronologie, un glossaire des différentes commissions d'enquête ainsi que des références à des articles spécifiques de la loi qui ont été enfreints au cours de ces décennies. En outre, ce *PLQ inc.* pourra servir de point de comparaison avec des études similaires portant sur la corruption et les dessous du financement politique dans d'autres pays, car comme pour toutes les activités clandestines ou occultes, le plus difficile reste de mettre à jour toutes ses ramifications et de quantifier l'ampleur réelle, car souvent sous-estimée, de ces activités souterraines, difficilement mesurables. Ce sont précisément ces enquêtes et la mise à jour de ces pratiques frauduleuses qui prouvent, jusqu'à un certain point, la vigilance des personnes devant assurer l'intégrité du système; plusieurs observateurs mal informés risqueraient au contraire de conclure trop hâtivement que la scène politique québécoise serait plus permissive ou plus corrompue qu'ailleurs, ce qui serait doublement inexact et infiniment réducteur.

## Paleolithic Politics: The Human Community in Early Art

**Barry Cooper, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020, pp. 448.**

Marlene K. Sokolon, Concordia University ([marlene.sokolon@concordia.ca](mailto:marlene.sokolon@concordia.ca))

I spent part of my last sabbatical in the Dordogne region of France, famous for its foie gras and concentration of Paleolithic art. I will never forget the immensely profound experience of seeing the paintings of bison, mammoths and horses emerge from the darkness. It is impossible to have such an experience without wanting to know why such images were painted and what they might mean.

Barry Cooper's *Paleolithic Politics: The Human Community in Early Art* explores the potential contribution of political theorists to understanding such questions. Attempts to understand Paleolithic art have traditionally been the subject of the science of paleontology; however, as Cooper argues, the natural sciences are more adept at understanding natural processes and creating categories of physical traits than answering the philosophical question of what makes us human. To investigate the meaning of the art as connected to the question of human origins, Cooper draws on the political anthropology of Eric Voegelin. In *Order and History*, Voegelin traced back to the cultures of the ancient Near East his crucial idea that each society creates an order and evokes meaningful symbols to express our anxiety about the mystery of human existence. Cooper explores how Voegelin's concept of compactness and differentiation of this experience might contribute to understanding the much earlier symbols of Paleolithic art.

In this analysis, Cooper really explores two types of Paleolithic politics. The first type traces competing interpretations of the meaning of the images on the cave walls. This narrative covers the most famous figures in this debate, including Henri Breuil's influential early argument that the animal images represented magical hunting rituals, as well as "structuralists" such as

André Leroi-Gourhan and Annette Laming-Emperaire, who interpreted the images as compositions of social symmetries, such as male and female, or competing clan histories. In contrast to these more well-known interpretations, Cooper devotes considerable attention to two lesser-known figures in this debate: Marie König and the American journalist Alexander Marshack. König's interpretation provides the strongest link to Voegelin's political theory, as she understood the cave paintings as a differentiated expression of the cosmological order also found in the more compact symbolization of much older cup marks, spheroids and incised lines. Marshack also argued that earlier mobile artifacts represented symbolic lunar-solar observations that revealed a conceptualization of time and space. Cooper's analysis of these competing interpretations challenges the progressive ideas of Paleolithic man as foremost a toolmaking being. In contrast, he suggests, human beings may express the awareness that we emerge from and return to nothing in different ways, but evoking such symbolization is primary and common to all human beings.

Interwoven with the competing theories of what the cave paintings might mean, Cooper exposes a second type of not-so-ancient Paleolithic politics: academic politics. His narrative relates the epistemological struggle between connoisseurship of interpreting artistic style and scientific techniques such as carbon dating. It details the rejection of outsiders without "proper" academic credentials, such as König and Marshack, whose innovative interpretations challenged accepted convention. König, in particular, faced a double prejudice from being a female, private scholar. In contrast, Breuil's academic status supported his hunting magic interpretation despite contrary physical evidence. The structuralist interpretation reflected a dominant academic theory of the time, and Jean Clottes's shamanistic interpretation was privileged by his position in the powerful French bureaucracy. As Cooper's narrative divulges, our attempts to understand these 12,000- to 35,000-year-old paintings reveal more about the contemporary biases, norms and preoccupations of our current human community than what the artwork might mean.

This observation—that our theoretical perspective influences our interpretation of Paleolithic art—can be similarly directed toward Cooper's Voegelian reading that this art is a more compact expression of symbolic meaning of the common experience of the order of reality. Do, for example, the animal images really express anxiety about the place of humans in the cosmic order? Cooper notes that his analysis does not interpret what particular paintings or "signs" mean, which leaves open many questions. For example, why the concentration of large animals, such as mammoths, and the paucity of images of fish, birds and, especially, human beings? In contrast to such questions, which admittedly require a lost interpretative context, Cooper persuasively argues that whatever the symbols might have meant, they reveal that our common shared human community is far, far older than our limited horizon of historical and philosophical evidence. Most importantly, Cooper's argument rejects the assumption of cultural progress that allows political scientists to ignore such prehistorical symbolization in their theories of community. *Paleolithic Politics* is a valuable contribution to understanding the cave paintings as part of, and essential to, the philosophic question of what it means to be human.

## Humour et violence symbolique

Sous la direction de Julie Dufort, Martin Roy et Lawrence Olivier, Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2020, pp. 239

Sophie-Anne Morency, Université du Québec à Montréal

Si les recherches sur l'humour ont longtemps été négligées, elles sont aujourd'hui en pleine effervescence, et ce, dans une multitude de disciplines. Alors que la francophonie québécoise