This manuscript has been underway for the past 11 years. The original text was a doctoral dissertation defended in 2006. Most of it has been rewritten in the meanwhile; the analytical structure and the argument as such are different.

Much of the credit (and, of course, none of the blame) for writing and rewriting it up to this form goes to the people I was fortunate to encounter. Over a decade is a long time in one’s life and thus provides ample opportunities to travel academically and meet people. That being said, I was particularly lucky in this respect, to have encountered that rare and ever scarcer breed: genuine scholars, for whom ideas are neither dead and dull nor something trifling to merely toy with.

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