

IQ Nexus Journal

<https://iqnexus.org/journal/>

Vol. XVII, No. 3; September 2025

*Featuring:
When Did Humans
First Inhabit the Americas?*



Inside

7 Fine Arts

music, poems, visual, gallery

Science & Philosophy

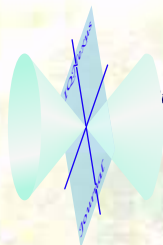
papers, essays, dialogues, reviews

Puzzles, Riddles & Brainteasers

sudoku, matrices, verbals

IQNJ Calendar

Online Journal publishing the works of the members of IIS & ePiq Societies, members of WIN



IQ Nexus Journal editorial staff

ublisher/Graphics Editor & Web Administrator..Stanislav Riha

English Editor.....Jacqueline Slade

IQ Nexus founder.....Owen Cosby

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Website; <https://iqnexus.org/journal/>

Non-members' contributions are welcome and every new contribution has to be accompanied by an introduction from the contributor.

IQ Nexus Journal

was created to publish creative endeavours for members of the IIS and ePiqs, web based societies as well as guests of other societies and invited non members..



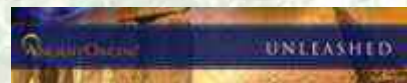
This issue features creative works of:

Listed alphabetically;

***Alena Plíštilová
Anja Jaenicke
Edgar Allan Poe
Eric A Trowbridge
Jaromír M Červenka
Stanislav Riha
Xavier Jouve***

COVER PAGE

When Did Humans First Inhabit the Americas?



What happens when an archaeological site is so extraordinary, that it threatens to eclipse everything we knew about history up to that point? Some discoveries are just too hard to fully grasp, and that makes us question their accuracy. Hueyatlatco in Mexico is one such archaeological site, forcing us to reconsider the timeframe of human habitation in the Americas. By a lot. The finds presented at Hueyatlatco are still a matter of heated debate amongst scholars today, but one thing is certain - there are still many unanswered questions which need to be explored.

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*Special thanks to **Jacqueline Slade** for her great help with English editorial work and **Owen Cosby** For reviving and restoring Infinity International Society and establishing IQ Nexus joined forum of IIS and ePiq and later ISI-S Societies for which this Journal was created..*

"Even though scientist are involved in this Journal, I and all involved in the IQ Nexus Journal have tried to keep the content (even though it is a Hi IQ Society periodical) on an ordinary human level as much as possible. In fact, is it not the case, that - to be a human being is the most intelligent way of life?"

Stanislav Riha

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Edgar Allan Poe

IQ Nexus



7 Arts

Music Sculpture Painting Literature Architecture Performing Film



LISBOA INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITION

AFONSOUL
ANA MALTA
ARANKA SZÉKELY
CARSTEN BUND
DAPHNE
ENDRE BARTOS
INÊS PRATS
JOAQUIM GROMICHO
JOCIMAR FAUSTINO
KAYO SATO
LEONOR RIBEIRO
LORRAINE MAHOT
LS
LUISA PETIZ
MAFADA GONÇALVES
MARIANA SANTOS
MARTA CARVALHO
MARTA MARQUES
METKA VERGNION
MINEO KURODA
NATÁLIA GROMICHO
NEL TEN WOLDE
NOELLE KALOM
PATRICIA MARIANO
PEDRO CHARTERS
RENATA CARNEIRO
RUI A. PEREIRA
ŠÁRKA DARTON
STANISLAV RIHA
TAMAS CSATO
TERRAKOTA
TOMMI VIITALA

04-17
OCT



Wisdom of ancient Master

Tao Te Ching

Lao-Tzu 500 BCE

Those who know don't talk.
Those who talk don't know.

Close your mouth,
block off your senses,
blunt your sharpness,
unite your knots,
soften your glare,
settle your dust.
This is the primal identity.

Be like the Tao.
It can't be approached or withdrawn from,
benefited or harmed,
honored or brought into disgrace.
It gives itself up continually.
That is why it endures.

SGA



Stonewall Gallery of Art

The Artists alphabetically

Alena Plisfilova
Anja Jaenicke
David Udbjorg

J M Cervenka
Marilyn Grumble

Standa Riha
Xavier Jouve



Ala Plisilova
photography



Ala Plisilova
photography



La Spaventosa

Anja Jaenicke
painting



Alfred Hitchcock

Anja Jaenicke
painting



David Udbjerg
photography



David Udhjorg
photography

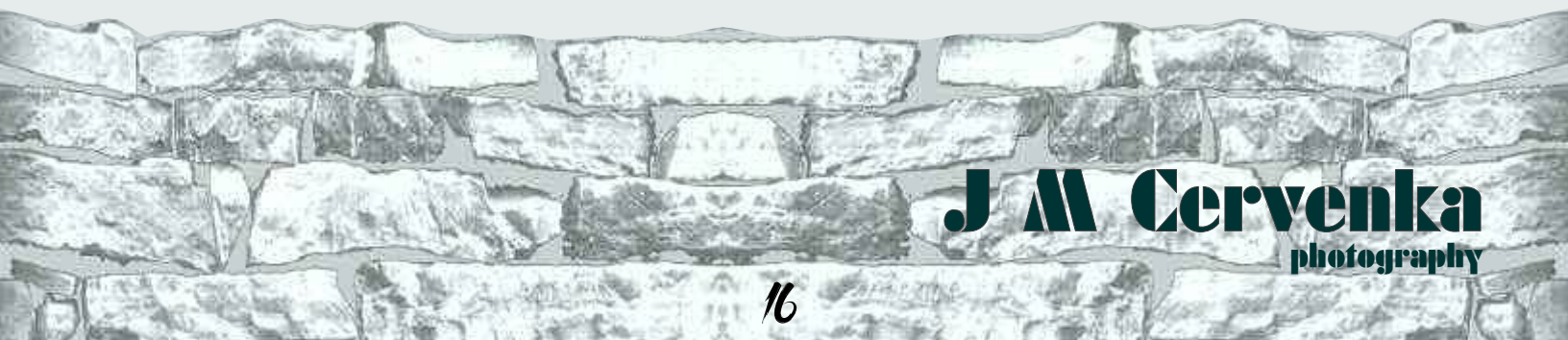


Nicolas Poussin

Art from the past



J M Cervenka
photography



J M Cervenka
photography



Standa Riha
mixed media



Standa Riha
mixed media



Xavier Jouve
photography



Xavier Jouve
photography

Essays, Philosophy, Science & Reviews

Reification of Beliefs: A Secular Look

by Eric Anthony Trowbridge

When Did Humans First Inhabit the Americas?

by Ancient Origins Unleashed

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH.

Less known stories by Edgar Allan Poe

Reification of Beliefs: A Secular Look

Eric Anthony Trowbridge

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I. Introduction

To reify is to take something that exists only as an idea or abstraction and treat it as though it has concrete, physical existence. It is a conceptual transformation—a move from the interior domain of thought to the exterior world of objects and institutions. Religion, perhaps more than any other cultural system, depends upon this transformation. Though the existence of gods, spirits, and divine principles remains unverified by empirical means, religious traditions across history have ceaselessly constructed rituals, buildings, garments, and moral codes that give these immaterial claims a kind of flesh. A cathedral stands not just as a building, but as a monument to belief; a priest's robe is not merely fabric, but a uniform worn on behalf of the divine; a code of ethics is not just a set of social agreements, but is presented as eternal, sacred law.

This essay contends that religion is, fundamentally, a system of reification. In the absence of verifiable gods or demonstrable metaphysical truths, religion creates robes, rites, hierarchies, and behavioral expectations to lend the appearance of reality to what is otherwise confined to the realm of belief. These external forms are not incidental—they are crucial. They are the ways in which faith makes itself look like fact, how imagination dresses itself in the trappings of authority, and how what is subjective is projected into the world as objective. To say that no god exists except in the minds of the worshipful is not merely a critique—it is a recognition that everything religious people do to make their gods “present” in the world is an attempt to give physical and social form to the unreal.

In exploring how religion reifies its claims, we must examine not just its doctrines, but its material culture, its moral teachings, and its institutional power structures. We will ask what it means to treat belief as if it were truth, and what the psychological and social costs are of building monuments to fantasy. Ultimately, this essay seeks to understand why the human mind is so inclined to exteriorize its inner yearnings—and what possibilities emerge when we stop mistaking the symbolic for substance.

II. The Nature of Religious Belief

At its core, religious belief is a phenomenon of the mind. It is a private, subjective affirmation of something that cannot be seen, touched, or tested in any empirically consistent way. Belief in gods, afterlives, miracles, or divine justice does not arise from material proof, but from internal conviction. This conviction may be deeply felt, emotionally powerful, and culturally reinforced—but it remains a belief, not a demonstrable fact. The fundamental distinction

between belief and knowledge is essential here: knowledge implies justification by evidence or reason; belief requires neither.

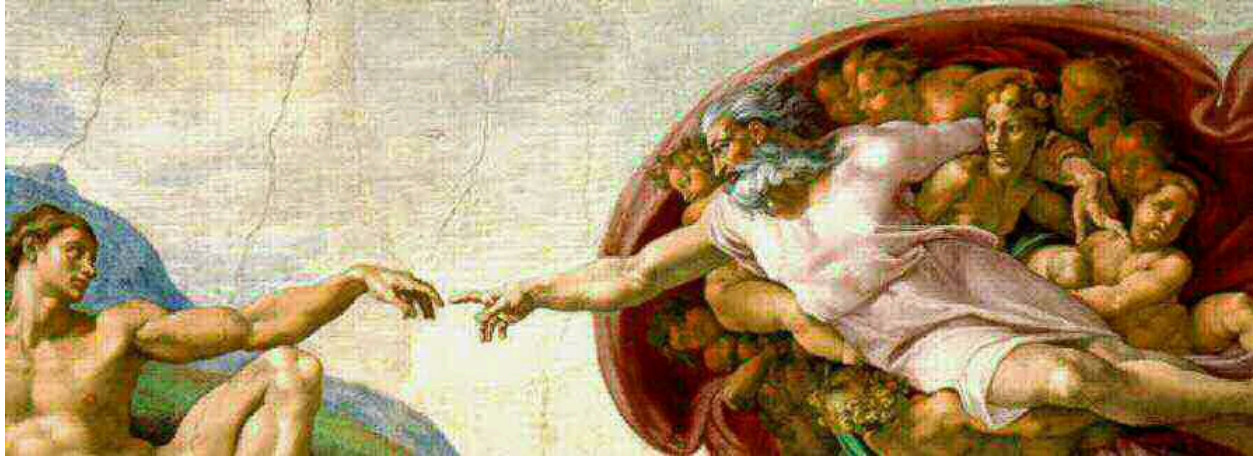
In the realm of religion, belief often holds primacy over fact. The faithful are frequently taught that doubt is a weakness, that questioning is sinful, and that faith is a virtue precisely because it defies verification. In this way, belief is deliberately severed from evidence, even as it makes sweeping claims about the structure of reality. One is not supposed to believe because something is true; rather, in many religious contexts, something is considered true because it is believed.

This reversal of epistemological priority leads to a peculiar dynamic: belief becomes its own justification. The more fervently one believes, the more “real” the object of that belief seems—not because reality has changed, but because belief has intensified. A worshipper who kneels before an altar may feel the presence of a god, but this feeling is generated within the nervous system and conditioned by culture. There is no external verification. The experience is entirely internal—yet for the believer, this internal state is treated as evidence of an external reality.

Religious communities, then, are built not on shared access to a divine being, but on shared belief in that being. The god is not “found” so much as agreed upon. This collective agreement gives belief social weight: it becomes normal, expected, even morally mandated. In many cases, belief is not even seen as a choice, but as a duty—a sign of righteousness or spiritual health. As such, belief becomes deeply entangled with identity, family, community, and belonging. To disbelieve is not simply to dissent intellectually, but to risk exile from the emotional and cultural fabric of one’s life.

This social entrenchment of belief paves the way for its reification. Once belief is widespread and deeply embedded in the emotional lives of people, it seeks outward form. It demands rituals, objects, institutions, and spaces that give it tangibility. The inner certainty must be expressed externally in order to be shared, reinforced, and protected. Thus, the subjective becomes performative—and eventually, institutional.

Religious belief, then, is not just a mental state. It is the seed from which vast cultural systems grow, systems that work tirelessly to conceal the fact that they originate in the mind. The garments, the buildings, the texts—all are designed to obscure the origin of belief and replace it with a sense of permanence, universality, and inevitability. But this permanence is an illusion. Belief remains what it always was: an internal conviction without external verification, a mental construct dressed in the garments of the real.



III. Ritual and Symbol as Reification

If religious belief begins as an internal conviction, then ritual and symbol are its first steps into the world of the tangible. They are the mechanisms by which belief becomes visible, repeatable, and—crucially—shared. Through ritual, what is personal becomes communal. Through symbols, what is abstract becomes material. These practices are not neutral—they are designed to reify, to give form and permanence to what would otherwise remain fleeting and private.

Rituals are performative acts, often repeated in set patterns, that seek to invoke or respond to the divine. Yet their true function lies not in their efficacy—no evidence supports that a prayer alters the cosmos or that a blessing changes the substance of water—but in their symbolic reinforcement of belief. A person kneeling, crossing themselves, or receiving communion is not altering the metaphysical order of the universe, but participating in a structured enactment of faith. The repetition of these acts over time embeds belief into muscle memory, creating an illusion of contact with the divine precisely because the act is so deeply internalized.

Rituals also serve a social purpose. They synchronize bodies, voices, and actions, creating a shared emotional and psychological atmosphere. This collective synchronization can feel transcendent, not because it reaches beyond the human, but because it intensifies the human experience. The sensory richness of rituals—chanting, incense, music, robes, architecture—overwhelms the rational faculties and reinforces the illusion that something greater is present. In reality, what is being felt is the power of coordinated human expression. The divine presence is a projection onto this experience, not the cause of it.

Symbols function similarly. Sacred objects—crosses, crescents, icons, scriptures—are material items imbued with abstract significance. A wooden cross is just that: a piece of wood. But within Christianity, it is saturated with meaning, treated not only as a reminder of belief but as a presence in itself. This is the essence of reification: to treat a symbol as though it is the thing it represents. The same holds for temples, mosques, and churches, which are often described as “houses of God,” as though the divine literally resides within their walls. These buildings are architectural assertions of belief, built with the intent to impress, awe, and intimidate. Their

size, decoration, and solemnity are designed to feel sacred—but sacredness, again, is a psychological response, not a property of stone and glass.

Language, too, is enlisted in the project of reification. Religious liturgies, chants, and sacred texts repeat key terms and phrases that stabilize belief over time. When a congregation recites the same words weekly—“Amen,” “Peace be upon him,” “Hallelujah”—those words accrue weight not because they are true, but because they are repeated. They become sacred through ritualized use. This phenomenon, known in semiotics as performative speech, allows language to not just describe belief but to enact it. In saying, “This is the body of Christ,” the speaker transforms a wafer not physically, but socially and symbolically, into something sacred.

The repetition of ritual and the saturation of symbols are central to religion’s survival because they give continuity to belief. A person may doubt intellectually, but when surrounded by the solidity of sacred architecture, the solemnity of music, and the comfort of shared gestures, doubt is softened. The physicality of religion makes it feel more real than it is. This is precisely the point: religion must constantly compensate for the absence of empirical evidence. It does so not by providing proof, but by providing experience—sensory, emotional, and communal.

Ritual and symbol, then, are not just accessories to faith. They are its armor, its scaffolding, its disguise. They work not only to express belief, but to conceal its fragility. By surrounding abstract claims with tangible practices and objects, religion creates the illusion that its gods, its moral codes, and its promises are as real as the stones of a cathedral or the pages of a holy book. But they are not. They are still beliefs—only now adorned in the trappings of reality.



IV. Ethics and Morality as Reified Divinity

Among the most potent forms of religious reification is the transformation of morality into divine mandate. While ethical behavior can emerge from secular reason, evolutionary biology, or social consensus, religion frequently claims morality as its exclusive domain. In doing so, it reifies the abstract concept of “goodness” by associating it with divine will, thereby giving moral codes the weight of cosmic authority. This move elevates what are ultimately human choices and social strategies into unchallengeable truths, encoded as commandments, laws, or virtues granted by a god.

The logic here is circular but powerful: the divine is said to be good, and goodness is defined by what the divine commands. This mutual reinforcement stabilizes both the concept of God and the concept of morality. If a god exists and that god is good, then to be moral is to obey that god. And if morality is tied to divine will, then disobedience becomes not just wrong, but sinful. This intertwining ensures that belief in a god is no longer a personal conviction—it becomes a moral obligation. Doubt is framed not only as error but as a lapse in virtue.

This dynamic is perhaps most evident in the Abrahamic religions, where morality is codified in sacred texts: the Ten Commandments, the Quranic surahs, the teachings of Jesus. These texts do not simply offer ethical guidance—they frame such guidance as eternal, unchanging, and divinely sanctioned. In doing so, they discourage critical examination. One does not question the source of divine morality without appearing immoral oneself. This is the heart of religious moral reification: the conflation of obedience with goodness, and of transgression with evil.

Yet, a closer inspection reveals that many so-called divine morals are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and even political contexts. Prohibitions against eating certain foods, rules regarding gender roles, or attitudes toward sexuality are not universal ethical truths, but regionally specific customs. What religion does is freeze these customs in time and declare them sacred. The ethical, which evolves with human society, is made static and sacred in order to shield it from change. Reification here serves a conservative function: it protects the status quo by sanctifying it.

This moral reification has significant social implications. Those who follow the moral teachings of a religion are often seen not only as faithful, but as good people. Religious identity becomes a proxy for moral character. This conflation allows adherents to view themselves as superior, not because they act ethically in any objective sense, but because their actions align with a religious framework. Conversely, those who reject religious morality are often cast as lost, dangerous, or depraved—not because of their behavior, but because of their nonalignment with a sacred system.

Importantly, this process allows religion to externalize the divine through human conduct. When a person acts morally—especially within the confines of a religious moral system—they are seen as a vessel of divine will. In this way, God is made visible through human behavior. A kind person, a generous donor, a patient listener: these individuals are often held up as examples of godliness. The divine, which cannot be seen or proven, is made real through ethical behavior.

But again, this is an illusion of causality. These moral acts do not prove the existence of a god—they only prove the presence of moral behavior. The reification lies in mistaking the one for the other.

Secular ethical systems—those based on empathy, reason, or mutual benefit—demonstrate that morality does not require a divine source. In fact, many ethical principles promoted by religions are indistinguishable from those arrived at through secular humanism: do not kill, do not steal, treat others as you wish to be treated. What religion does is repackage these shared human values and attribute them to a supernatural source, thus monopolizing virtue and tying it to belief. This rebranding of common morality as divine command is a form of rhetorical power, not metaphysical truth.

Thus, religious morality is not merely about how to live—it is about how to project belief into action. It transforms the internal conviction that a god exists into an external demonstration of that god's will. This makes the moral person into a kind of avatar for the divine. But this avatar is misleading, because the morality does not originate with a god; it originates with human beings, and is then retroactively sacralized. To say that “being good is being godly” is to mistake the moral for the metaphysical. It is to reify a fantasy by acting it out in the world.

V. Institutional Power and Social Construction

If belief is the seed and ritual the practice, then religious institutions are the structures that cultivate and protect reified religion. These institutions—churches, mosques, temples, clerical hierarchies, and governing bodies—form the social architecture that allows belief to move from the realm of personal conviction into the domain of public authority. They are not merely administrative; they are active agents in making belief appear real, stable, and unchallengeable.

Institutions give belief continuity across time. A personal vision, a mystical experience, or a charismatic prophet may spark a religious movement, but without institutionalization, the movement fades. It is the creation of religious authority—priests, imams, rabbis, monks—that ensures the transmission of belief from one generation to the next. These roles are not spontaneous expressions of spirituality; they are formalized positions within bureaucratic systems. The vestments, titles, and rituals of these figures are not spiritual in themselves but are treated as sacred, reifying the idea that the institution speaks for the divine.

Religious buildings play a central role in this process. A church is not merely a meeting place; it is constructed to evoke awe, humility, and reverence. Its architecture—towering ceilings, stained glass, acoustics engineered for echoes—works not through divine intervention but through psychological manipulation. The spatial design is meant to suggest that the believer is small, the sacred immense. This effect is powerful, but it does not testify to the presence of a god—it testifies to the effectiveness of design in eliciting emotional responses. The reification occurs when these emotional responses are misattributed to the divine rather than to the architecture itself.

Beyond buildings and titles, religious institutions exert control through the regulation of doctrine. Councils decide which texts are sacred, which beliefs are orthodox, and which interpretations are heretical. These decisions, though made by people, are framed as divinely guided. The social effect is profound: dissent becomes sacrilege, reform becomes blasphemy, and obedience becomes faithfulness. In this way, religious institutions preserve their own power by presenting their human decisions as divine inevitabilities. This is a particularly insidious form of reification—what is essentially political becomes sacred.

Moreover, institutions construct religious identity through practices like baptism, confirmation, circumcision, or initiation rituals. These are not simply symbolic—they mark an individual as belonging to a particular tradition. This belonging is reinforced through education, community expectations, and sometimes legal structures. Religious identity, once conferred, is treated as immutable—even though it is often decided for the individual by parents or community, long before personal choice is possible. In this way, religion becomes not just a belief system but a social category, a status imposed as well as assumed.

Education is perhaps the most enduring tool of institutional reification. Religious schooling, catechism classes, Quranic study, and Bible camps are all designed to inculcate belief as early and thoroughly as possible. Children are taught that religious claims are facts, not interpretations; that stories of miracles and divine wrath are history, not metaphor. The earlier and more consistently these ideas are taught, the more likely they are to be perceived as obvious truths rather than inherited myths. The success of this indoctrination is evident in how deeply religious belief can be embedded even in those who later come to question or reject it.

Social rituals—weddings, funerals, holidays—further normalize religious structures. Even those who do not believe may participate in religious ceremonies out of social obligation or tradition. In this way, religious institutions extend their influence beyond the faithful. The symbols, words, and forms of religion become part of the culture itself, blurring the line between belief and custom. This normalization is a form of passive reification: religion becomes the assumed backdrop of life, its metaphysical claims embedded in ordinary social functions.

Finally, institutional religion often wields real political and economic power. Religious leaders endorse candidates, shape policy, and lobby governments. Religious organizations own property, run charities, and influence public morality. In many countries, religion is formally entwined with the state. These institutional actions are often justified as divine mandates, but in reality, they are exercises in worldly power. The reification here lies in attributing spiritual authority to decisions that are driven by political, financial, or ideological concerns.

Religious institutions are not merely preservers of tradition; they are engines of reification. They transform human decisions into divine will, architecture into sacred space, and social control into moral duty. Through their persistent efforts, the imagined becomes treated as real, the abstract as authoritative, and the unverifiable as undeniable. To understand religion without understanding its institutional machinery is to miss the most effective means by which belief is projected into the world as if it were fact.

Social rituals—weddings, funerals, holidays—further normalize religious structures. Even those who do not consider themselves religious often participate in these rites, which are heavily encoded with religious symbolism and language. A funeral conducted in a church, a marriage blessed by clergy, a national holiday with religious origins—all reinforce the presence of religion in the fabric of communal life. These rituals blur the line between cultural tradition and theological commitment, allowing religious institutions to exert influence even over the secular or skeptical. What begins as culture is often retrofitted with claims of divine origin.

The institutional power of religion extends to law and governance. In many societies, religious bodies influence—or even dictate—laws on marriage, education, reproductive rights, speech, and dress. These legal intrusions are justified by appeals to sacred doctrine, effectively turning belief into law. In such cases, the personal becomes political, and dissent becomes criminal. The illusion of divine authority is used to legitimize very human systems of control. Again, reification plays a central role: religious doctrines are treated not as subjective interpretations, but as universal truths with jurisdiction over everyone, believer or not.

Perhaps most revealing is the way religious institutions adapt to cultural and political changes while maintaining the illusion of timelessness. Doctrines that were once used to justify slavery, patriarchy, or violence are quietly revised or reinterpreted, not because of divine instruction, but due to social pressure. The institution changes while insisting it remains unchanged. This sleight of hand reveals the human core of religious authority: it is not responding to gods but to people, not preserving truth but maintaining relevance. Yet the reified image of religion as eternal and divinely anchored persists.

Thus, institutional power is not an accidental feature of religion—it is a central mechanism of its reification. Belief, in order to survive, must be dressed in the robes of permanence, authority, and inevitability. Institutions provide this dress. They construct a world in which belief appears to be fact, tradition becomes obligation, and fantasy is confused with history. What they protect is not truth, but the appearance of truth. And in doing so, they stabilize the fantasy at the heart of religion by making it look like the foundation of civilization itself.

VI. Conclusion; Living Without Reified Illusions

If religion is, at its core, a set of beliefs without empirical foundation—subjective convictions rendered objective through ritual, symbol, morality, and institutional power—then to live without religion is not merely to reject certain doctrines, but to refuse the reification of belief itself. It is to insist on the distinction between what is imagined and what is real, between what is subjectively meaningful and what is ontologically true. This rejection is not nihilism. It is a clearing away of illusions so that meaning, ethics, and community can be rebuilt on firmer, more honest ground.

Living without reified religious structures does not necessitate a life stripped of meaning or transcendence. Human beings still crave awe, still seek order, still long for connection and purpose. But these longings need not be projected onto imagined beings or eternal realms. They

can be rooted in the here and now—in our relationships, our art, our search for knowledge, and our ethical commitments to one another. To acknowledge that morality, beauty, and wonder emerge from human minds and not from divine decrees is to reclaim responsibility for them.

Moreover, rejecting the reified claims of religion opens space for pluralism and dialogue. In a religious worldview, to disagree is to err or to sin. In a secular, non-reified worldview, disagreement becomes an opportunity for growth. Without divine authority looming over every discussion, ideas can be debated on their merits, and morality can be refined in light of reason, empathy, and lived experience. The loss of divine sanction is not a loss at all—it is an invitation to maturity.

This is not to say that religious people are inherently deluded or irrational. Rather, it is to highlight that the forms religion takes—robes, rituals, hierarchies, scriptures—often obscure the psychological origins of belief. What began as a thought or a feeling becomes, through reification, a system that claims independent existence and authority. To challenge this process is not merely to deny a god; it is to reclaim agency over our own narratives.

The challenge, then, is not only intellectual but existential. It requires individuals to confront uncertainty without defaulting to myth, to face mortality without clinging to promises of an afterlife, and to act ethically without fear of divine punishment or hope of celestial reward. These are difficult demands—but they are also liberating. They shift the locus of meaning from the supernatural to the personal and the communal. They make us authors of our own values, rather than vessels for inherited commands.

Ultimately, the reified claims of religion persist not because they are true, but because they are useful—psychologically comforting, socially cohesive, politically expedient. To see through them is to risk alienation, but it is also to gain clarity. It is to live without illusion, and in doing so, to accept the full weight and beauty of the human condition: fragile, finite, but capable of wonder nonetheless.

In the end, the project of un-reifying religion is not about destroying faith but about redirecting it—away from imaginary gods and toward one another. It is about building cathedrals of compassion instead of stone, rituals of reason instead of obedience, and communities of mutual aid instead of hierarchy. In this light, to reject reified religion is not to live without meaning, but to begin the difficult and noble work of creating it ourselves.



When Did Humans First Inhabit the Americas?



What happens when an archaeological site is so extraordinary, that it threatens to eclipse everything we knew about history up to that point? Some discoveries are just too hard to fully grasp, and that makes us question their accuracy. [Hueyatlaco](#) in Mexico is one such archaeological site, forcing us to reconsider the timeframe of human habitation in the Americas. By a lot. The finds presented at Hueyatlaco are still a matter

of heated debate amongst scholars today, but one thing is certain - there are still many unanswered questions which need to be explored.

The Hueyatenco and the Enigmatic Traces of Early Man

The Valsequillo Basin is located near the city of Puebla, in Mexico. Situated in the central part of the country, this basin has been the focus of much interest for geologists, archaeologists and the scientific world as a whole. This interest was sparked due to the presence of numerous megafaunal remains and evidence of very early human habitation. Megafauna, as we know, is the term commonly used for large animals that roamed the landscapes of the Pleistocene, such as [mammoths](#), woolly rhinoceroses, and cave lions. However, although rich in important discoveries, the site has always been the cause of much [controversy](#), simply because some of the theories surrounding it are very hard to fully grasp.

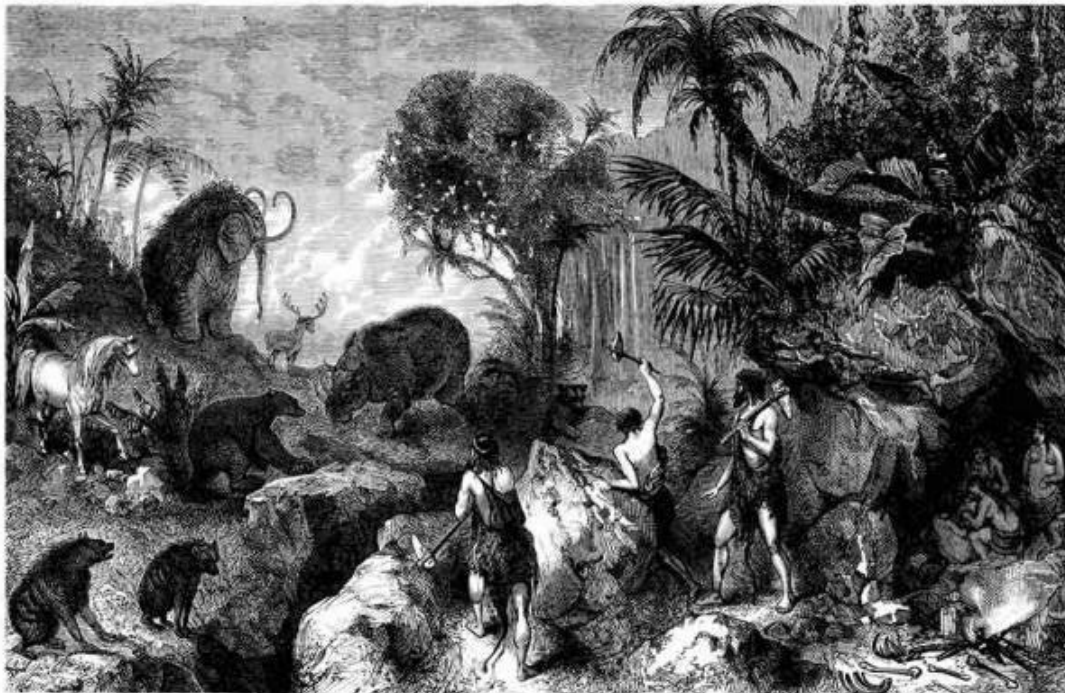
It has been proposed that the landscapes of the Early Pleistocene period were characterized by many deep lakes, and that this basin might once have been one such lake. However, no direct proof for this ever surfaced and dating has proven quite difficult for scholars. Nevertheless, the area is of immense geological interest due to it being dominated by the stratovolcanoes [Popocatepetl](#) and La [Malinche](#), and its location in the Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt. As such, this is a site with a time-worn history, which also helps shed some light on early human habitation of the region, because [geology](#) and archaeology often go hand in hand.

- [Evidence Mounts in Favor of Early Inhabitants of the Americas Over 20,000 Years Ago](#)
- [Criticisms Mount Against Claim of Hominins in the Americas Over 100,000 Years Ago](#)

Some of the first excavations at Hueyatenco were carried out in 1961, when professor Cynthia Irwin-Williams conducted an extensive dig at the site. Even before she arrived, the region was known as a place rich in animal fossils, which sparked the interest of scholars. Irwin-Williams was soon joined by other prominent persons of the U.S.

Geological Survey, notably Virginia Steen-McIntyre, who was responsible for publicizing the find and the magnificent discoveries it entailed. Due to the vast numbers of animal fossils, it was commonly believed that this site was a kill site, where ancient humans butchered the animals they [hunted](#).

The countless animal remains were located in fluvial deposits commonly known as Valsequillo gravels, which were often plain and exposed in the high cliff sides of the Valsequillo Reservoir. Some of the ancient animal fossils found included [bison](#), camel, dire wolf, peccary, short-faced bear, [sloth](#), horse, tapir, [mammoth](#), saber-toothed cat, mastodon, glyptodon, four-horned antelope, and several other species. But the really important finds were made in 1962, when Irwin-Williams discovered both animal [bones](#) and stone tools, together, *in situ*. The subsequent struggle to positively identify the age of these remains led to much controversy.



During excavations at Hueyatlaco in Mexico, Cynthia Irwin-Williams discovered animal bones, fossils and stone tools together. The dating of these remains has created unending controversy. ([Erica Guilane-Nachez](#) / Adobe Stock)

A Conundrum of Man's Earliest Origins

The tools that were discovered included some very crude and primitive implements, but also tools that were much more sophisticated, with double edges and detailed flaking construction. These tools were diverse and included quite elaborate projectile points, many of which were made from non-local materials. This was a clear proof that Hueyatenco was used by various groups of people for a long period of time. Either way, these findings were quickly pushing back the previously believed timeline of human habitation in South America, which caused conflicts in the scientific world.

Very early on in the excavations, attempts were made to discredit the work done at Hueyatenco, and some turned out to be blatant attacks on the work. Someone seemingly had a problem with the idea that South America was inhabited so much earlier than was commonly believed. In 1967, Jose Lorenzo, a member of the Mexican *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, came forth with a controversial claim that the artifacts discovered were deliberately planted at the site, in a way that made it difficult to know whether they were actually discovered. This gossip was seemingly unmerited and looked a lot like an attempt to disrupt the crew from making further claims at the site.

What is more, the suspicious activities did not stop here. Irwin-Williams did make a startling discovery of mammoth bone fragments that were carved with intricate images, depicting various megafauna animals such as serpents and saber-toothed cats. Similar carved images have been discovered all over the world, and are associated with early man. However, these carved bones disappeared under puzzling circumstances, as if someone didn't want them to reach the public eye. Photographs of the carvings survive.



Virginia Steen-McIntyre working on the Hueyatenco site in the mid-1960s. ([The Pleistocene Coalition](#))

Stigmatized Because of the Truth Because of Hueyatenco Results

By 1969, Irwin-Williams sought support in the scientific community, and gained support from three renowned scholars who visited the site of the excavations and confirmed that everything was being conducted in a professional manner. During that same year, the team published their first scientific paper that detailed the excavations and the importance of the site. And that importance was *the age* .

Various methods for dating the finds were utilized, many of which were revolutionary for the time. The usual [radiocarbon dating](#) indicated that the remains were roughly 35,000 years old. However, dating by uranium suggested the remains to be far older, roughly 260,000 years old. At the time, these results were considered an anomaly,

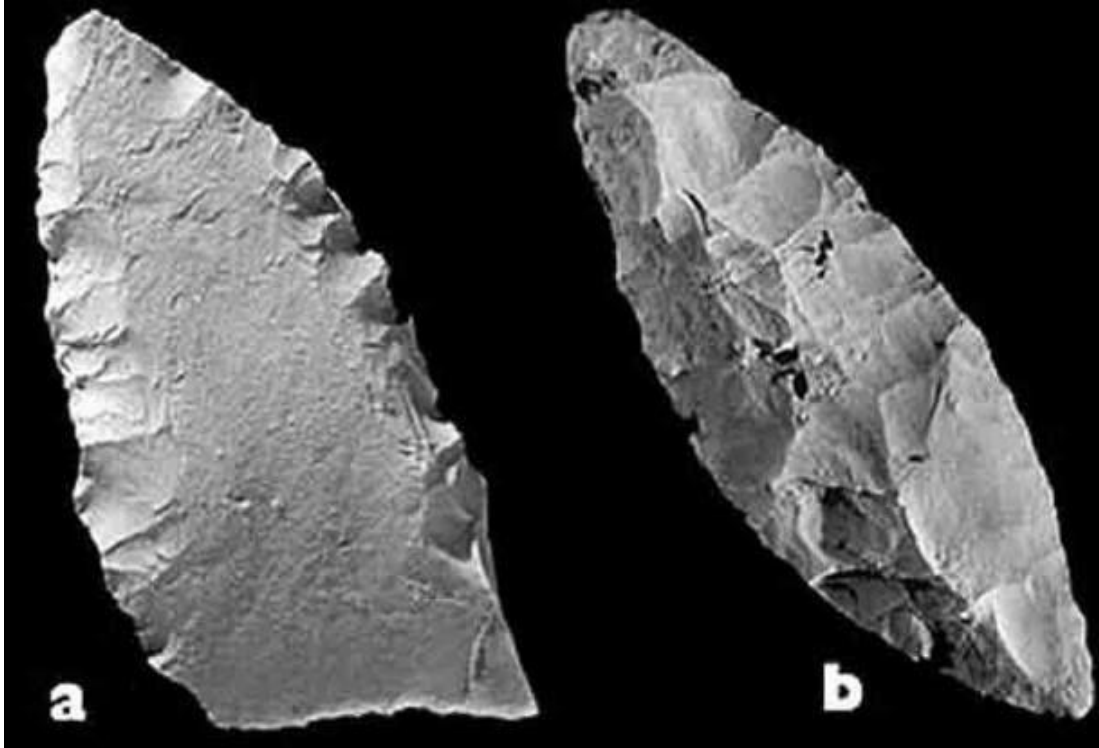
especially due to the fact that general science proposed a general time of 16,000 years before present for the settling of the Americas.

Some suggested that the strata (or geological layers) were eroded by ancient waterways, and that might have mixed up the specimens, and causing such differing results. By 1973, scientists returned to Hueyatlaco, hoping to conduct new excavations and attempt to once more examine the layers and to resolve the oddities of dating the finds. However, their research concluded that the layers *were not* eroded and that specimens were not mixed up.

What is more, this new team managed to analyze volcanic ash from the site and apply the revolutionary zircon fission track dating method. Through this geochemistry approach, they determined that the volcanic ash - discovered in the same layer as the tools - was roughly between 370,000 and 240,000 years old. This confirmed the extremely old age of human habitation at the site, and further deepened the enigma that was Hueyatlaco.

In time, plenty of friction arose between the team members, as they could not agree on the age, the direction in which the excavation was heading, or the accuracy of the dating methods. Uranium dating was extremely new at the time, and its reliability not well known, while the fission track dating method had a substantial margin of error. In time, the excavation team was separated by their views.

Irwin-Williams believed that the probable age was 20,000 years before present, although that view in itself was considered controversial by many. On the other hand, Harold Malde and Virginia Steen-McIntyre, other team leaders, firmly believed the original dating of 200,000 years before present - which was so revolutionary that it was hard to comprehend. Some suggested that the 20,000 year theory by Irwin-Williams was “puzzling” and almost a deliberate tactic to discredit the find. This was believed mainly because no evidence for that age was found in the excavations at all.



The excavations at Hueyatenco unearthed stone tools, some of which were very crude and primitive implements, but others that were far more sophisticated. ([Ancient Origins](#))

A Tearing of the Scientific Community

Irwin-Williams never went forward to solidify her claims. In fact, she never published a report on the site whatsoever, which led to questions on the honesty of her claims. On the other hand, the other part of the team firmly believed in their 200,000 year theory, and were not willing to drop it. In 1981, this faction made up of Malde, Fryxell, and Steen-McIntyre published an extensive scientific paper in the *Journal of Quaternary Research* , providing a detailed insight and evidence for the extremely old dating of human habitation at the site.

In their paper, they provided the results from four different dating tests: the fission track, the uranium-thorium test, the study of mineral weathering to determine age, and the tephra hydration tests. All of these tests confirmed the age of the remains to be roughly

250,000 years old which confirmed their theories. To that end, the authors wrote in their paper:

"The evidence outlined here consistently indicates that the Hueyatenco site is about 250,000 years old. We who have worked on geological aspects of the Valsequillo area are painfully aware that so great an age poses an archaeological dilemma [...] In our view, the results reported here widen the window of time in which serious investigation of the age of Man in the New World would be warranted. We continue to cast a critical eye on all the data, including our own."

This was an educated, accurate response that acknowledged that such a radical claim *did* seem odd, but was not entirely impossible. The story of Hueyatenco continued to look like a deliberate attempt to discredit these finds or hide them under the carpet. The evidence was there: early humans could have inhabited the so-called New World, the Americas, far earlier than was commonly believed.

But seemingly, someone did not want that truth to be accepted. To that end, Irwin-Williams, who was at odds with the rest of the team, raised objections to several aspects of the published paper, seemingly continuing her attacks on the finds. The team were confident and quickly refuted her attempts to discredit their work.



Controversial Results at Hueyatlaco Silenced from the Shadows

Further secrets were soon revealed. Virginia Steen-McIntyre was at one point fired from her job due to her claims, and she also revealed that some of the original team members were harassed, their careers were threatened, and they were proclaimed incompetent - all because of their involvement in the project. So, we need to wonder, why did these findings cause so much enmity from mainstream science? Sure, to some, the claims of such an old age might seem radical and hard to believe. But rather than simply disagreeing with the claims, mainstream scholars went to great lengths to attack, harass, and fully discredit the professional work the team has conducted.

- [Evidence for Pre-Clovis Inhabitants of Americas Emerges from Sea Floor](#)
- [Were the Americas inhabited 30,000 years ago?](#)

Nevertheless, as time progressed, new tests were conducted, providing new evidence and deepening the controversy related to the site. In 2004, for example, researcher Sam Van Landingham conducted extensive bio-stratigraphic analysis, confirming that the strata that bore the discovered tools was some 250,000 years old. He re-confirmed these finds once again in 2006. He states in his papers that the samples can be dated to the so-called *Sangamonian stage* (from 80,000 to 220,000 years before present) due to the presence of several diatom species only appearing in that age. More findings appeared in 2008, when paleomagnetic testing was conducted on the volcanic ash layers from the site, dating them to roughly 780,000 years before present.

[Hueyatlaco](#) remains a true scientific anomaly. It is not at all impossible that early man could have crossed over to the Americas much, much earlier than is currently believed. In fact, there already is the conundrum of the [Solutrean theory](#), which tells us that the [Clovis people](#), the proposed ancestors of the Native Americans, were *not* the first inhabitants of the Americas. Besides these, there are numerous pieces of evidence

across the continent that tell us that it is nigh time that we reconsider the history of human habitation in the Americas.

Top image: The results discovered at Hueyatenco remain controversial even today.

Source: [Kovalenko I](#) / Adobe Stock

By Aleksa Vučković

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THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH.



THE "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress or egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death."

It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. There were seven—an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different; as might have been expected from the duke's love of the bizarre. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass whose color varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example, in blue—and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was

purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange—the fifth with white—the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood color. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall, a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes, (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies,) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colors and effects. He disregarded the decora of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the moveable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great fete; and it was his own guiding taste which had given

character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm—much of what has been since seen in "Hernani." There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away—they have endured but an instant—and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many-tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture; for the night is waning away; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-colored panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches their ears who indulge in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who revelled. And thus, too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade license of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and

shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

"Who dares?" he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him—"who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him—that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the battlements!"

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly—for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the moment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple—through the purple to the green—through the green to the orange—through this again to the white—and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry—and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave-cerements and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.