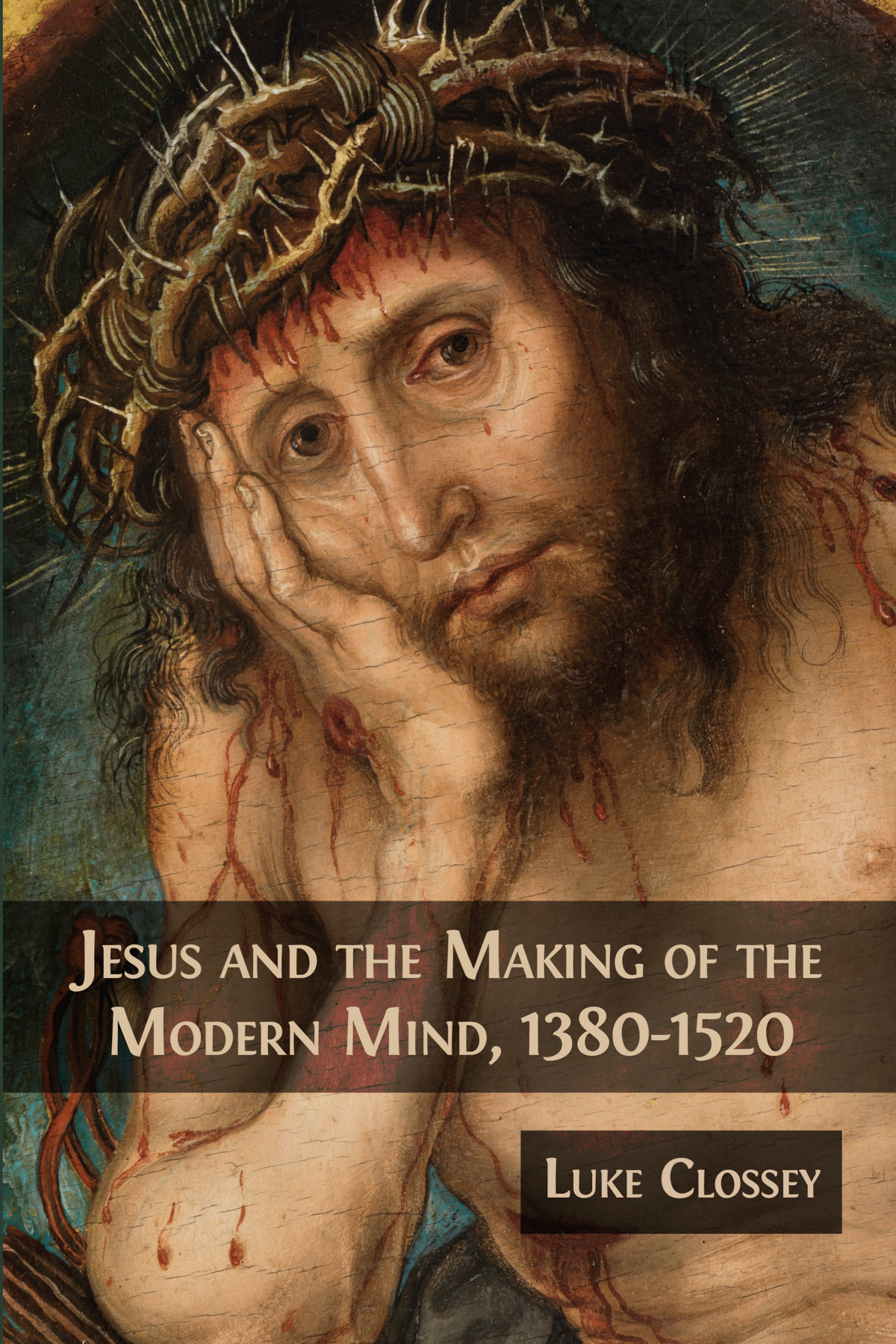

Jesus and the Making of the Modern Mind, 1380-1520

Luke Clossey

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2. The Two Kens

定法ハ今日ノ不定法ナナリ
…yesterday's eternal truth is not the same as today's eternal truth.

—the Buddha (apocryphal)[1]

Deep and Plain Kens

In English, the word "ken" refers to a sailor's range of sight, or more loosely to anyone's knowledge or perception. Something within one person's ken may be outside another's. That iceberg we are racing towards might be within the ken of a keen-eyed lookout, or "beyond the ken" of the myopic. More generally, we experience the world at our senses, and extrapolate it from patterns in those sense-contacts. The logic I use for that extrapolation might be different from the one you use.

In the course of researching this book, I noticed that many failures to see eye-to-eye, between two contemporaries in the fifteenth century, or between myself and some fifteenth-century person, could be explained by a difference in perspective. It was not that one party was smarter than the other, but that they saw and thought with different kens. In particular, two kens crystallized. I came to call them the plain ken and the deep ken.

What does the plain ken see? It perceives a world that is sparer, more minimalist: it finds a mess of particular things, a mess of human action. These messes occur in everyday spacetime, subject to its rules: every event can be located precisely with three spatial coordinates and a time stamp. God does not express his will by regularly interfering with the universe. There's no deep meaning beyond what we happen to create. There's no absolute knowledge beyond, or prior to, what is constructed in time. All that is now unknown can be systematically discovered; there are no hidden meanings that can be understood, much less manipulated. There's no certainty. There's no stability. The universe

1 Dogen, *Karonshū, Nōgaku ronshū* 歌論集 能樂論集, Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei 日本古典文学大系 65 (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, Shōwa 33–41 [1958–66]), 456.

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is contingent, accidental, and random. It is a universe so fluky that we have to rely on statistics and probabilities to make sense of it. The plain ken draws from an old Axial Age insight into the possibility of meaningful human action: a cause causes an effect. The plain-ken perspective works against the delusion that things, even truth and beauty, are permanent. Even permanence is merely an idea constructed in time.

What is the deep ken? The deep ken allows for all the things the plain ken denies. There is deep, subtle, and real meaning—and meaningful connections—beyond the accidental constructions by humans and the chance encounters of normal spacetime. There is at least the possibility of certainty and stability, for the deep ken is independent of time. A deep intentionality suffuses everything: the deep ken can be divine or universal, the perfect and unmediated expression of the will of God, or a reflection of the underlying order of the universe. There are subtle and powerful meanings, necessities, and connections, found especially in beauty and proportions, so uncanny as to be suspect to the plain-ken mind. Indeed, "un-*can*-ny"—"un-*ken*-ny"—literally means "beyond one's ken"—here meaning beyond the plain ken.

The plain ken sees history happening haphazardly, without deep meaning, while the deep ken sees history happening meaningfully, with subtle and surprising consonances. We can use dimensions to distinguish between the kens. The plain ken sees a four-dimensional world: three spatial dimensions plus time. The deep ken takes this world and adds a fifth dimension, one of meaning, that connects events in spacetime via wormholes. One such wormhole might open between the execution of Jesus in first-century Palestine and an Easter mass ritual performed in, say, a Vancouver cathedral today. The deep ken is deeper than the plain, in both literal and figurative ways—space-collapsing wormholes create meaning. The plain ken is flatter than the deep ken: without wormholes, time is only fixed and linear, which makes history suddenly important as part of a chronological sequence; first-century Palestine was actually very far from twentieth-first-century Vancouver. Moving from a deep ken to a plain ken involves ignoring, or forgetting, what had been the most meaningful dimension.

Why "deep" and "plain"? Both these words were native to the period under discussion. Happily, English (as well as Latin and Sanskrit) takes words that refer to spatial depth (or lack thereof) and gives them figurative meanings related to depth of subtleness and complexity (or lack thereof). By 1400, "plain" (or "playne," etc.) had both literal connotations (referring to flat, open land) and figurative connotations (indicating something easily understood or possessing simple meaning). John Wycliffe (ca. 1328–84) had described a Jesus story from the Gospels as "playen" or "pleyn," in that it had a simple, clear, accessible

meaning.[2] "Deep" had both a literal and a figurative sense even earlier, as shown by examples in Old English: the Wessex Gospels had the Samaritan woman advise Jesus that her well is "deep" (Jn 4:11), and the Paris Psalter (BnF MS Lat. 8824, ca. 1050) rejoiced that God's thoughts were extremely "deep" (Ps 92:5 [91:4]).[3]

Some caveats are useful. It is critical to resist any urge to consider the deep ken as spiritual or invisible, and the plain ken as mundane or visible. For now, we should refrain from making these associations.[4] Both kens allow for a powerful God. In the deep ken, God's power creates the underlying order, with connections visible only to deep-ken eyes. In the plain ken, God's power creates the potential for a variety of underlying orders, with more obvious connections. The plain ken creates a statistical space without a divine hand invariably, or even regularly, pulling strings.[5] A move into such a statistical space means the past, even when distant, is homogeneous. The deep ken admits the Crucifixion happens in time, but emphasizes its transcendence of time. The plain ken sees the Crucifixion as happening centuries ago, but on a day not unlike today.

I am not claiming that the deep and plain kens really exist as separate things in nature. Each ken assembles a number of facets that, to me, persuasively cohere with each other. The plain ken is just a name for the collection of attitudes we tend to bring to texts and images, and the deep ken comprises their opposites.

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2 John Wycliffe, *Select English Works*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1869), I, 362 (sermon 105): "Þis gospel telliþ a playen [variant reading "pleyn"] storie." One translation (ca. 1398) of Bartholomaeus Anglicus uses "playne" in three senses: flat geometry, unwrinkled (heaven is "playne"), and clear in meaning. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, trans. John Trevisa, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), I, 337, 451, II, 1367.

3 Benjamin Thorpe, ed., *Ða Halgan Godspel on Englisc* (London: Rivington, 1842), 190; George Philip Krapp, ed., *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius* (New York: Columbia UP, 1932), 63.

4 Alistair Cameron Crombie and, after him, Chunglin Kwa wrote about epistemological "styles." Our deep ken and plain kens describe a lower level of knowing, perhaps a "vibe" of knowing. Although our plain ken and their statistical style have much in common, theirs starts in the eighteenth century, while aspects of ours are ancient. Crombie's styles are postulation, experimental, hypothetical modelling, taxonomy, probabilistic and statistical analysis, and historical derivation. A. C. Crombie, *Styles of Scientific Thinking in the European Tradition* (London: Duckworth, 1994). Chunglin Kwa, *Styles of Knowing: A New History of Science from Ancient Times to the Present* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011) identifies the deductive, experimental, hypothetical-analogical, taxonomic, statistical, and evolutionary styles.

5 Even in modern statistics some sense of divinity can be discerned in unexpected results: one popular statistics textbook describes outliers as "minor miracles." David Freedman, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves, *Statistics*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 102.

At times, historical reality defies the division between these two perspectives. A person, or even a culture, might be inclined more towards one than the other, but could certainly apply both, even simultaneously, to the same subject. Rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive, we might think of them as existing on a continuum. A single individual can think about spiritual matters with both kens. A deep-ken perspective does not exclude the plain ken, nor vice versa: in practice, each can contain elements of the other. Indeed, sometimes both occur equally and simultaneously to powerful effect. For example, traditional mainstream theories of the Qur'an understood that the meaning of any given word was arbitrary (plain ken) yet permanent (deep ken).[6]

The two kens have been useful to me: they have helped me understand how people thought about Jesus, and have helped me understand history. World history stops being a story of people vaguely getting smarter on the road to now—with acceleration during periods like the Renaissance and Enlightenment when intellectuals liked to write about how smart they were—and becomes a story of the rise and fall of deep-ken and plain-ken fashions in thinking.[7]

Deep-ken Logics

We can listen in on a fifteenth-century sermon to better understand how the deep ken processes time. In the 1410s, a preacher was telling the court of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania about creation, when an audience member announced to the grand duke that he had caught the speaker in a lie: the preacher was not old enough to have witnessed creation. The monarch impatiently explained that creation, the start of the Jesus-centred plan of salvation, occurred 6600 years ago

6 Robert M. Gleave, "Conceptions of the Literal Sense (ẓāhir, ḥaqīqa) in Muslim Interpretive Thought," in *Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Overlapping Inquiries*, ed. Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adele Berlin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2016), 183–203 (201).

7 Machiavelli is interested in deep-and-plain-ken issues, but proposes a different categorization, one more appropriate for his purposes. Machiavelli talks about the ephemeral "times and circumstances." He describes a universe "governed by fortune and by God," in contrast to a universe where humans act freely, and concludes that reality is halfway between the two universes. He links the first universe with chance (*governare alla sorte*), because, from the perspective of the heroic actor, both chance and God are random and out of control. In contrast, the deep ken sees a universe controlled by God, and the plain ken a random universe. Machiavelli takes both of those universes, notes that neither is under the control of humans, and concludes that effectively they're the same thing, for purposes of human agency. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1988), 84–86; Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ed. Luigi Firpo (Turin: Einaudi, 1961), 92–94.

as a result of the divine order.[8] The grand duke listened with a deep ken, and the critic with a plain ken. The deep ken is not a lack of historical perspective, but an ability to make connections independent of linear time. One thirteenth-century chronicler described a Roman aristocrat attending Easter mass in the century before Jesus lived.[9] Deep-ken history is easy to mock. The medievalist E. H. Davenport sniffed that, "without exciting suspicion," one medieval author "made his popes of the first and second centuries write in Frankish Latin of the ninth," then "quote documents that had not yet been composed, and issue rulings on questions that had never yet arisen."[10] More sympathetically, art historians Alexander Nagel and Chrisopher S. Wood talk of "formal rhymes between historical events that revealed the pattern imposed on reality by divinity."[11] The deep ken hears history rhyme.

Such nuanced, or wild, understandings of history are possible when God pulls the levers. Deep-ken connections make better sense when one believes in a divine "author." In the deep ken, God follows Anton Chekhov's (1860–1904) dramatic rule: "You cannot put a loaded gun on the stage if no one intends to fire it. You can't make promises."[12] That is, the playwright would not put a gun on the stage, or a word into scripture, unless it was meaningful. An insignificant thing placed significantly is, in effect, a broken promise. God does not promise in vain. (For more on the deep ken and divine authorship, see Appendix B.)

Plain-ken Logics

The fifteenth century witnessed a renewed interest in the particular circumstances critical for the plain ken. Such details, including time and place, were of fundamental importance in ancient rhetoric and jurisprudence, as, for example, in the determination of legal penalties.[13] Niccolò Machiavelli

8 Jan Długosz, ed., *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae*, 12 vols. (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), XI, 24–25.

9 This is Belisae, the wife of Lucius Sergius Catilina (ca. 108–62 BC). Ricordano Malispini, *Storia Fiorentina*, 3 vols. (Livorno: Glauco Masi, 1830), I, 31. See Patricia J. Osmond, "Catiline in Fiesole and Florence: The After-Life of a Roman Conspirator," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* (2000) 7: 3–38 (24), https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02689199

10 E. H. Davenport, *The False Decretals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1916), 68–69.

11 Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone, 2010), 10–11.

12 А. П. Чехов, *Полное собрание сочинений и писем*, 30 vols. (Moskow: Nauka, 1976), III, 273–75: "Нельзя ставить на сцене заряженное ружье, если никто не имеет в виду выстрелить из него. Нельзя обещать."

13 Cicero, *On Invention*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library 386 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1949), 200–01 (2.39); Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans.

(1469–1527) spoke of the "quality of the times" (*qualità dei tempi*), and insisted that leaders needed to adapt themselves to circumstances, just as judges needed to consider circumstances in adjudicating the law.[14] Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), in turn, criticized Machiavelli for making gross generalizations that ignored how circumstances change "according to the times and other occurrences."[15] One anonymous treatise from Bohemia (ca. 1400), representing mainstream views, asserted that "our cognition originates from our senses, through which we move from the particular to the universal, from the visible to the invisible."[16] The theologian Robert Ciboule (d. 1458) emphasized the particularity of knowledge: "In any good knowledge there is nothing that does not serve in its time and in its place." Ciboule's best example of this was Jesus, who "often preached in simple language and with parables of common things."[17] Coming from another direction, in the context of music theory, the French theologian Jean Le Munerat (fl. 1490s) saw knowledge as conditioned by time: he cited usage and classical philosophers, for "our lords the jurists, in fact, say that usage or habit is a certain law."[18] Much of this interest indeed drew from ancient thought. Cicero (106–43 BC), for example, noted that Sophocles's (ca. 497/96–406/05 BC) comment on the attractiveness of a passer-by was inappropriate in a business meeting, but would have been fine during a sports event, "so great is the significance of both place and circumstance."[19]

Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library 403 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1954), 66–67 (2.6); *Institutiones* and *Digesta*, ed. Paul Krueger and Theodor Mommsen, Corpus iuris civilis 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1889), 815 (Dig. 48.19.16.1).

14 Peter Burke, "Context in Context," in Burke, *Secret History and Historical Consciousness* (Brighton: EER, 2016 [2002]), 185; Ian Maclean, *Interpretation and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1992), 81–82.

15 Francesco Guicciardini, "Considerazioni sui Discorsi del Machiavelli," in *Opere inedite*, ed. Piero e Luigi Guicciardini, 8 vols. (Florence: Barbèra, Bianchi e Comp., 1857), I, 52.

16 *Augustiniani cuiusdam tractatus contra errores Mathiae de Ianov*, ed. Jan Sedlák, in *M. Jan Hus* (Prague: Dědictví sv. Prokopa, 1915), 21*–44* (26*). See Pavel Kalina, "Cordium penetrativa: An Essay on Iconoclasm and Image Worship around the Year 1400," *Umění: časopis Ústavu dějin umění Akademie věd České republiky* 43 (1995): 247–57.

17 Robert Ciboule, *Livre très utile de saincte méditation* (Louvain: Bergangne, 1556), 18–19.

18 Don Harrán, *In Defense of Music: The Case for Music as Argued by a Singer and Scholar of the Late Fifteenth Century* (Lincoln, NE: 1989), 88.

19 Cicero, *On Duties* [*De officiis*], trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library 30 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2015), 146–47 (1.6).

The plain ken is interested in what has been called the "pastness of the past."[20] For centuries, forgers of documents were so relaxed about that pastness that they practised their craft without attention to the appearance of history. The Renaissance renewed an interest in the past as past. Petrarch (1304–74) was interested in antique coins and costume. The painter Jacopo Bellini's (ca. 1400–70) obsession with classical coins and epigraphs is shown in the many copies he made of them. History fascinated fellow painter Andrea Mantegna (ca. 1431–1506), who befriended antiquarians. Mantegna and Bellini both put classical details in their compositions to indicate a historical setting.[21]

Already in our period some thinkers had a plain-ken sense of how religion itself developed, and decayed, in time. Polydore Vergil (ca. 1470–1555) argued that early humans "did highly advance [to] their first Kings honour and praise; and by the persuasion of the Devil [...] magnified them as gods."[22] Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525) noted that even miracles were subject to decay: Jupiter's name was once powerful, but no longer; Jesus's name can cure disease now, but will not always.[23] (See Appendix B.)

Space in the Two Kens

In the plain ken, spacetime is contiguous and homogeneous (see Fig. 2.1). If Jesus at his birth held one end of a rope (Mary could help him if that's beyond his ability), I could take up the other as I write this here and now (49.3 N, 123.3 W, 66 feet, 2024 AD). If I wanted to get closer to Jesus, I could follow this rope. We could divide this rope into ten equal lengths, corresponding to ten 'steps'. Step 1 would put me on the Missouri River in central Montana, Assiniboine territory, in 1821, sixteen years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition passed

20 Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008), 239, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781107051126

21 Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (New York: St. Martin, 1970), 12–13, 21–24; Fritz Saxl, "Jacopo Bellini and Mantegna as Antiquarians," in Saxl, *Lectures* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1978), 150–60. See Donald R. Kelley, "The Theory of History," in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1988), 746–61; Maren Elisabeth Schwab and Anthony Grafton, *The Art of Discovery: Digging into the Past in Renaissance Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2022), 10–40, https://doi.org/10.1353/book.109177

22 Polydore Vergil, *De rerum inventoribus* [1499], trans. John Langley (New York: Agathynian Club, 1868), 17 (1.5).

23 Pietro Pomponazzi, *Trattato sull'immortalita dell' anima: Il libro degli incantesimi* [1520], trans. Italo Toscani (Rome: Galileo Galilei, 1914), 255–60. See Marco Bertozzi, "Il fatale ritmo della storia: La teoria delle grandi congiunzioni astrali tra XV e XVI secolo," *I Castelli di Yale* 1 (1996): 29–49.

through. Step 2 falls on the western edge of the Great Lakes, Fox and Ojibwe lands, in 1618, and Step 3 on the eastern edge of those Lakes, in 1416, just as the Onondaga were beginning to confederate. Steps 4 through 7 skip across the medieval Atlantic, where we might catch a glimpse of voyaging Indigenous Americans, Norsemen, Gaels, Muslim Iberians, or perhaps sea serpents. Steps 8 and 9 pick a path through a tottering late Roman Empire in northern Africa, and with Step 10 we reach Jesus at his birth.

Fig. 2.1 Vancouver to Bethlehem through Spacetime, map by Taf Richards, Arcane Atlas Cartography (@Arcane_Atlas), CC BY-NC.

Such a journey illustrates what it means to navigate the contiguous, homogeneous spacetime of the plain ken. There may be obstacles against travelling through space and time to see Jesus—border crossings, a vast ocean, our physical inability to travel backwards in time—but the idea is conceivable and straightforward. When calculating the intermediary points, no doubts arose as to whether they could exist in spacetime at all. This is a natural world, where humans live their lives, dramatic and ordinary, sitting, standing, defecating, building, playing, killing, dying, and perhaps helping their baby hold one end of a historian's rope. People have various languages and cultures that they find meaning in, languages and cultures that themselves move through spacetime, evolving as they go. The view from one point in spacetime might be very different from another, but the two points are fundamentally of the same sort. This is the way that most professional historians today think about the world, most of the time.

Where the plain ken is dry, the deep ken is saturated with meaning. In the plain ken, a given point might have personal significance to you, or it may have some historical or geographical meaning—but that meaning is projected onto it. Nazareth, a city in Israel where Jesus grew up, sits at 32.703 N latitude. If a pianist played C_1, the third white key from the leftmost end of the piano keyboard, a hammer would make a string vibrate 32.703 times a second. In the plain ken, this coincidence is coincidental, and any attempt to find significance in it is idiotic: both measurement systems, of latitude and of frequency, are

arbitrarily and historically constructed. In the deep ken, spacetime is imbued with significance, and this coincidence might dramatically bridge space and sound, perhaps, as here, through numbers. An event happens at a time and place necessarily and significantly; it could not have occurred otherwise.

If you want to get closer to Jesus, in the deep-ken sense, you do not move back in time and directionally towards Bethlehem. Instead, you go to a mosque or a church—especially the one in Prague named "Bethlehem." You develop a reverent mind-state. You behave ethically, in imitation of Jesus's behaviour. You recruit eleven other people to spend the day with your Bolivian friend Jesús, in imitation of Jesus and his twelve disciples. You move forward in time until Christmas arrives. You move forward in time until the number of years between you and the year of Jesus's birth is beautiful—we just passed 2000, which is gorgeous, and will have to wait patiently until 2100, which is still pretty. Plain-ken historians might point out that we know neither the year nor the calendar day of Jesus's birth, that December 25 was chosen arbitrarily and the calendar was, they estimate, four years off. Deep-ken historians would reply that this misses the point entirely.

Because space is saturated with meaning, "close" signifies something beyond the mere physical proximity that the plain ken recognizes (see Fig. 2.2). Although music follows natural rules independent of human perspective, we can use music as a metaphor to better understand how some deep-ken logic works. Consider that piano keyboard: playing two adjacent keys creates an especially dissonant sound, an interval called a minor second. Playing two keys separated by exactly eleven others creates an especially consonant sound, an octave. The first pair of notes are as physically proximate as possible; they are near in the plain ken. The second pair of notes are a hand-span apart physically, but in some deeper, meaningful way are even "closer" than the first pair—they "consonate" with each other. This is possible because musical space has a cyclical quality: start with any note, and as you move up the scale consonant sounds will occur at regular intervals. Our calendar also has cyclical qualities. Sunday occurs every seven days, and Christmas comes every 365 days.[24] The deep ken might see 25 December 2024 as closer to all the December 25ths than to 26 December 2024. (See Appendix C, Example 1).

24 Or 366 days, exceptionally, to take in account the failure of astronomy to live up to the beauty of the mathematical system.

Fig. 2.2 Vancouver to Bethlehem via Wormhole. Flyazure (2023), CC BY-NC.

Coincidence in the Two Kens

The most decisive way to distinguish between the two kens is to place in front of them a coincidence, a concurrence of two things without obvious connection between them. "Coincidence" comes from the Latin for "falling together." We might ask the two kens, did these two things *just happen* to fall together—or were they *put* together?

The plain ken sees coincidences merely as coincidence, random and accidental. The world is contingent. Any happening could easily have been otherwise. The universe and its history are messy. A coincidence, by definition, has no causal connection compelling it. The two things just happened to fall together. At best, if they were put together, they were put together intentionally by humans. If something strange happens, we might reasonably look for a set-up, for the hidden camera recording our reaction.

The deep ken sees a secret choreography, explanations beyond those visible to the plain ken. Open to the world's hidden necessary relationships, it recognizes that coincidences might have causal connections beyond mere coincidence. Events that the plain ken would dismiss as meaningless can have beauty and significance in the deep ken. Many divination processes have their basis in this deep-ken outlook. The position of the planets at your birth has meaning decodable by the skilled.

This meaningfulness is possible because a powerful God with intentions, or a network of subtle natural laws with their own logic, runs the show. Just as a plain ken can see a meaningful coincidence in an author's novel or prank video, so too can a deep ken find a meaningful coincidence in a universe authored, or pranked, by some powerful intelligence. G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) referred to coincidences as "a spiritual sort of puns."[25] The deep ken sees the

25 G. K. Chesterton, *Irish Impressions* (London: Collins, 1919), 202–03.

universe in narrative terms, as something authored, complete with symbolism, foreshadowing, literary-like motifs, and word play.

Consider how the two kens makes sense of language. In the deep ken, reality is saturated with meaning, and is interdependent with meaning. Language is a way to access that meaning. For a century, punsters have pointed out that "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish."[26] The deep ken might take this seriously, holding that if the words "tune" and "tuna" have a connection (which you can see and hear), then there may well also be a connection between the things they signify, namely adjusting a musical instrument and a large saltwater fish. We tend to think about language with the plain ken, so this is ridiculous. These words have these meanings as a result of historical processes. "Tune" comes, via the Latin *tonus* (tensing a rope), and Greek τόνος *tónos* (rope), from the Proto-Indo-European **tón-os* (stretch); "tuna" comes, via the Spanish *atún*, the Arabic تُنّ *tunn*, the Latin *thunnus*, and the Greek θύννος *thúnnos* from either the Hebrew תנין *thnn* (snake) or the Greek θύνω, the co-incidence in modern English of "tune" and "tuna" is pure coincidence, the result of a long, accidental, and haphazard chain of linguistic shifts. None of these centuries of innovative or careless speakers of English, Latin, Greek, or Proto-Indo-European were setting up a joke for twentieth-century vaudeville—but from a deep-ken perspective, God or the universe might well have arranged it all for precisely that purpose. A subtle network of hard-wired meaning permeates deep-ken space, connecting fish to words to instruments to places to times, and to Jesus.

A plain ken might dismiss something only visible to the deep ken as speculative and nonsensical. A deep ken might dismiss something visible to the plain ken as trivial and meaningless. Speaking to someone who sees things you do not can be frustrating. Indeed, recognizing connections or patterns or significance in the world that are not recognized by others has been, and continues to be, associated with mental illness. German psychiatry coined two relevant words: the recognition of meaning in indirect connections as "apophanie," a cousin of "epiphany," but modified by *ἀπο- apo-* (away from) to mean its opposite,[27] and "pareidolia," a cousin of "eidola"—images or representations—but modified by *παρά- para-* (alongside, contrary to) to mean incorrect images, like seeing a man's face in the moon's craters.[28]

26 The earliest known variation is "You may be able to run the scales on a salmon, but you can't tuna fish." *Bill Johnston's Second Joy Book*, ed. William T. Johnston (New York: D. Appleton, 1925), 234.

27 K. Conrad, *Die beginnende Schizophrenie* (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1966), 157.

28 K. Kahlbaum, "Die verschiedenen Formen der Sinnesdelirien," *Centralblatt für die medicinischen Wissenschaften* 3 (1865): 890–93, 910.

The first use of the word "shit," referring to cattle diarrhea, belongs to an anonymous medieval English farmer with a poetic inclination. By the sixteenth century, "shit" had generalized to refer to any kind of excrement, and could be used to describe a bad person. By the middle of the twentieth century, "shit" had become fully generalized, without any necessary fecal connotation. The word "happens" also has medieval origins, but in the nineteenth century took on a sense of randomness: one could say that something "just *happens*," without reason. To the best of our knowledge, it was a black teenager in San Francisco in the early 1960s who first smithed together these two evolving words: "That shit," referring to police brutality, "happens all the time." By the 1980s, "shit happens" had an almost philosophical force, beyond police misconduct or anything specific. With its sense of randomness and meaninglessness, "shit happens" could serve as a motto for the plain ken.[29] Theodoric Vrie (fl. 1410s), a friar at the Council of Constance (1414–18) conceptualized a five-stage history of the papacy, from an age of gold, to silver, to iron, to mud, and finally and currently to dung (*stercus*), in which Rome sits as "that dreadful pope crucifies my groom," Jesus.[30] With his deep ken, Vrie conceptualized the dissonance between first-century Jesus and fifteenth-century popes as a decline from a meaningfully ordered age of gold to his own age of dung—one best understood with the plain ken.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) recognized something like our two kens and placed them in a hierarchy: his plain-ken equivalent was inferior to the deep ken. For Aquinas, what appeared accidental to the plain ken was in fact providential to the more subtle deep ken: "Nothing prohibits that certain things are fortuitous [*fortuita*] or casual [*casualia*], in comparison to proximate causes—but not in comparison to Divine Providence, for thus nothing is at random [*temere*] in the world."[31] While their proximate causes might be random, in terms of divine providence nothing was accidental. In 1277, the theology faculty of Paris condemned the idea that God could make a mortal immortal, because it did not consonate with this deep-ken nexus of reality, logic, and truth. Thus, a deep ken could be applied to human experience that allowed subtle, trained thinkers to find consonance between reality, logic, and theological truths. This was a tight, integrated system.

29 Anonymous teenager quoted in Carl Shear Werthman, "Delinquency and Authority" (MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1964), 121. Perhaps the teenager was drawing from a knowledge of medieval Islamic philosophy: the skeptic Al-Ghazali's (ca. 1058–1111) example of a random happening was a book transforming into horse defecating in his library. See Appendix B.

30 Theodoric Vrie, "Historia Concilii Constantiensis," in *Magnum Oecumenicum Constantiense Concilium*, ed. Hermann von der Hardt, 6 vols. (Helmstadt: Schnorius, 1697), I, col. 11.

31 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, I, q. 116, art. 1.

Imagine a gambler at a slot machine, whose first ninety-nine attempts at a jackpot have all failed. If he were "superstitious," his optimism might leap at the next attempt: he might see some magic in the number one hundred, and feel that the machine, after so long a drought, is "ripe" for a win. Experts are so unimpressed by this kind of logic that they came up with a name for it: the "gambler's fallacy." All the "laws" of probability and statistics assert, and assume, that the events under consideration are independent from each other. The odds of success at the hundredth attempt are fully independent of all preceding attempts. Although the plain ken does not object to the possibility of a rigged machine, or of its inner mechanism acquiring a bias through repeated use, in this example it does insist on the independence of events. The deep ken, however, sees hidden dependencies invisible to the plain ken, and so these "laws" of probability and statistics no longer apply. In the deep ken, God or the universe may take pity on the gambler ninety-nine times unlucky.[32] (See Appendix C, Examples 2–4.)

Overview of Jesus between the Kens

This chapter closes with a table that focuses on Jesus in the context of the two kens. This table presents the answers each ken would give to a series of ten questions representative of the book's major themes. Theories of learning and student feedback suggest that quizzing yourself by coming up with answers before checking mine is an efficient way to consolidate your understanding of the kens, and perhaps identify where our understandings differ.

	DEEP KEN	**PLAIN KEN**
Is it okay to translate scripture into a vernacular language?	No. There are deep, meaningful connections between the words in the holy language and the things they represent. Jesus died on a *crux*, not on a *cross*.	Yes. Latin and Arabic words are, like English words, created by humans in time. All these words are merely approximations of the things they represent.

32 When experts insist that luck or ripeness "does not happen" (e.g., Leonard Mlodinow, *Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives* (New York: Pantheon, 2009), 101), they are asserting assumed mathematical laws or empirical observations over a larger period of time (over a "sample space"), which is not relevant to a single case of gambler who has a good or bad relation with luck. In fact, *it has happened* that a long string of failures is followed by a success at a symbolic moment—and that has been observed, and noted for future strategy.

Should a priest celebrating mass wear expensive vestments?	Yes. The richness of the clothing consonates with the truth and power of the ritual. Decorum optimizes the meaning of the ritual.	No. Clothing has no essential meaning. The obvious, accessible meaning is Jesus's explicit and verbal embrace of poverty. If you want to find meaning in Jesus, listen to what he says—the meanings he's trying to convey—not what he does.
Does the cross shape have power?	Yes. There is a deep-meaning connection between the cross hanging on a necklace and the cross on which Jesus died.	No. A cross is just two pieces of wood. Any power it has is psychological and emotional, in the minds of individuals.
Should a fifteenth-century Italian painter depict Jesus to look like a fifteenth-century Italian? Should the painting's background look like fifteenth-century Italy?	Yes. Jesus was not a fifteenth-century Italian, but was equally relevant to every time period. It is best to ignore the historical particulars and depict the true, timeless Jesus in a way that is itself timeless.	No. Jesus was a first-century Palestinian, and should be depicted to look like a first-century Palestinian in first-century Palestine.
Is the Old Testament still relevant to Christians?	Yes. The Old Testament is the timeless word of God. Its prophets literally made references to the future Incarnation of Jesus.	It has become far less relevant. The Old Testament writers, existing before Jesus, could not be literally writing about Jesus, because of the rules of normal spacetime. Religious truth naturally changes during the course of history, and so the New Testament has come to replace the Old.
In a Muslim perspective, is the Gospel still relevant?	(Christians may have approached this question with the deep ken—but mostly from a Christian perspective; Muslims did not.)	No. The Gospels were incorrectly transmitted, with human error, through history, and so cannot be relied upon.

Should music communicate clearly to humans?	No. Music's purpose is to consonate with the divine order of the universe.	Yes, the purpose of music is to communicate, both verbally through lyrics and musically through the music itself—through word painting, through the replication of human emotion. Music has degraded through time, and we should restore it to its original clarity.
Can we be certain, about, e.g., morals?	Perhaps. There's at least the possibility of stable knowledge that we have access to through careful study of subtle meaning.	No. Knowledge is constructed in history, and therefore is not stable enough to give us certainty. At best, we can have a pragmatic "moral" (99.9999…%) certainty.
How should we synthesize the gospels?	That an event was repeated in multiple gospels may have deep meaning. If three gospels report that Jesus did an action, he may have done that action three times. Because God inspired precisely four gospels, we should instead look for deeper meaning within each of them.	Jesus's life took place in everyday spacetime, and his life was recorded by human authors themselves living in everyday spacetime. It is highly likely there's duplication in the record, as it was haphazardly compiled. Still, each one is a unique historical artifact, and we need to evaluate each on its one terms in order to understand their (dis)continuities.
If God ordered you to do something immoral, what should you do?	This is a trick question: God (who consonates perfectly with the Good and Moral) cannot order an immoral act. A God-ordered immoral act makes as much sense as a "colourless green idea."	This is a trick question: nothing is inherently "immoral." Morality is constructed by God in time, as he makes decisions and commandments. Something ordered by God is, necessarily, moral.

Table 2.1 Jesus between the Kens.