

Comparison of the Narrative Traditions—China and the West

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Abstract: Narrative tradition refers to the way storytelling is passed from generation to generation. Tradition is not an unchangeable or pure object. The reason that people cannot approach tradition rationally lies in its maternity and divinity. Tradition is not passed down only by narration because at times the narrative related to tradition creates tradition or serves as a substitute for tradition. Nowadays, people learn tradition more through narratives related to tradition. There are many forms of expression in narratives and only by grasping the main line of “storytelling” can we penetrate the existing barriers of the disciplines and restore the genealogy of the narrative tradition. The latest anthropological studies suggest that the main reason for human success is storytelling, which helps to convey the significance of narrative traditional research.

Keywords: narrative, tradition, storytelling

Narratives are created to describe events, namely, to tell stories. Now storytelling is no longer dominated by speaking and writing as media evolution allows us to be engaged by varied narratives in an unprecedentedly wide range of ways. Traditions are the systems passed down from generation to generation, including bloodlines, orthodoxies, learning practices, legitimacies and state regimes.^① In the simplest sense, a narrative tradition refers to a storytelling mode

① Book of the Later Han • Eastern Countries • Japan: “After the Emperor Hanwu annihilated Korea, about 30 countries assigned diplomats to the Han Dynasty. All these countries were dominated by hereditary kings. And it became a tradition passed down from generation to generation”

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passed down from generation to generation. As China is now on the track of national rejuvenation, Chinese scholars are increasingly enthusiastic about narrative traditions. This entails deepening our understanding of the core concept. In this paper, narrative traditions are differentiated from the source using scientific principles in ways that benefit related studies and the “tell the stories of China well” initiative.

1. Tradition

Definitions of “tradition” are so varied that even a whole book cannot clarify what a tradition is. For the avoidance of lengthiness, we may express our understanding in a roundabout way, by correcting some common misunderstandings.

It is widely believed that traditions are changeless past things. This is the first misunderstanding to be corrected here. In fact, traditions subtly change while being passed down from generation to generation. What the second generation passes down to the third generation cannot be the image of what the first generation passed down to the second generation, because passers leave their imprints or even brands on what they pass down. On the surface, traditions go downwards through successive generations. Yet, every generation’s contribution to traditions is made in a form of upward feedback. As Irving Babbitt (2004, p. 155) found, “In most cases it will be attained, if at all, by a knowledge of good literature — by a familiarity with that golden chain of masterpieces which links together into a single tradition the more permanent experiences of the race”. Furthermore, his student T.S. Eliot argued that, “The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves,” and “the supervention of novelty” enables traditions, which exist as systems, to change themselves.

What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. (Eliot, 1994, p. 3).

Everything has its “qualitative prescription.” As traditions are systems passed down through successive generations, they must continue downwards. Yet, if such continuation is changeless, the closed regime will definitely and quickly end in death. That is to say, continuation of traditions involves pushing the boundaries. In his essay, Eliot clarified the dynamics of traditions: A tradition is like a long river running throughout history. If it was not replenished by water from all directions, the river could not continue to flow. In fact, what Eliot hoped to express through this quoted passage is far more than its surface meaning. Traditions are not only what belong to the past as many people believe. They seem to always stand behind generations, yet every generation is making a history and altering the traditions behind them while moving forward. A tradition continues to adjust its internal order as every generation it accompanies moves ahead, echoing what Eliot (1994, p. 3) precisely summarized, “The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past”. Take the *Dream of the Red Chamber* for example. This “towering tree” occupied the center of the ancient novel “forest” immediately with its debut. And, various earlier novels, including the Ming Dynasty’s “social customs novels,” which “depict human relationships and reveal their fickleness” (Lu, 1981 a p. 179) and

directly inspire the narrative pattern of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, had to surrender the laurel to this “tree.” Traditions of novels are only part of what this book impacted. Just as Wen Yiduo (1987, p. 365) once said, “The majority of our literary history is, in essence, a poem history”. However, the emergence of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* disrupted the traditional view that “poems outweigh novels.” “If you do not mention the *Dream of the Red Chamber* in discussions, you are not a real reader.” This common saying is a true portrayal of the new pattern that features “waning of poems, waxing of novels.”

“Tradition” is “traditum” in Latin. As a derivative of the root “trade,” it implies “being passed down and transferred.” People in China, who often hear “carrying forward traditions,” consider a tradition as what is transferred between generations and inherited subject to human subjectivity. This is the second misunderstanding of traditions. In individual-tradition relationships, either party should not be viewed simply as the subject or object. While people may opt to inherit a certain aspect of a tradition, they cannot refuse the whole tradition, as they are products of the tradition. Considering traditions fully independent of people is as absurd as describing human as being given birth by rocks. In some sense, traditions are “the greater self” that contains “the smaller self.” To use a metaphor, individuals are Sun Wukong (Monkey King) in the *Journey to the West*, who cannot escape from the Buddha’s palms. In his book *Tradition*, Edward Shils named the first chapter, “In the Grip of the Past.” This chapter emphasizes the decisive effect traditions have on individuals:

The human beings alive at any given time are very rarely more than three generations away from any other member of their own lineage who are alive at the same time. However, their range of direct contact, physical and symbolic, with things, with works, words, and modes of conduct created in the past, is far more extensive and it reaches much further back in time. They live in the present of things from the past. Much that they do and think and aspire to, leaving aside idiosyncratic variations, is an approximate reiteration of what was done and thought for generations, long before anyone alive was born (Shils, 1981, p. 37).

While Shils provided no theoretical analysis on this emphasis, we may give a supplementary explanation from the perspective of phenomenology. Heidegger extensively discussed how humans exist inside time using terms like “thrownness,” “there,” and “falling prey” in his *Being and Time*. According to the literal meanings of these words, the birth of a man is a form of being involuntarily “thrown”—God throws him into a world completely unknown to him. Confronted with the fate of “falling prey” into “there,” what he can do is no more than abide. What any person does and thinks, as emphasized in *Tradition*, “approximates reiteration” of what his predecessors did and thought before his birth, because “thrownness” and “falling prey” trap him in “the grip of the past.” Attributed to such a trap, how he thinks and expresses himself cannot rise superior to his predecessors or established practices. Among traditional things, language is what clings most tightly to people. Eastern European poet Paul Celan was born in a Germany-speaking Jewish family. Although both his parents were killed in a Nazi concentration camp, Celan had to use German while creating works. This made him suffer enormously—“Mom, I am poetizing in the enemy’s language.” In the ten-year Cultural Revolution (from 1966 to 1976), which began with the so claimed “destroying the old and establishing the new,” traditional cultures, especially Confucianism, were criticized most harshly. Yet, the critics seemed to willingly use expressions left by Confucius, like “If he can bear to do this, what may he not bear to do” (*Analects of Confucius—eight lines of eight dancers apiece*). The practice of “criticizing the enemy in the enemy’s language” demonstrates that the effects of traditions are more significant than people perceive them to be. Even when a

tradition is criticized and denied, some aspects of its value are carried forward or recognized.

As traditions are “the greater self” that contains “the smaller self”—individuals, it is difficult for individuals to rationally treat traditions. Subject to their self-consciousness and specific emotions, individuals can hardly stay objective and impartial when dealing with things involving “me” or “us.” While many people care less about their own dignity, most people cannot bear to see their “wombs”—including parents, hometowns, families, nations and motherlands—being wronged, even if such wrong is on the part of their “wombs.” Shen Zhuliang (Duke of Ye) considered “a son who reports on his goat-stealing father” frank, while Confucius argued that frankness is demonstrated by “a father and his son who conceal each other’s misdeeds” (*Analects of Confucius—Zilu*). Traditions are a “womb” for individuals, so such irrational “kin concealment” also influences how individuals treat traditions. To tell the truth, the long river always features a mixture of good and evil. The so-called “selecting the essence and discarding the dross” represents a difficult process because it involves a difficult job—to distinguish between “the essence” and “the dross.” Many irrational factors restrain people from distinguishing objectively.

For individuals, in addition to being a “womb,” traditions are also of “divinity,” which represents the major reason why it is difficult for individuals to rationally deal with traditions. “Divinity” refers to the charisma of traditions. “Charisma,” which was originally a Christian term, refers to transcendental endowments bestowed by God. Max Weber generalized this concept, “using it to refer to outstanding physical or spiritual qualities of leaders with divine emotional appeal, such as the extraordinary abilities God bestows to prophets, wizards, legislators, military leaders and mythological heroes, as well as all supernatural, divine qualities opposite to things in daily or worldly life, such as royal or noble bloodlines” (Fu, 2014, p. 3). Shils extended its connotations by attributing “charisma” to “a range of behavioral patterns, roles, systems, symbols, ideas and objective substances considered relevant to an ‘ultimate’ ‘order-defining’ transcendental power” (Fu Keng, 2014, p. 4). It is clear that “charisma” is a product of irrational thinking, because there are no supernatural qualities in the world. Yet, these objects are so prominent that people hope they relate to an ultimate “order-defining” transcendental power as mentioned by Shils. As such, people give them charisma. What are given charisma include history-making figures, far-reaching events, places and times of events, and even some tangible or intangible milestone creatures. Giving lasting impression in history, these figures and events, among others, are viewed by people as the embodiment of traditions, and who respect them almost by instinct. Such attitudes toward traditions can hardly be explained from the perspective of rationality. In fact, the reverence towards and abidance of charismatic substances are often rooted in people’s souls.

History also witnessed advocates for rationally treating traditions. In the 18th century, European enlightenment campaigners held rationality in high regard. They set up an imagined rational court, which allegedly judged everything including traditions, “Everything was subjected to the most unsparing criticism: everything must justify its existence before the judgment-seat of reason or give up existence” (Engels, 2009, pp. 19-20). However, the existence of anything is built on reasonableness in a specific context of time and space and being “subjected to the most unsparing criticism” would lead some traditions to “give up existence” prematurely. This so-claimed “rationality” was irrational. When discussing the disadvantages of the Enlightenment, Shils said sentimentally, “The emancipation of mankind from superstition and from belief in magic has been carried so far that it has destroyed for many persons the ideal of a morally ordered universe in which some things were sacred...” (Shils, 2014, p. 349). Furthermore, the rational court was sometimes chaired

by enlightenment campaigners, rather than rationality. They judged everything but themselves. Similarly, over-corrections and judgments without self-discipline have often been seen in the criticisms of traditions since the 20th century in China. Rationally treating traditions is not as easy as agitating for rationality. Nobody could act fully based on rationality. Alongside that, enlightenment campaigners' commitment of forcibly judging traditions by leveraging rationality would endanger the charisma of traditions, as a tradition deprived of charisma could not last long.

2. Narrative traditions

Narrative traditions are only part of all-inclusive traditions. The first step to profoundly understand the extraordinary relationship between narrative traditions and traditions as a whole is to make clear the relationship between narratives and traditions.

Instead of going downwards on their own, traditions are passed down mainly through narratives. While observations and imitations also enable inter-generational succession, scattered impressions lacking logical connections tend to lose. Systemic collective memories that go from mouth to mouth and pass from generation to generation may take shape only if information is embedded, in the form of event or story, in a specific space-time framework in ways that organically depict related characters, actions and environments. Human history is beset with brambles. Telling stories about how predecessors endured great hardships in pioneer work may help descendants draw on wisdom and experience and find the best solutions to their current issues. As revealed in history, what predecessors experienced often repeats in a certain form in later ages. As such, traditions help descendants who cherish their collective memories avoid detours. Here, "predecessors" refers to numerous generations that have entered the arena of history. Compared to the present generation, they represent a larger size and have more extensive experience. Collective memories accumulated through the ages allow the present generation to bypass the traps their predecessors experienced, and to march along the paths blazed by previous generations. Such bypassing and marching can yet be regarded as a secure, reliable way to act.

Human history did not see the prevalence of literal communications until the most recent few thousands of years. Before that, collective memories resorted to oral narratives. How strong our predecessors' auditory memories used to be is inconceivable for people of the present generation, who live in a vision-dominated era. Fortunately, traditions of oral narratives still prevail in places where intangible cultural heritages are well preserved. In Chinese agglomeration areas of the *Tibetan*, Mongol and Khalkhas ethnic groups, you can find artists engaged in singing epics like *Gesar*, *Jangar* and *Manas*. For example, *Manas* singers can sing an epic from evening to dawn, and even perform for a few days during a competition. By investigating traditions of singing epics in former Yugoslavia, Millman Parry and Albert Bates Lord developed the Parry-Lord Theory (also known as the Oral-Formulaic Theory), which seeks to give an academic explanation on how an

① "In this theory, singers' poetic language is construed as a special linguistic variant. Functionally, it differs from common expressions and the language that singers use in daily communication and informal occasions. As a traditional structure is leveraged at all levels from simple phrases to macro-level plot design, oral poets tell stories in a simple but incomparably powerful way, namely under the principle of change within limits." (Foley. 1997).

artist can memorize tens of thousands of verses.^① However, the theory fails to fully reveal the secret of the phenomenon, as some illiterate artists' memories of epics can hardly be attributed to procedures and training. Just like musical and mathematical geniuses, such artists are distinctly expert in memorizing history. In the historical novel *Roots* by American writer Alex Haley (1999, p. 638), the protagonist "I," being a black slave's descendant, takes a root-seeking journey to Gambia when he grows up. To his surprise, in the country, all historical information is preserved through teaching orally. "Seeing how astounded I was, these Gambian men reminded me that every living person ancestrally goes back to some time and some place where no writing existed, when human memories and mouths and ears were the only ways those human beings could store and relay information. They said that we who in the Western culture are so conditioned to the 'crutch of print' that few among us comprehend what a trained memory is capable of."

Narratives are more than the carrier of traditions. Tradition-related narratives often create, or act as a stand-in for, traditions. Traditions come from the past, and most past things erode over time. People of the present generation learn about traditions very often through tradition-related narratives. As such, signifiers sometimes substitute for the signified. In Buddhist terms, the finger pointing to the moon is mistaken for the moon. For example, Christmas, which prevails in Western countries, is a product of fictional narratives and not a custom from ancient times in the West as most people take for granted, Christmas had been a period for rest until the publication of the novel *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens in 1843. The scenes depicted in that book, such as the family reunion, gift giving, blessings and banquets, were imitated by the masses, and evolved into and have survived as Western traditions for nearly two centuries. Narratives are always purposeful. By writing *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens looked to correct the profit-driven tendencies lacking a human touch. So, a purpose can be found behind every story. I once investigated the legend of "Swan-Maiden" originating from Jiangxi, China (281-296). This legend has been widespread globally thanks to the plot of a fairy and an ordinary person bearing children. Such a plot provided an open-end "interface" that enables later persons to deify their bloodlines in a strained way. For example, records that rulers are "a fairy's descendant" survive in both Japan proper and the Ryukyu Islands.^① Locals unconsciously recognize that the rulers are charismatic figures while spreading the attractive story. Similarly, the *Book of Songs – Hymns of Shang* reads, "A black bird falls from the heaven to give birth to the Shang Dynasty," decorating the bloodline of the Shang Dynasty's kings with the good-looking feathers of a black bird. As demonstrated by these examples, many myths were committed to developing traditions, and the charisma of traditions is definitely of relevance to deliberately added fictional content.

3. Proposing narrative traditions

Traditions are passed down through narratives, the course of which witnesses the gradual shaping of paradigms and routines which bring about narrative traditions. Since the relationship between narratives and traditions is so close, why is it the concept "narrative tradition" has not been a focus of the academic

^① "King of Chūzan Ofusato unified the 'three kingdoms' of Ryukyu. His reign represented the most glorious period of Ryukyuan history. Ofusato was a goddess' child." Hisako Kimishima (1990): "A Fairy's Descendants—Forms of Earliest Ancestor Legends in Genesis Myths, I" (excerpt).

community until recently? Seemingly, the wave of narratology that has surged in recent years has enabled the focus. Narrative studies entail tracing narrative traditions. To use an analogy, novel studies cannot be conducted without paying attention to the history of novels. More profoundly, the moment when the concept “narrative tradition” was proposed and included in the “agenda” marked the moment the academic community made a point of considering storytelling behaviors across disciplines and categories a new from the perspective of narratives. As such, the “pendulum” of discipline categorization is swinging away from “continuous detailing.”^①

Rolano Barthes once figured out the absurdity of dividing humanities: “We put calligraphers on this side, painters on that side, novelists this side, poets that side... however, their works are integral.”^② Narratives are also part of such “integral” work. Neither chasms among literature, history and news nor isolators among novels, dramas and poems can defy the commonplace in storytelling. At the very beginning of media evolution, people transmitted event information using their organs and limbs, in forms like fingering, drawing, dancing, saying, singing and writing. Later, the maturity of papermaking and printing technology enabled writing-based narratives to stand out among these forms. Following that, social development and media transformation impelled all these forms to upgrade and allowed some of them to “join hands” to leverage their respective strengths. From oral narratives through writing-based narratives to today’s camera-based narratives, while they significantly differ from each other, narratives remain committed to storytelling, though what is “told” is not necessarily received by the auditory sense. The central theme remains the same. As we work to break barriers among discipline categories and reveal the genealogy of narrative traditions, we must focus on the storytelling aorta.

Also, it should be noted that current discipline categories are based on Western modes of thinking and thus may be inappropriate to Chinese traditions. If we stick to the distinction between literature and history, we may have difficulty in understanding why many predecessors commented on historical works as literary works (e.g. Lu Xun commented the *Records of the Grand Historian* as “a rhythm-less *Lisao*”) and vice versa (e.g. Qi Liaosheng commented the *Dream of the Red Chamber* as “sublime words in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, deliberate digressions in historical works”) (Qi, 1990, p. 499). In such a time-honored country where the official historian culture was given priority, outstanding literature was often awarded titles involving the names of two historians—Sima Qian and Ban Gu, and praised as a “talent of historical writing” or a “good historian” for their excellent narrative ability. All these demonstrate that our predecessors paid less attention to such distinctions. Instead, they were aware that narratives are interdisciplinary and looked to observe storytelling behaviors with inner links at the level of narrative tradition. As regards divisions in the literary community, while novels, dramas and poems represent different categories in the West, distinctness can hardly be achieved among them in China. Take dramas and poems for example. Dramas are merely dramas in the West, but Chinese traditional dramas are called “operas” as they combine dramas with music. In particular, the popularity of Sanqu (a type of verse with tonal patterns modeled on tunes drawn from folk music) during the Yuan Dynasty made “Yuan verse” a pronoun of the poetic dramas of the Yuan Dynasty.

① “A specific problem must be overcome before a balanced view of the narrative tradition becomes attainable. Something must be done about our veneration of the novel as a literary form.” Robert Scholes, James Phelan, Robert Kellogg (2015). *Nature of Narrative*.

② Rolano Barthes: *The Pleasure of the Text—Spirits of Letters*, In Tu Youxiang (Tran.). Shanghai People. (Tran.). ext—Spirits of Les of Leako.

Another example is about novels and dramas. Beyond Western people's imaginations, novels and operas once belonged to the same category in ancient China. Operas can be found in Jiang Ruizao's *Study of Chinese Novels* and Qian Jingfang's *Collected Studies of Novels*, which were both written in the early 20th century. At that time, magazines like *New Novels* and *Novel Collections* were important platforms where opera works were published. To blend operas and novels is not at all surprising to Chinese people, as their rudiments were interactive neighbors in ancient public places of entertainment. It is such neighboring that leads to many similarities between operas and novels.

The discussion above focuses on the interdisciplinary quality of narratives. If the focus is shifted to anthropology, which studies humankind all around, we may deepen our understanding of what the proposing of narrative tradition includes. How could humankind stand out from all living beings on the earth, becoming "the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals" (Shakespeare)? Some studies attribute that to our storytelling ability. Like our ancestors—homo sapiens, Neanderthals, who have a larger size and cranial capacity, are also part of early men. According to Yuval Noah Harari (2014, p. 35), the author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (the *Sapiens*), higher storytelling ability enabled homo sapiens to triumph over Neanderthals.

In a one-on-one brawl, a Neanderthal would probably have beaten a Sapien. But in a conflict of hundreds, Neanderthals wouldn't stand a chance. Neanderthals could share information about the whereabouts of lions, but they probably could not tell—and revise—stories about tribal spirits. Without an ability to compose fiction, Neanderthals were unable to cooperate effectively in large numbers, nor could they adapt their social behavior to rapidly changing challenges.

This storytelling ability makes it possible to hold people together and combine individuals to a community that features a willingness to cooperate, through stories. "Two Serbs who have never met might risk their lives to save one another because both believe in the existence of the Serbian nation, the Serbian homeland and the Serbian flag" (Harari, 2014, p. 29). Compared to many animals with sharp claws, teeth, horns or wings, our relatively smaller ancestors, have few physical strengths. Yet, they might defeat the enemy through large-scale, effective cooperation, which was built on the mutual trust developed in the course of storytelling.

As a popular science book, the *Sapiens* inevitably boasts joking elements. However, Harari's view that humans grew and thrived on storytelling is a conclusion drawn by anthropologic studies. Robin Dunber (2016, p. 20), former Dean of the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, University of Oxford, wrote in *Human Evolution: Our Brains and Behavior*: "There are probably two key aspects of culture that stand out as being uniquely human. One is religion and the other is story-telling." In fact, religion also features storytelling elements. While pure preaching tends to be insipid, sermons mixed into stories are loved by believers. According to Dunber's book *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*, grooming by primates is an important way of communication, as it indicates closer relationships, and signifies factions and small circles; grunts made by primates were not linguistic, yet instruments with higher sensitivity recently have demonstrated that such grunts are not as simple as they sound. They may send complicated messages like "be careful" and "help." Acoustic communication is more connotative and much more efficient than silent grooming (Dunber, 1998, pp. 21-22; pp. 46-51). Gossip, which emerged after humankind became speakers, was a successor of grooming and grunts. This form of oral narrative, being a higher-level product of evolution, resembles the function of grooming and grunts—expressing likes/dislikes and ganging up.

From Dunber's point of view, the development level of a primitive man's brain has a positive correlation to

the size of the group the man belongs to. A larger group involves more complicated interpersonal relationships, which make the identification of friend or foe more difficult. The need to address the pressure naturally enables the cerebral cortex to grow (Dunber, 1998, pp. 61-64). In the context of this paper, we may conclude that group expansions are accompanied by improvements in narrative competence. From the perspective of communication, the evolution from grooming through grunts to gossip is an inevitable outcome of group expansions. As a form of “one-on-one” bodily contact, grooming will be put in a double squeeze when a group expands. In contrast, gossip, such as flying rumors, may spark sensitivity, taboos and curiosity among factions, small circles and individuals, and tend to spread like wildland fire within groups, in an efficient, inexorable “one-to-many” way. On the other hand, gossip, coupled with various storytelling behaviors, is a necessary condition for the shaping, maintaining and expansion of a group. Take the “tribal spirits” mentioned by Harari for example. It might be a joke at the very beginning. Yet, as the joke was recognized and ran from mouth to mouth, a group with a shared belief took shape. On that basis, we may understand why Dunber identified religion and storytelling as two key aspects of human culture. As the originator of Western narrative traditions, Greek mythology remains the cultural source in the eyes of Spanish ethnic groups worldwide—the original meaning of “mythos” in Greek is “grunt.”^① Similarly, “God” in English and Germanic can be traced back to a form of call.^② As a Chinese proverb says, “Wind starts at the heads of duckweeds.” Grunts followed on grooming but preceded gossip. Narrative traditions have played a critical role in socializing humankind and are shared by apes and men.^③

① “Myth comes via mythos from the Greek root mu meaning to make a sound with the mouth.” David Leeming, Edwin Belda.

② The ancient meanings of the Indo-European roots are sometimes twisted around, even distorted beyond recognition, but they are still there, resonating inside, reminding. The old root gheue, meaning simply to call, became gudam in Germanic and then ‘God’ in English.” Lewis Thomas (2011).

③ “Even today the vast majority of human communication – whether in the form of emails, phone calls or newspaper columns – is gossip. It comes so naturally to us that it seems as if our language evolved for this very purpose. Do you think that history professors chat about the reasons for World War One when they meet for lunch? ...Gossip usually focuses on wrongdoings. Rumor-mongers are the original fourth estate, journalists who inform society about and thus protect it from cheats and freeloaders.” Yuval Noah Harari (2014). Also refer to: “Here, then, is a curious fact. Our much-vaunted capacity for language seems to be mainly used for exchanging information on social matters; we seem to be obsessed with gossiping about one another. Even the design of our minds seems to reinforce this.” Dunber, Robin (1998).

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