

PROTODISM

From Where 39 Thinkers Left Off

The Protodic Hypothesis is in dialogue not with a single field but with the accumulated work of seven disciplines (philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, cognitive science, history, political science) spanning 1841 to 2025. Each thinker correctly saw, named, and documented a phenomenon — but stopped at the question of mechanism, ground, or source. The inventory below lists these 39 points of stalling and the answer the book gives to each.

7 disciplines · 39 thinkers/works · 184-year span (1841–2025) · 5 dated 2025, literature contemporary with the book

1. CLASSICAL RELIGIOUS CRITIQUE AND PHILOSOPHY

Feuerbach (1841) → *B45.11*

Saw: Defined religion as the projection of human qualities onto the heavens.

Couldn't explain: Treated religion only as an error, without explaining its function.

Protodic answer: Religion is not an error but an undeveloped prototype — like the Wright brothers' first airplane.

Marx (1843) → *B45.11*

Saw: Showed how religion was instrumentalized for exploitation.

Couldn't explain: Did not explain the belief that preceded its instrumentalization.

Protodic answer: Prior to instrumentalization, the theogenic drive is a capacity — not manipulation.

Freud (1927) → *B45.11*

Saw: Read religion as the output of illusion and neurosis.

Couldn't explain: Did not see why facing death could be an evolutionary achievement.

Protodic answer: Being able to face and carry the fear of death is not neurosis — it is an evolutionary capacity.

Nietzsche (1882) → *B45.11, B43.1*

Saw: Diagnosed “God is dead,” saw nihilism coming.

Couldn't explain: Made the diagnosis but couldn't see the culprit — crystallization itself.

Protodic answer: It was crystallization that killed God; but thumos is still alive.

Bergson (1932) → *B45.11*

Saw: Established the static-religion / dynamic-religion distinction — the philosophical move that comes closest to the Protodic Hypothesis.

Couldn't explain: Saw the two types as equivalent and independent; couldn't establish the derivational relationship between them.

Protodic answer: Dynamic religion is not the equivalent of static religion but its prototype — the closed is the crystallized form of the open.

Diogenes / The Cynics (4th century BCE) → *B45.11*

Saw: Lived out the most radical stance against crystallization — rejected institution, property, and norm entirely.

Couldn't explain: Didn't see that formlessness is not a solution either — that it ends in leaving no trace.

Protodic answer: Refusing to enter a mold doesn't free thumos — it leaves it untransmittable and alone. The lantern still burns, but no one carries it.

Tillich (1948) → *B45.11*

Saw: Defined every human's capacity for meaning-making with the concept of “ultimate concern,” and criticized institution.

Couldn't explain: Stayed inside the institution; with “the God above God” he didn't abandon the concept of God, only made it more abstract.

Protodic answer: Thumos is sufficient — there is no “above” left to reach.

Kant (1788) → *B45.11, Category 4*

Saw: Argued, through the postulates of practical reason, that morality needs God.

Couldn't explain: Didn't ground why the postulate itself was necessary.

Protodic answer: The ground of moral motivation is not a postulate but the evolutionary theogenic drive.

Wittgenstein (1953) → *B45.11, Category 4*

Saw: Showed that religion operates by the logic of its own “language game.”

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain why this language game arose — its source.

Protodic answer: The language game is the cultural expression of the theogenic drive — its source biological, its expression linguistic.

2. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIETAL DIAGNOSIS

Durkheim (1897/1912) → *B45.11, Category 1*

Saw: Saw anomie — documented that when religious integration dissolves, people become unmoored.

Couldn't explain: Didn't give the mechanism for why they become unmoored.

Protodic answer: MADAD's theogenic drive left without an address — a capacity that finds no object to attach to.

Arendt (1963) → *B45.11, Category 1*

Saw: Saw the banality of evil — Eichmann wasn't thinking.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain why he wasn't thinking — which mechanism had stopped his thought.

Protodic answer: MADAD's complete shutdown; totalitarian systems brand moments of synaesthesia as betrayal.

Hoffer (1951) → *B45.11, Category 1*

Saw: Saw lateral drift — the fanatical communist easily becomes the fanatical fascist.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain why the content changes so easily.

Protodic answer: Without theolysis, the theogenic drive moves from one crystallization to another; the content changes, the search for satisfaction continues.

Fromm (1941) → *B45.11, Category 1*

Saw: Saw the escape from freedom, the retreat into authoritarian character.

Couldn't explain: Didn't show the biological necessity beneath this escape.

Protodic answer: When crystallization collapses, the theogenic drive is left without an address; authoritarian character is a search for new crystallization.

Berger (1967) → *B45.11, Category 1*

Saw: Described the collapse of the “sacred canopy.”

Couldn't explain: Didn't say what comes after the collapse.

Protodic answer: If theolysis occurs, a post-protodic stance follows; if not, lateral drift.

Tocqueville (1835) → *B46.11*

Saw: Saw American religion intertwined with liberty, saw the risk of “soft despotism.”

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain the mechanism of this relationship — why it sometimes protects freedom and sometimes threatens it.

Protodic answer: When collective MADAD stays open, religion nourishes freedom; when it closes, religion becomes crystallization's instrument.

3. EXISTENTIALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

Camus (1942) → *B45.11, Category 2*

Saw: Saw revolt — accepting the absurd and continuing to live anyway.

Couldn't explain: Couldn't show revolt's biological/evolutionary ground.

Protodic answer: If the theogenic drive is evolutionarily rooted, the absurd is not only tragic — it is evidence of our capacity.

Frankl (1946) → *B45.11, Category 2*

Saw: Saw the will to meaning — the force that kept people alive even in Auschwitz.

Couldn't explain: Didn't give this will's biological root.

Protodic answer: The theogenic drive is an evolutionary capacity created by death-awareness.

Rawls (1971) → *B45.11, Category 2*

Saw: Built a theory of justice but couldn't ground the motivation to step behind the “veil of ignorance.”

Couldn't explain: Couldn't explain why a reasonable person would act that way.

Protodic answer: A person whose theogenic drive is active can see and recognize another's capacity for meaning-making.

4. ANTHROPOLOGY, MYTHOLOGY, AND DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

Jaspers (1949) → *B46.3*

Saw: Saw the Axial Age (800–200 BCE) — the simultaneous emergence of Socrates, the Buddha, the Hebrew prophets, and Confucius.

Couldn't explain: Couldn't find the reason for this simultaneity — even he called it “mysterious.”

Protodic answer: The Axial Age is a collective wave of synaesthesia — thousands of individual synaesthesia moments intersecting in the same historical window.

Campbell (1949) → *B45.11*

Saw: Mapped the monomyth — the hero's universal journey.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain why the journey is so universal — its source.

Protodic answer: The monomyth is the theogenic drive's manifestation in narrative form — the same inner structure in every culture.

Jung (1938) → *B45.11*

Saw: Defined the archetypes and the collective unconscious.

Couldn't explain: Couldn't give the archetypes' biological source.

Protodic answer: The archetypes are the recurring cultural crystallizations of the theogenic drive.

William James (1902) → *B45.11, B7.8*

Saw: Showed the individual, pragmatic value of religious experience.

Couldn't explain: Left the experience's source neutral — left it open whether supernatural or neurological.

Protodic answer: The experience is real and has a neurological ground; its interpretation (supernatural/natural) is crystallization's work.

Turner (1969) → *B45.11*

Saw: Defined liminality — threshold states, *communitas*.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain why liminal experience forges such powerful bonds.

Protodic answer: The liminal moment is when crystallization is temporarily suspended — when *thumos* meets itself bare.

Girard (1972) → *B45.11, Category 3*

Saw: Saw the sacrificial mechanism, the scapegoat dynamic.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain why the mechanism began to be questioned over time.

Protodic answer: The one who questions the sacrificial mechanism is experiencing *synaesthesia* — seeing from outside while still inside.

Atran (2010) → *B45.11, Category 3*

Saw: Documented the non-negotiability of sacred values through fieldwork — the “devoted actor.”

Couldn't explain: In his own words: “there is currently no theory of sacred values.”

Protodic answer: A sacred value is the outward expression of crystallized *thumos*; the devoted actor is the limit case where MADAD has fully shut down.

5. COGNITIVE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

Boyer (2001) → [B45.11](#)

Saw: Established HADD (hyperactive agency detection) and the theory of minimally counterintuitive entities.

Couldn't explain: Explained what is believed, not why the capacity to believe runs so deep.

Protodic answer: HADD is crystallization's biological raw material; the theogenic drive is far more than single-event attribution.

Whitehouse (2004) → [B45.11](#)

Saw: Showed crystallization's two speeds through the doctrinal/imagistic mode distinction.

Couldn't explain: Didn't give why the two modes exist, their common source.

Protodic answer: The two modes are manifestations of the same theogenic drive at different crystallization speeds.

Norenzayan (2013) → [B45.11](#)

Saw: Built the “Big Gods” thesis — showed that the idea of a moralizing, all-seeing god held large communities together.

Couldn't explain: Didn't ask why this idea of god was invented so readily — its source.

Protodic answer: The theogenic drive was already there; the big-god idea was a form of crystallization that channeled it at societal scale.

6. HISTORY AND CIVILIZATIONAL THEORY

Weber (1922) → [B46.6](#)

Saw: Saw the routinization of charisma — the founding fire turning into institution.

Couldn't explain: Couldn't explain why it goes out, by what mechanism.

Protodic answer: Charisma is the uncrystallized theogenic drive; routinization is crystallization's institutional name.

Kuhn (1962) → [B46.7](#)

Saw: Showed the paradigm shift — that science advances through revolutionary leaps.

Couldn't explain: Didn't ask whether this could generalize beyond scientific paradigms to belief systems.

Protodic answer: A paradigm shift is also a form of theolysis — the old mold dissolves under anomalies, the new mold crystallizes.

Taylor (2007) → [B46.8](#)

Saw: Showed the falseness of the “subtraction story” — secularization didn't subtract religion, it added a new frame.

Couldn't explain: A correct observation, but no mechanism — why did the values survive?

Protodic answer: Religious values were products of the theogenic drive; religion crystallized them, theolysis set them free, the secular institution put them in a new container.

Toynbee (1934–61) → [B46.12](#)

Saw: Saw the creative minority turning into the dominant minority, and civilizations collapsing because of it.

Couldn't explain: Didn't give the psychological mechanism of this transformation.

Protodic answer: The creative minority are people who have undergone theolysis, whose thumos is free; turning into the dominant minority is re-crystallizing.

Diamond (1997/2005) → [B46.12](#)

Saw: Showed the role of geography and resource management in civilizational collapse.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain the psychological/institutional obstinacy beneath resource-management failure.

Protodic answer: The obstinacy of ignoring the resource is a symptom of protecting the institution's crystallized identity.

Spengler (1918) → [B46.12](#)

Saw: Saw civilizations like organisms — born, mature, die.

Couldn't explain: The organic metaphor was an analogy, not an explanation; there was no mechanism.

Protodic answer: A civilization's “aging” is the accumulation of crystallization — not a biological fate, but a reversible tendency.

7. CURRENT ACADEMIC DIALOGUE — 2025

The book is in dialogue not only with classical literature but with the most current academic discussion of the moment it was written. Four of the five sources below are dated 2025.

Uzlaner (2025) → [B46.8](#)

Saw: Showed that in the secularization debate, “loss of societal importance” and “loss of individual religiosity” diverge.

Couldn't explain: The literature itself declared this divergence an “unresolved question.”

Protodic answer: Migration of form (secularization 1) and dissolution of content (secularization 2) proceed at independent speeds — an expected result.

Lalot & Abrams (2025) → [B46.11](#)

Saw: Documented “transgression credit” — the pattern of voters forgiving their own leader's violations.

Couldn't explain: The democratic-backsliding literature leaves this pattern's trajectory an “open question.”

Protodic answer: MADAD's selective shutdown — once the leader becomes an identity object, criticism threatens identity.

Freyd (2008/present) → [B21.2](#)

Saw: Defined “institutional betrayal” and “moral injury” — the specific trauma of betrayal by a trusted institution.

Couldn't explain: Didn't give the mechanism for why this trauma runs so deep in a religious/authoritarian context.

Protodic answer: It is the forced, traumatic triggering of MADAD's fourth (perceptual) layer.

Norris & Inglehart (2011) → [B1.7](#)

Saw: Proved the strong correlation between rising material security and declining religion.

Couldn't explain: The why question — the mechanism — remained open.

Protodic answer: Security reduces not the need itself but its urgency; death-awareness stays constant, its urgency changes.

Fukuyama (2014) → [B46.12](#)

Saw: Showed that strong institutions become fragile when “repatrimonialized” by elites.

Couldn't explain: Didn't explain the psychological root of elites' drive to protect the institution.

Protodic answer: Once an institution becomes an object of meaning, questioning it threatens the identity of those who protect it.

What this inventory shows is not a single claim but a pattern: the same gap, noticed again and again across seven different disciplines over 184 years, never filled. The Protodic Hypothesis gives that gap itself a name and a mechanism.