preceding settled agriculture by some 6000 years (Marshall & Hildebrand 2002). Pastoralist economies laid the basis for several of Africa's earlier state developments, in the west African Sahel (MacDonald 1998) and in southern Africa (Pikirayi 2001; Sinclair 1987). Africanist archaeologists do not often use the same terminology of states and territory, but they have catalogued a series of complex polities based on multiple economic systems, including the 'yam states' that Scott often denies (p. 21). In the Inland Niger Delta, archaeology has recovered a unique urban configuration occupied over 1500 years from *c.* the first century BC to AD 1400. The 'Jenne-jeno urban cluster' consists of clustered, differentiated settlement mounds based on mixed subsistence and craftworking and apparently without a ruling elite (McIntosh 1999; McIntosh 2015). This is one of the places in the African past that is best recognized as an alternative political structure, and it is widely cited. Yet these are only a few of the many examples that could be pulled from the African past, and which are excluded from this global story of the origins of the state.

The diversity of places that do not feature in this conversation should give us pause when framing the past as a means of understanding the present. There is a problem of geography here, and also a problem of chronology. Many of the African state-like formations are much later in time than the Mesopotamian examples; they were often 'secondary' in origins. This has traditionally meant their exclusion from these models, but I would like to argue that later states might have more to tell us about the global present. In particular the rise of capitalist, mercantile economies, which fuelled the rise of many of Africa's 'secondary' states (Leyser *et al.* 2018), might be more relevant to the understanding of contemporary geopolitics than the conditions of Mesopotamian slaves.

In general, the disruptive approach to standard narratives found in *Against the Grain* is a welcome force for archaeological discussion. The ways that archaeological data were summarized and brought to bear on thinking through relations of power were insightful and interesting. Next, we can hope that Scott might turn his attention to non-state groups, perhaps moving to less well-ploughed furrows.

Stephanie Wynne-Jones
Department of Archaeology
University of York
King's Manor
York YO1 7EP
UK
Email: stephanie.wynne-jones@york.ac.uk

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Response

James C. Scott

The fact that 10 notable scholars have taken the time to examine my book *Against the Grain* and provide thoughtful commentary is a form of flattery of which I am acutely conscious and very grateful. This would be the case even if their comments had ben totally damning! I braced myself for the onslaught of a phalanx of archaeologists justifiably indignant that a rank amateur should even dare trespass

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on their turf. When invited to reply to such a symposium convened by the *CAJ*, the thought crossed my mind that I was being brought to the symposium in the same spirit as the Romans 'invited' the Christians to the Coliseum. Happily, while there are gashes, bruises and perhaps a life-threatening wound or two, much of my argument seems to have come through the encounter. One or two of the commentators, I understand, believe they left me for dead!

The result, in my view, is that my critics have supplied me with a daunting reading list, much of which I should have more profitably read before writing the book, and a series of errors of fact, reasoning and conceptualization that I might have avoided. Throughout the writing of *Against the Grain* I was always conscious that, while I imagined that I was updating the civilizational narrative on the basis of what we had come to know in the past three decades, in a decade or so my own account would be superseded by new findings. No one has the last word. And that is as it should be. The best we can hope for is to make a rich contribution to the compost heap of scholarship so that those who plough these fields after us may have richer fertilizer.

Reply to Campbell on domestication

The focus I maintain on the process of domestication, broadly understood, was remarked upon by several commentators. It was, for me an illuminating focus to understand the growing transformation of the natural world—flora, fauna, soil—for human use. Not only were the mutual dependencies thereby created between *Homo sapiens* and plants and animals in the domus diagnostic of both a new cultural and biotic symbiosis, but I found that, more speculatively, the logic of domestication was a useful lens to understand certain aspects (not all) of the instrumental use of slaves and women by states and patriarchy. This lens was intended to be provocative, not comprehensive.

One of the contributors to the symposium, Rod Campbell, and surely my harshest critic, is correct to notice the pessimistic tone of my analysis of domestication. That said, I confined the argument of the book strictly to the earliest state making. I made no assertions about contemporary life or global warming or the Anthropocene beyond noticing in passing in the introduction that we had all become more concerned with mankind's footprint in the environment since the fossil fuel era. Nonetheless, Campbell charges me with 'denying … possible futures'. He continues: 'If all governance is domination and domestication an unmitigated evil [his assertion, not mine], what are we supposed to do? With no chance of the world's 7.6 billion instantly dropping "off the grid" short of some global calamity, perhaps a better use of the past than paving it over with a tendentious meta-narrative would be to take it seriously, learn its lessons, and let the richness of lost human worlds teach us new lessons for the future.'

Campbell would like me to be more helpful, more constructive. But I did *not* write about the future, nor do I believe that all governance is domination and domestication. Much of my long career has, to the contrary, been devoted to peasant resistance, rebellion and revolution. My job, as I saw it, was to understand the ecology of the earliest agrarian states as best I could, whether or not the implications were encouraging or demoralizing. They are of course, *both*! But the book made no contemporary judgments or predictions, as there is all too much of that, for my taste, in my home discipline of political science.

Campbell is, as noted, quite right to have detected a pessimistic tone to my discussion of domestication. The implicit premise as I finished the book, *but not a part of its explicit thesis*, is that sedentary, fixed-field farming and livestock rearing began a process that is increasingly universal and fraught with unintended consequences. In this context, I would like, as a digression, to elaborate briefly on the basis for such pessimism about the contemporary world.

A single rather zany statistic, calculated by none other than Vaclav Smil (2002), brought home to me the hegemony that domestication has come to exercise over the increasingly unnatural world—mostly in the last 200 years. Smil asked a beguilingly simple question: in sheer metric tonnage of animal flesh in the world, what is the proportion of domesticated flesh to wild flesh? His answer: nine to one. If human flesh is added to the domesticated total, the imbalance roughly doubles. One shudders at the many debatable assumptions required for such a calculation. But if Smil is even approximately correct, the fauna that we have shaped and manage are taking over from the 'wild' world. The trend can only be accelerating. One wonders as well what the ratio would be for flora, the ratio of plantation crops, production forests, sown pasture grasses, field crops on the one hand to wild plants and forests on the other. The portion of the world 'made' by mankind seems on its way to utter domination. One might cheer or deplore this fact, but it surely represents the triumph of the domestication process. I, for one, find it deplorable that mankind finds itself now managing (however incompetently) what is left of the non-domesticated world of nature reserves and bio-reserves as, essentially, zoo-keepers. Campbell may find my attitude, which is not declared in the book, unwarranted, but I believe it reflects Antonio Gramsci's dictum: 'optimism of the will, pessimism of the intellect'.

I move now to what I take to be a few of the main themes and criticism raised by the contributors. The concerns raised by 10 commentaries are so numerous and varied that I will have inevitably left some of them unaddressed, for which I apologise.

The state

A good many of the contributors were dissatisfied with my treatment of the state. Some concluded that my concept of the state was too unitary and, in any case, ignored important differences in state formation outside Mesopotamia. Others judged that my view of the archaic state is 'all stick … and no carrot' and believe that the

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symbolic and religious aspects of state making merited more emphasis.

I plead guilty to the charge of implicitly universalizing the Mesopotamian case of pristine state making, as if the many other processes of state making in Meso-America, along the Yellow River, in Southeast Asia and even in the case of late 'nomadic empires' such as the Mongols and the Comanche could be understood as minor dialects of a general state-making language. D'Altroy, Drennan, Stark and Wright all converge in drawing my attention to patterns of state making that do not follow the Mesopotamian trajectory, that are not ringed by fortifications, that are more dispersed, if not actually on horse-back. *Touché*! Were I writing the book again, I would have attempted to draw out the most salient variants of state making and emphasize that my account is largely confined to the archaic Sumerian states.

Before I concede too much ground to my critics, I would stress that the ecological and demographic conditions for state formation are by no means infinite. They require, with rare exceptions, a setting in which populations of far greater density (compared to hunter-gatherer bands) can be sustained. Normally, this means a flood plain or seasonal wetlands in which a combination of rich silt (or loess) soils and wetland diversity permit a concentrated surplus of foodstuffs in a delimited space allowing for political control. Under archaic conditions of land transport by ox-cart or pack animal, that space is quite small, though it is often considerably expanded by the ease of water-borne transport. Early states *may* arise in such settings, but in the absence of such settings, a state is unlikely to appear. The exceptions are those geographical locations that are strategically situated at the site of a much-sought resource (e.g. obsidian), athwart a bottleneck in an annual migration route of game animals or fish (e.g. gazelle in the Euphrates Valley, salmon in the Pacific Northwest), or a similar bottleneck or pass in a lucrative trade route. Absent any of these conditions, which is to say most of the landscape, states are also absent.

Another criticism of my treatment of the archaic state is that, in my binary attention to states and 'barbarians', I fail to see 'all the important cleavages within ancient state societies'. Thus, D'Altroy points to the factional competition, dynastic infighting, rival temples, landed aristocrats and military. Again, *touché*! I do not sufficiently recognize what might be termed the pluralism within the archaic state apparatus. While such inter-elite conflict was mentioned in passing as a key cause of state collapse ('politicide', pp. 212–13), a fuller recognition of such conflict would have added a useful dose of nuance to my discussion of the state.

Pauketat takes this criticism a giant step further. Invoking Phillip Abrams' valuable insights, he accuses me of essentializing the state 'like a typical twentieth-century materialist' and failing to recognize that the state 'was not, and is not, a real thing, territory, or bureaucratic structure, but a distributed set of relationships in which people find themselves entangled'. He adds that Abrams and others, like Gramsci, used the words 'ideology' and 'cultural hegemony' to convey the distributed and consensual character of the state.

Pauketat is perfectly justified in noticing that I slip into an essentializing idiom when writing about the state, a state that is far more plural, contradictory, and 'distributed' than I imply. On the other hand, I believe he makes two errors: 1) in de-essentializing the state so that it dissipates totally in the ether; and 2) in misunderstanding Gramsci's analysis (taken up in the next section). Despite the amorphous and frictionful character of the state, the fact is that governing elites actually do act in powerful and unitary ways. They make war, they collect taxes, they exact *corvée* labour, they take captives, they imprison and execute, they trade, they make alliances and, yes, they relieve famines by handing out grain. The state may not quite exist the way a rock might—it is, after all, a social structure—but it is definitely a cause with effects. If it is not 'agentful', then I would ask Pauketat to explain to an enslaved captive in the Athenian silver mines how it is that he came to this fate. Recognizing the pluralism and contradictions at the heart of any state must not blind us to the fact that the state is, nonetheless, perhaps the most consequential and fateful of all human institutions.

Ideology and religion

This brings us to the crucial question of ideology, consensus, religion, ritual and ceremony. My emphasis on slavery, wars of capture and the problem of flight suggests that the state was largely a coercive affair, which I believe to be the case. It is only reasonable in this context for a discerning reader to wonder if, perhaps, the claims to divinity and supernatural powers, monumental building and ritual were not, in and of themselves, a powerful symbolic potion that elicited awe and even enthusiastic consent. To invoke Gramsci's concept of 'cultural hegemony' in the context of the archaic state, however, is a misreading of his argument. What Gramsci is trying to understand in much of the *Prison Notebooks* (1971), is why, *despite having the right of democratic citizenship and the franchise*, the working masses have not brought about socialism peacefully. His answer: 'cultural hegemony' via major institutions like schools, newspapers, and the church. Cultural hegemony for Gramsci can *only* occur in a democratic setting; all other forms of pre-democratic power he calls *domination,* in which the implicit consent of democratic forms plays no role at all.

Apart from Gramsci, however, the question of consent, acceptance and perhaps even 'legitimacy' of the archaic state arises. Stark, for example, writes of the 'attraction' of shrines, temples and hermitages in pre-modern Southeast Asia with their 'eclectic mix of Brahmanic, animist and Buddhist ideas'. She writes of the 'magnetism' and '"pull" factors that attracted pre-modern Southeast Asians to growing cities'. Drennan, a little more circumspectly, points to the 'ritual and ceremony [that] were sometimes (but not always) centripetal forces'.

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I am correctly accused of not dealing directly with this important issue. *Touché* again. I will now do so. I avoided the topic in the book for two reasons. First, I did not encounter any convincing evidence of active consent or enthusiasm beyond official hymns of self-praise—though it is hard to see what would count as evidence, given how little we know about such matters in the archaic states. And much of the circumstantial evidence (e.g. slavery, punishment for flight, wars of capture) pointed in the opposite direction. If I had to guess, on the basis of my reading about archaic state and pre-modern societies, however, I think a few conclusions are plausible.

There is, of course, every reason for the most privileged strata of such societies (clerks, high priests, scribes, military specialists, overseers, officials, merchants and elite artisans) to identify strongly with the reigning elites. But these strata are unlikely to represent, at best, 20 per cent of the population. For the rest, should we imagine them to be in awe of their monument-building, ritual-wielding betters? Do they believe the high priest's or king's claims to make the rains fall and the crops grow and to avert famine and pestilence? And, if the rains fail, the crops wither and the plague strikes, are they to blame?

My (educated?) guess is that the term 'legitimacy' is an anachronism that is not applicable to ancient states. Rather, I suspect that the political authorities are in the same category as the *weather*. One may curse or praise it, but the weather is simply immutable, just there as a fact, like it or not. Contrary to the view of institutional economics in which the rise of the state is a benign invention of elites to defend and protect the community, its lives, its fields, its granaries, it seems just as plausible to see the ritual claims, ceremonies and monuments of state elites as a form of self-hypnosis that serves to increase the cohesion and self-confidence of the rulers and impress rival states.

The absence of firm evidence about the degree of 'mystification' allows rampant speculation. At one extreme is the view that the building of the pyramids might be likened to a West African harvest beer-party where work is embedded in communal feasting and cultural celebration (Dietler & Herbich 2001). On the other hand, there are parables from Sumer about avoiding manual labour and personal domination by becoming a scribe (p. 164) and accounts of actual strikes by royal tomb-builders in Egypt (p. 165). But, as historians and archaeologists are fond of saying, 'the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'. The jury is still out.

What I can do in this context is to suggest some reasons for my scepticism about the claim that the subjects of the archaic states were in thrall to the symbolic claims of their rulers. First and foremost, there is strong evidence that 'popular religion' diverges in identifiable ways from elite religion in early states. I.M. Lewis, in his *Ecstatic Religion* (1971), shows that the religious beliefs and practices of subordinate groups and women are typically at odds with those of elites. They are likely to worship at the shrines of 'lesser', dissenting deities whose cults are distinctly subversive of official religion. The Christianity of New World slaves is a striking example. Their masters tried to teach the New Testament to them ('turn the other cheek', 'be a good and faithful servant'), while the slaves, for their part, embraced the Old Testament (Joshua, Moses, the 'promised land') themes of liberation along with the cults they brought with them from Africa and practised in 'hush-arbors'. It is a rare pre-industrial society that also does not have rituals of reversal (e.g. Carnival, Holi, Dionysian rites) that, far from being mere harmless vents for letting off steam, were genuinely contested ritual spaces that might spawn insurrections. Peasants and serfs were likely to have a 'transactional' view of ritual and symbolic claims. Villagers in Catholic countries might, after persistent misfortune, burn the shrine of their non-performing patron saint and adopt a new one. Russian serfs might assault their Orthodox priests if the rains they claimed to summon with their prayers failed to arrive. One can thus imagine a subaltern population fully invested in a non-material world of spirits, ritual, patron deities and magic without at the same time assuming that its effect was symbolically to cement the subordinate classes to the ruling elites.

Finally, one might wonder, given the frequent warfare among archaic states, how a state that had not mesmerized its population could raise an army in the first place. To do so, however, is to miss what I understand to be the character of archaic armies. They were not at all like modern nation-state armies. They were more like joint-stock companies in which the main objective was plunder—both human captives and valuable goods—that could be sold, ransomed, or taken as property. They were as much a commercial venture as a war machine. Max Weber's term for this is 'booty capitalism' (1905). Although the danger of death was real, such armies were not held together by blind patriotism or religious fervour.

The lure of the state form

Susan Pollock raises, I think, an important question that I have not considered. Although individual archaic states were fragile, why is it, she asks, that 'the state as an institutional form has shown itself to be remarkably resilient?' Thought they might collapse, 'new states and new centres of power (re-)formed repeatedly'. 'What led to their continuation over the millennia?' The only answer I can offer is essentially ecological. Located almost without exception on very rich alluvial soils re-fertilized annually by the flood-pulse, the concentration of population and foodstuffs they afforded made them perennially favourable sites for state formation. I think of such sites as the most common ecological module for state creation. If a state at such a site were to collapse, new settlers would be attracted to the favourable ecology before long. Thus, as Pollock implies, states arise again and again at roughly the same location. Somewhat later in the historical record, at least two additional forms of organizing political power appear: empires and maritime trading polities (often city-states).

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Empires are both larger geographically and necessarily more loose-limbed than the archaic agrarian states. Nevertheless, they also depend on the control of concentrations of sedentary cultivators from whom they can extract taxes and tribute. Maritime city-states, if they have no directly controlled agrarian hinterland, can flourish spectacularly on the basis of growing trade. In the long run, however, to judge from European and Southeast Asian history, they have been swallowed by the larger agrarian states with superior manpower and armies.

Diet *versus* taxes

D'Alpoim Guedes takes me to task, and justifiably so, for claiming that non-state populations grow few, if any, standing crops. Her own work on the Tibetan plateau shows the importance of wheat and barley as staples. My question would be to wonder if such staple crops played a role in those periods during which Tibet itself was something of an imperial presence in parts of China and Southeast Asia? I recognize that there is, nevertheless, a great variation among non-state peoples in the degree to which they rely on cereal grains.

This raises an issue that is important to the thrust of my argument, and that is the difference between diet on the one hand and tax goods on the other. Several commentators, including d'Alpoim Guedes, stress that the cultivators of the archaic state planted and ate far more than cereal grains. I regret if I gave the impression that that the subjects of Uruk had nothing to eat but wheat and barley. Far from it. Although wheat and barley were the dominant staples, the diet included legumes, fruits (notably dates), nuts, fish, meat, pulses, etc.

My emphasis on cereal grains—which were actually a larger share of the diet in the northern alluvium than in the south—derives from their fiscal centrality for the state. Here one must sharply distinguish between agricultural production and diet on the one hand and tax goods on the other. The agricultural tax system is always simpler than the diet or the diversity of production. Otherwise we are obliged to imagine a community or temple that is expected to provide, for example, so many bushels of dried fish, dried dates, barley, so much wool, flax, chickpeas, reeds, sedges, etc. It would be a taxman's nightmare to arrive at an assessment for each product, let alone monitor production and collect diverse tax goods at the various times of year when they become available. One can perhaps imagine taxes in kind on specific commodities when the producers of a large area were specialized (e.g. wool for pastoralists, dried fish for fishers, reeds for marsh-gatherers). The Ottomans, for example, had trouble trying to tax mobile pastoralists and settled on a kind of tithe of animals and wool levied during the roughly month-long lambing season when the shepherds were necessarily stationary.

My point is simply that while a population's production and subsistence may be very diversified, this does not mean that the tax regime imposed on them will mirror that diversity. Perhaps the oldest tax in the world is the religious tax, originating in Judaism and replicated both in the Catholic tithe (*dîme*—one tenth—in France) and the Islamic *zakat* (also notionally one tenth). Medieval Catholic villagers grew many crops, but the tithe was collected almost entirely on their cereal crops. The *zakat* in the Malaysian village in which I lived for a time was collected exclusively from the rice harvest. Different products have different levels of attraction, if you are squinting at them as a taxman might. Some are easy to assess, some have dependable yields, some transport well, some store well with little spoilage, some lend themselves to distribution as daily rations. The crop that serves as the major tax good is often seen as the 'metric' for the comparative value of most other goods (e.g. a mature ewe might be the equivalent of 20 bushels of barley).

Flat barbarians

Wright and Smith find my characterization of the societies outside the state (a.k.a. 'barbarians' in the state's eyes) to be … well, a caricature. I readily concur with their judgement! I do, in fact, lump all barbarians together, overlooking the vast differences in their social structure, their modes of subsistence, their mobility, their complexity and their relations with the state. The problem is that it is hard for me to imagine how a book devoted to the earliest state formation could avoid treating barbarians as a sort of residual —all those not inside—of state formation. Had I conceived the book radically differently as, say, an account of the whole spectrum of non-state peoples, out of which, after all, every early state was composed, then I would have done the reverse. I would have devised a quasi-Linnaean typology of 'barbarians' and created an even flatter or more monotonic state. Part of my neglect of barbarian diversity was, I believe, inherent in the nature of the enterprise.

My critics might have gone even further in faulting me for reifying the untenable binary of 'state' and 'barbarian'. First, the term 'barbarian' fails to distinguish between hunters and gatherers, shifting cultivators, pastoralists, traders, marine nomads, independent horticulturalists, collectors of trade goods and bandits. Nor does it account for the shifting over time, sometimes in a single life-span, between these different forms of subsistence. Each of these non-state social forms, moreover, is likely to occupy a different position *vis-à-vis* the closest state. Some 'barbarian' social forms approach the complexity we usually associate with the state: a central court, artisan specialists, grain fields, and networks of tax and tribute. The wide spectrum of non-state societies also challenges the binary of my book: that of state subjects and non-state peoples. In this spirit, were I to rewrite the book, I would emphasize far more the permeable membrane between the two and the movement, sometimes slow, sometimes massive, between them. It's a question of opening the temporal lens. A

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snapshot of a single moment appears to confirm the binary; open the lens wider to decades and centuries, however, and what impresses is flux and movement.

Despite the movement across the binary, the economic complementarity between the state and its barbarians is constant. Occupying different ecologies, they are natural trading partners; each has goods the other desires. In this respect the earliest Sumerian states on the alluvium were more likely to be rivals than allies. Each competed with the others for access to the minerals, trade goods, luxuries, necessities and slaves that only the barbarian zone could offer. The 'Uruk expansion', as it is called, should be seen in this light as an early example of vertical integration.

Smith is surely on firm ground to criticize the degree to which I read barbarian histories as the 'inverse' of the state. I am guilty of, to borrow a phrase, 'seeing like a state'. The relative scarcity of autonomous barbarian histories is in part responsible for this skewed optic. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the inversion of state civilization is a conscious cultural stance of many non-state peoples to distinguish themselves from state subjects. This was the key insight of Pierre Clastres' prescient *La Société contre l'État* (1974). The state, for its part, is likely to pay most attention to militarily dangerous pastoral nomads such as the Scythians, Mongols and Huns (especially those on horseback) as noted by Smith. Once again 'seeing like a state'! I pay too little attention to the many early states that were *not* menaced by potential barbarian conquerors. Here, Wright mentions the Meso-American early states and I would add to this virtually all the Southeast Asian states whose adjacent barbarians included no pastoral nomads.

Finally, I want to take note of an intriguing observation by Smith that, in the ancient state, 'campaigning' (a.k.a. raiding) 'was an indispensable annual rite of kingship'. Its aim was less territory than 'commodities: livestock, grain, preciosities and, indeed, human slaves' and which figure prominently in 'royal art and annals'. Invoking Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians 1982*, Smith speculates that the state's stereotype of the barbarian is a 'projection of civilization's originary violence onto the Other'. This is a powerful insight that, I believe, helps illuminate analogous situations such as the projected fears of slave owners in North America and the colonizers' fears and stereotypes of the people they had conquered. It need hardly be added that the 'Other', once so characterized, can make use of these fantasies, as Fanon, Sarte and Baldwin understood.

We already knew this!

There is one criticism that I want to accept as something of a badge of honour. It is a criticism I fully anticipated in the context of being fed to the professional archaeologists. Actually, I expected even more in the way of cries; 'But we already knew that!' D'Altroy notes, quite correctly, that Hans Nissen and Robert McC. Adams did most of their transformative work 30 to 40 years ago, and that their insights 'have long been incorporated into our accounts of the time and place'. Drennan also writes that the rejection of the old civilizational story, such as that codified by V. Gordon Childe in 1936, 'is not news'. But that is precisely the point: it is not news in *our* accounts of the time and place if *our accounts* refer to the professional world of ancient history and archaeology. Unless I am very much mistaken, the average educated, non-specialist layman is still walking around with the antediluvian version of civilization's rise that the specialists revolutionized long ago. What I was trying to do, admittedly in a quirky way, was to serve as a megaphone to broadcast what I have learned from you to a wider public. I may have garbled the message and got some things wrong, but that was my aim.

To close, I'd like to point to a dog that didn't bark. One of the possible factors in understanding demographic change and the fragility of the early state is the impact of the rise of infectious diseases. In this context, I believe I made a case for the possibly pivotal role of the epidemiological consequences of crowding of domesticated livestock and humans. Chapter 3 on 'Zoonoses' was admittedly somewhat speculative, and although Drennan usefully questions my time-line for the demographic 'bottleneck', I would have welcomed more in the way of expert commentary on this topic.

James C. Scott
Department of Political Science and Yale Agrarian Studies Program
Yale University
New Haven, CT 06422
USA
Email: james.scott@yale.edu

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