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Aristotle's Political Presentation of Socrates in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

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It may be best to begin by stating what this article does and does not seek to clarify. The subject under consideration is Aristotle's political presentation of Socrates in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth referred to simply as the *Ethics*). The study which follows does not examine the *Ethics* with a view to discovering what (if any) light this book sheds on the historical Socrates. Indeed, the effort to distinguish the historical Socrates from the character we encounter in the works of Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle would appear to be of limited value since it is the latter—a character who no doubt bears some resemblance to the original—who is of greatest interest to students of philosophy.

It is, nevertheless, necessary to qualify this statement in one important respect. There is one historical fact which is crucial for an understanding of Socrates; namely, his trial and subsequent condemnation on charges of impiety and corruption of the young. About this fact, however, there can be no doubt. I cite it here because the significance of this trial and condemnation figures prominently (whether explicitly or implicitly) in all subsequent accounts of Socrates. That significance might be stated in a general way as follows: In the historical figure of Socrates the fundamental tension between the life of the philosopher and the requirements of life in the city was brought into sharpest possible focus; the life of radical inquiry was summoned to the tribunal of political justice and found wanting. Socrates the philosopher was condemned to death because his activity in some way undermined the deep although vulnerable guarantors of public order—the shared beliefs of citizens concerning the gods and the noble. In some obscure yet disturbing way Socrates refused to take his bearings from those beliefs considered most authoritative and praiseworthy by his fellow citizens. If his activity was not subversive in intent it was in effect and combined with Socrates' own apparent intransigence, it elicited the severest possible penalty.

These well-known historical facts concerning the trial and death of Socrates are inseparable from his influence on later generations of students. Perhaps one might say that Socrates, more than any other philosopher, personifies the public face of philosophy; that is, philosophy as it confronts and is confronted by the exigencies of political life. If later generations of philosophers were to gain even the partial acceptance of their fellow citizens, the life and death of Socrates was an event to be reckoned with. This concern is obvious in the writings of Plato and Xenophon, several of which are explicitly apologetic in

character. This concern is also present in the writings of Aristotle, particularly in his moral-political works. Although an additional generation had intervened since the death of Socrates, religious and political charges against philosophers were not a thing of the past as Aristotle's own forced exile to Chalcis made all too clear.[1]

If philosophy were ever to be accepted by the city, that acceptance would require as a constitutive element a new attitude toward its hero-victim; those who had once condemned Socrates for his often outlandish and galling manner would have to see the Socratic way of life in a new light. If Plato and Xenophon had begun this task, they had not completed it. Could the "gadfly of Athens" come to be regarded as the city's greatest benefactor as the Platonic Socrates gratingly claimed (*Apology* 30c–e; 36d–e)?[2] In what follows I hope to show that Aristotle sought to extend the circle of those who might acknowledge the truth imbedded in this Platonic assertion. Although it may prove impossible to mitigate entirely the disruptive consequences of philosophy for civic life, the apologetic character of Aristotle's political writings is suggested by the extent to which they reveal how philosophy is able to offer respectful and substantial clarity regarding matters of vital importance for those who bear primary responsibility for the city.

If the preceding remarks suggest something of the general importance attributed to Socrates by later generations of students, it is also necessary to say something with respect to his particular importance in the *Ethics*. The reason for focusing on this work lies in the fact that the *Ethics* is not addressed primarily to philosophers but rather to the better sort of persons referred to in classical literature as gentlemen.[3] Although I believe it is wrong to presume that Aristotle neglects the concerns of philosophically-minded students in this work, I hope to show that Aristotle's presentation of Socrates belongs to what, from the most obvious point of view, might be called the dominant horizon of the *Ethics*—his concern to foster and in some way shape the best sentiments of his gentlemen readers. In the course of this study Aristotle attempts to bring his gentlemen readers to some positive appreciation for Socrates' life and teach-

1. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323, Eurymedon indicted Aristotle for impiety Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 5.5). Aristotle decided to leave Athens before the matter came to trial, lest, as one tradition reports it, he give the Athenians a second opportunity to sin against philosophy.

2. The incompleteness of the apologetic task as it was undertaken by Plato is further suggested by the following Socratic statement (among others): "Now the men who have become members of this small band [philosophers] have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession it is. At the same time, they have seen sufficiently the madness of the many, and that no one who minds the business of the cities does anything healthy " *Rep* 496c.

3. Gentleman (*καλόκἀγαθός*) is a term of distinction connoting both social-political status and a certain level of moral excellence. The gentleman is a citizen in the fullest and best sense of the word, one who embodies the highest aims of the polis. See *EE* 1248b8–1249a18. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) pp. 142–43.

ing.[4] What is at stake is not merely or essentially the rehabilitation of Socrates' good name, but the acceptance of the place and importance of philosophy to those who will be most influential in the city. It is especially in the *Ethics*, the first part of Aristotle's "philosophy of the human things," that we find an initial treatment of the problematic relationship between philosophy and the city. It would seem reasonable to view Aristotle's presentation of Socrates in this book as an important part of his initial presentation of the philosophic life, a presentation which is marked by its sensitivity to the perspective and concerns of Aristotle's gentlemen readers.

Socrates appears seven times in the *Ethics*. These seven references can in turn be divided into four thematic treatments. Socrates is referred to within the following four contexts: Aristotle's consideration of (1) courage (1116b3–5), (2) truthfulness and irony (1127b25–26), (3) prudence (1144b17–19; 28–30), and (4) incontinence (1145b23–26; 1147b14–17). Each of these references will be considered in turn.[5] Particular attention will be given to the various impressions conveyed by the specific contexts within which Aristotle chooses to speak of Socrates, as well as the larger context provided by the movement and discussion of the *Ethics* as a whole.

COURAGE

Socrates makes his first appearance in the *Ethics* within the context of Aristotle's account of courage (1115a6–1117b22). It may be helpful to recall the major elements in Aristotle's treatment of courage before turning to the specific place which Socrates occupies within that treatment.

4. This thesis runs contrary to some of the prevailing views on this subject. Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, contends that the *Ethics* contains "a systematic repudiation of the morality of Socrates" and that Aristotle's references to Socrates in the *Ethics* evidence "none of Plato's respect." *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 67–68. Werner Jaeger's influential study seeks to establish a chronology for Aristotle's writings based on the extent to which they evidence a rejection of the Platonic Socrates: the more Aristotle "developed" as a thinker, the more he repudiated the views of his teacher. *Aristotle: Fundamentals of his Development*, trans. Richard Robinson, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948). The correctness of my own view must be judged on the basis of the evidence this article brings to light.

5. Although there is a scholarly tradition of dividing and rearranging Aristotle's works in general and the *Ethics* in particular, recent scholarship has tended to emphasize the integrity of this book as a whole. Typical in this regard is Amélie Oksenberg Rorty who writes, "Even if the book is a thing composed of threads and patches, the organization of those threads and patches composes a perfectly coherent pattern." *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 3. I regard this approach as the best among possible alternatives. Moreover, the remarkable cohesiveness of Aristotle's references to Socrates in the *Ethics* provides a further piece of evidence for the fruitfulness of this approach to the text. Cf. Harry Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), especially Chapter 4, and Robert Faulkner, "Spontaneity, Justice, and Coercion: on *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III and IV," in J. R. Pennock and J. W. Chapman, eds., *Coercion*, Nomos XIV (Chicago: Aldine/Atherton, 1972), p. 85, n. 6.

Aristotle describes courage as a mean with respect to the emotions of fear and confidence. Courage is displayed most especially with reference to that which is most fearful—namely, death. However, even death does not in all circumstances afford an equal opportunity for courage. The fullest measure of courage pertains to the noblest form of death. This is death on the battlefield where one has the opportunity to defend himself courageously or die nobly. That death in battle provides the standard for courage is, Aristotle observes, supported by the fact that public honors are conferred precisely on this basis. Although Aristotle acknowledges that it is possible to be courageous in the face of illness or a storm at sea, courage in the full sense (*κυρίως ἀνδρεῖος*) is found midst the perils of war.

The second major emphasis in Aristotle's treatment of courage is his insistence that the courageous man acts with a view of the noble. Whereas Aristotle had initially described virtue as a mean between excess and deficiency, it is especially within the context of his consideration of courage that he amplifies the essential connection between virtue and the noble. If the formal cause of virtue is best explained as a mean between excess and deficiency, the final cause of virtue is best understood as an attachment to the noble. Aristotle explains that although a courageous man sometimes experiences fear, he does so in the right manner (*ὡς δεῖ*) and as principle (*λόγος*) dictates on account of the noble (*τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα*) (1115b11–13).

Two observations are appropriate at this point. First, Aristotle's initial presentation of courage suggests that this virtue is essentially political. Courage in the proper sense is exhibited by one who fearlessly confronts noble death on the battlefield. Aristotle begins his consideration of moral virtue in general and courage in particular by emphasizing the political or civic horizon within which this excellence is best revealed. Perhaps the obvious and necessary dependence of the city upon courage explains why Aristotle chooses to begin his treatment of moral virtue in this way. Whether or not this is the case, Aristotle draws upon common political experience to support this view of courage. Whether one lives in a polity or monarchy, it is courage on the battlefield—that is, service to one's country—that is most highly esteemed (1115a29–32). Aristotle's solicitude for the civic horizon of his gentlemen readers is evidenced by his willingness to appeal to that which is most valued by the city as that which provides the authoritative standard for courage.

Secondly, Aristotle's initial elaboration of the noble is presented within this same civic horizon. The kind of courage which one might exhibit in confronting a fatal disease (although it might also be borne as one ought, according to principle and for the sake of the noble) fails to provide the full measure of courage because, Aristotle asserts, the noblest kind of death is death on the battlefield. This emphasis is reinforced by Aristotle's explanation at the end of this section that it is not courageous to face death in order to escape poverty, eros, or pain because this is really a sign of weakness and therefore cowardly.

Although Aristotle's examples are chosen to illustrate how one might fearlessly face death out of weakness, it is also striking that each one—unlike death on the battlefield—pertains to an individual or merely personal experience. Aristotle's initial discussion of the noble comes to sight within the context of that which is most highly prized by the city as well as that which is essential for its continued existence.

In the second part of Aristotle's account of courage he takes up five qualities which bear some resemblance to courage but do not constitute courage in the proper or most authoritative sense. The five "types" of courage discussed are: (1) political courage, (2) experience of a particular danger, (3) spiritedness, (4) cheerfulness, and (5) courage based on ignorance.

Of these five qualities, political courage (*ἡ πολιτικὴ*)[6] most closely resembles courage in the sovereign sense. Citizens exhibiting political courage take their bearings from the laws (written and unwritten) of the regime (*διὰ τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων ἐπιτίμια*) (1116a18–19). Aristotle's account brings out the extent to which political courage both approximates and at the same time falls short of courage in the full sense. Whereas the virtue of courage is motivated by a desire for virtue itself and an attachment to the noble, political courage is motivated by a sense of shame (*αἰδώς*) (which is not strictly speaking a virtue although Aristotle sometimes refers to it in this way) and a desire for honor which may be noble but is not the same thing as the noble (1116a27–29). Aristotle's description of political courage emphasizes the desire to avoid reproach. As such, it is both similar to and yet different from the virtue of courage which is characterized by a more innate disdain for anything ignoble.

The lowest form of political courage mentioned by Aristotle is found among those who maintain their post because their commanders threaten physical violence if they do not. Although Aristotle indicates that this is inferior to political courage in the best sense, it is a form of political courage nevertheless. Aristotle's consideration of political courage as a whole suggests that it falls short of sovereign courage insofar as it results from a certain kind of compulsion or necessity (*ἀνάγκη*) rather than adherence to the noble (1116b2–3). If this is seen most clearly in the case of those who must be threatened with physical violence, it is also true of those who maintain their post because they fear the reproach of their fellow citizens. The latter exhibit a behavior which is likewise derived from compulsion, albeit of a more subtle kind stemming from the laws and customs of their particular regime. Aristotle's general suggestion appears to be that the various manifestations of political courage are defective to the extent that they are compelled from without.

Although Aristotle introduced his initial discussion of the noble within an

6. Plato also speaks of political courage which he defines in the following way: "the preserving of opinion produced by law through education about what—and what sort of thing—is terrible" (*Rep* 429c). Aristotle appears to have Plato's discussion in mind, for, as we shall see, his own account is essentially a more muted presentation of the same idea.

explicitly political horizon, his consideration of political courage as something which falls short of courage in the sovereign sense, suggests that the noble, although it may presuppose politics, cannot be simply identified with the horizon of needs and concerns fashioned by the body politic. Aristotle's account clearly indicates that actions undertaken because they are noble are both higher and better than those undertaken for the sake of political honors or out of fear of public disgrace. It must be noted, however, that Aristotle does not (in the present context) suggest any conflict between actions based on the noble and those based on the laws and customs of the city. He simply maintains that the former are more perfect and consequently provide the standard for the latter. In fact, far from being in opposition to the noble, the law is presented in this discussion as commanding what virtue requires. Political courage appears to be a training ground for courage in the fullest or most authoritative sense.

The second mistaken or imperfect view of courage identifies it with confidence as it results from experience in the face of some particular danger (1116b3–23). It is within this context that Aristotle first speaks of Socrates, asserting that this view was at the origin of Socrates' supposition that courage is knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) (1116b3–5). Aristotle explains that this type of courage is exhibited most clearly by professional soldiers. Due to their superior experience, professional soldiers are able to distinguish false alarms from the real thing and so often appear courageous owing to the ignorance of their fellow soldiers regarding the true situation. Moreover, the greater experience of professional soldiers makes them adept at fighting, for they know how best to use their arms and possess the best quality arms both for attack and defense. Generally, the superior experience of professional soldiers makes them like armed men fighting against unarmed or trained athletes fighting against amateurs.

Despite their superior fighting ability, Aristotle explains that professional soldiers possess less courage than those citizens who act on the basis of political courage. The reason for this is that professional soldiers rely on their superior strength whereas citizen soldiers are constrained by the fear of disgrace. Hence, whereas citizen soldiers prefer death to safety procured in a shameful way, professional soldiers prove to be cowards when the danger imposes too great a strain or when they are at a disadvantage in numbers or equipment. Aristotle concludes that the type of superiority shown in this case is only incorrectly understood as courage in the proper sense of the word.

It is striking that Aristotle chooses this context for his first statement about Socrates in the *Ethics*. Several aspects of this account warrant further comment. The first and most obvious point to be noted is that, from Aristotle's point of view, Socrates' understanding of courage was inadequate. The identification of superior experience or knowledge with courage is mistaken; it is not the virtue of courage as Aristotle has elucidated it. The second point bears on

the particular example which Aristotle uses in this section, that of professional soldiers who, according to Aristotle, best exemplify the Socratic understanding of courage. Aristotle's example clearly invites his readers to compare the Socratic understanding of courage with the kind of courage exhibited by professional soldiers. However, this type of courage may be even more intimately related to Socrates. Might there be a further resemblance between the kind of courage characteristic of professional soldiers and that which was exhibited by Socrates himself, particularly as he faced the prospect of death at his trial?

A few tentative comparisons suggest themselves. In the first place, like professional soldiers, Socrates did not appear to be especially attached to the polis, at least not after the fashion of those citizen soldiers whom Aristotle has just finished discussing. Moreover, if (as the context makes clear) Aristotle is speaking of foreign mercenaries (*ξένοι*), this does not seem an altogether inappropriate way to introduce Socrates who must have seemed like a "foreigner" or "stranger" to many of his fellow Athenians (cf. *Apology* 17d. Second, although Aristotle indicates that professional soldiers do not possess the virtue of courage, he does acknowledge their superiority in fighting. As Aristotle points out, it is not necessarily the most courageous men who are the best fighters. If this second point is applied to Socrates it suggests that he may exhibit a real superiority, although it is a superiority which cannot be understood in terms of courage—at least not as it is defined by Aristotle and exhibited by gentlemen. This second observation necessarily points to a third, one which bears on the major point in Aristotle's discussion. The superiority of professional soldiers derives from their experience which provides them with a greater knowledge of war (Aristotle specifically mentions the ability to distinguish false alarms from real ones) as well as a more extensive and specialized training in the art of fighting. Does this description of the superior experience and consequently superior knowledge of professional soldiers have any bearing on Socrates?

Even those not particularly attracted to Socrates would probably have been impressed by his unwavering refusal to beg for mercy or plea bargain at his trial. Might this Socratic courage be based on an ability to distinguish between false and true alarms? Perhaps, as Socrates maintained at his defense, death (at least in some circumstances) is less to be feared than acting in a way which does not befit a superior man (cf. *Apology* 29a–b and 34c–35b). We might also wonder whether Socrates' life of inquiry and clever speaking ability did not in fact provide him with the best possible training and arms as he faced death, ostensibly at the hands of the Athenian demos.

Whatever we make of these particular comparisons, Aristotle clearly indicates that neither the teaching of Socrates nor the example of professional soldiers reveals the virtue of courage in its most authoritative sense. Aristotle's treatment of courage establishes a hierarchy. Courage in the sovereign sense is undertaken for the sake of the noble. Political courage is undertaken because of

the honors and reproaches which are meted out by the city. Although great experience and superior strength have the appearance of courage, these qualities must be ranked still lower because the one who possesses them is not constrained by honor and disgrace as it is understood by the city. Aristotle concludes his consideration of the Socratic view of courage by drawing attention to its political limitations; in contrast to the citizen soldier who thinks it disgraceful to run away, professional soldiers do not (1116b15–22) for they lack attachment to any particular city and the way of life transmitted by its laws and traditions. Aristotle's initial presentation of Socrates expresses a certain sympathy for the perspective of his gentlemen readers insofar as it quietly acknowledges Socrates' apparent "strangeness," particularly his lack of attachment to what the city regards as honorable or reprehensible. At the same time, however it should be observed that Aristotle's presentation also suggests that Socrates may be characterized by a real superiority which, although not properly understood as courage, is in some way based upon knowledge or experience.

With respect to the remainder of Aristotle's treatment of courage, it is sufficient to add two observations regarding his account of spiritedness (*θυμός*), the third imperfect "type" of courage (1116b23–1117a9). First, Aristotle is harsh in his criticism of spiritedness. He begins by comparing those emboldened by spiritedness to wild beasts. Aristotle's account emphasizes the subhuman quality of *θυμός* which causes one to rush into danger like a wild or wounded animal spurred on by pain or anger and blind to whatever dangers are present. Aristotle's comparison of a spirited individual to a wild beast effectively emphasizes the problematic character of spiritedness. The spirited individual is indiscriminate in his action; like a wild beast he blindly strikes out at all who appear to pose a threat. In light of Aristotle's immediately preceding account, his harsh criticism of spiritedness might stem from a very specific problem. The spirited individual is likely to act without sufficient deliberation against all those who in some way pose a threat to the polis—whether they are enemies on the battlefield or "foreigners" living within the city walls.

The second emphasis in Aristotle's treatment of spiritedness in some way softens the harshness of his initial (and dominant) criticism. Aristotle acknowledges that courageous men are also spirited. He explains, however, that they are courageous not because of any feeling (*πάθος*) but because their action takes its bearings from the noble (*τὸ καλόν*) and is guided by principle (*λόγος*). Indeed, Aristotle goes so far as to suggest that spiritedness may provide the natural basis for the virtue of courage. Spiritedness by itself, however, is not sufficient; it requires the addition of deliberation (*προαίρεσις*). This second emphasis in Aristotle's discussion mitigates the harshness of the first insofar as it suggests that spiritedness, properly directed, may lead to the virtue of courage. What is needed is the presence of some guiding principle

and capacity for deliberation. We should note that the addition of precisely these qualities would cause spiritedness to lose its indiscriminate character.

IRONY

After a consideration of courage and self-control in Book III, Aristotle takes up liberality and magnificence as he begins an ascent to one of the high points of the *Ethics*, his account of magnanimity in Book IV The magnanimous man is one who not only possesses all the other virtues but possesses them to a great or extraordinary degree. In the latter part of Book IV Aristotle descends from this peak in order to consider several qualities which, although lacking proper names, are part of human excellence as a whole. He discusses ambition, gentleness, agreeableness, truthfulness, wittiness, and a sense of shame. It is within the context of Aristotle's discussion of truthfulness and, perhaps not surprisingly, within the more specific context of his consideration of irony that he turns for a second time to the figure of Socrates.

Aristotle begins his account of truthfulness (1127a13–1127b32) by explaining that he is not speaking in the present context of honesty in agreements or in matters involving justice and injustice, but rather that virtue which manifests itself even when nothing is at stake because it is the result of a fixed disposition (ἕξις). The boaster (ὁ ἀλαζών) pretends to praiseworthy qualities which he does not possess whereas the ironic or self-depreciating individual (ὁ εἴρων) disclaims praiseworthy qualities which he does possess. The mean is found in the straightforward man (ὁ αὐθέκαστος) who acknowledges the truth about himself without exaggeration or understatement. The man who possesses this quality is considered morally good (ἐπιεικής) and even praiseworthy because the one who loves truth (ὁ φιλαλήθης) even when nothing is at stake is likely to be even more truthful when something is.

Aristotle indicates that both excess and deficiency (boastfulness and self-depreciation) may be pursued with or without an ulterior motive. Lacking an ulterior motive, the words, actions and conduct in question reveal an individual's true character. Thus, Aristotle explains, the one who pretends to more than he deserves with no ulterior motive should be considered more foolish than bad. If, however, his pretensions have glory or honor as their aim, such an individual is subject to censure (although not severe censure). It is, however, more disgraceful (ἀσχημονέστερος) if the object of one's striving is money or something that will get money.

In contrast to the boaster, Aristotle indicates that the one who understates his merits possesses a more gracious or beautiful (χαριέστερος) character since he is not motivated by gain but by a concern to avoid ostentation. Aristotle adds that those falling into this category sometimes deny or reject the most

generally accepted and highly praised opinions (*τὰ ἔνδοξα*). It is Socrates whom Aristotle cites as his example. He then goes on to speak of those who disclaim insignificant and obvious qualities. These, he maintains, are appropriately despised. Aristotle suggests that this latter sort of self-depreciation might even be understood as a kind of boastfulness, for both excessive attention and extreme negligence bespeak an element of pretense. However, those who employ (*οἱ χρώμενοι*) understatement in a measured way (*μετρίως*) regarding things which are not commonplace or obvious appear to be gracious (*χαρίεντες*) (1127b29–31). Hence, Aristotle concludes, it is really the boaster who is the opposite of the truthful man because he is inferior to the one who expresses himself with irony.

Several points should be observed regarding this account of an apparently minor moral virtue. To begin once again with the most obvious point, Aristotle praises the man of straightforward character (*ὁ αὐθέκαστος*) because he embodies the virtuous mean between boastfulness and self-depreciation. Such an individual, Aristotle maintains, is worthy of praise because a love of the truth which expresses itself in small things will naturally embrace greater things as well. It should be noted, however, that the same word which Aristotle uses to describe the straightforward man also describes someone who is blunt or plain. Although these latter qualities are not such as to incur moral blame, one might wonder if the type of character which comes closest to the mean in this case is in every respect superior to the one who uses irony in a measured way—the one whom Aristotle twice refers to as "gracious." It is within the context of this apparent paradox that Aristotle makes his second reference to Socrates. Could it be that while Aristotle wishes to give the straightforward man his due, he also wishes to direct his readers in a gentle way to some appreciation for the more gracious and certainly more complex character of Socrates?

As we have seen, Aristotle indicates that one may be characterized by boastfulness or irony with or without any ulterior motive. With respect to the former case (those who act from an ulterior motive), Aristotle offers only two examples, those who exaggerate their abilities for the sake of honor and those who do so for monetary gain. Although both individuals are boastful, Aristotle perceptively remarks that when pretense is undertaken for another purpose, it is no longer pretentiousness which best describes the character of those in question. What is most revealing about the individuals in Aristotle's examples is not the exaggerated claims which they make for themselves but their desire for honor and money respectively.

Since Aristotle's only two examples of acting from an ulterior motive pertain to boastfulness, the reader is left to wonder what kind of ulterior motive might lead one to use irony in a deliberate way. Indeed, the only indication furnished by Aristotle in the present context is his reference to Socrates who is clearly placed into the category of those who use irony in a measured way to

speak about things which are not obvious or easily seen. Why did Socrates speak ironically?

Although one might offer a number of different answers to this question, the immediate context suggests one in particular. The specific topic under consideration is the virtue of truthfulness. If the straightforward man reveals his love of the truth (*φιλαλήθης*) in small matters of no consequence, might Socrates' love of the truth lead him to use irony in matters of great import?[7] Does Socrates use irony because the truth requires it or is best approached in this manner?

A second and related reason for using irony emerges within the context of Book IV as a whole. In his account of the magnanimous man, Aristotle indicated that such an individual reveals his greatness toward men of position and fortune whereas he is measured (*μέτριον*) in dealing with those of moderate station because it is vulgar to lord it over the weak (1124b17–23). Moreover, when addressing the many, he speaks with ironic self-depreciation (*εἰρωνεία*) so as not to call attention to the sharp difference in character which separates a superior man from an inferior or ordinary one. In fact, Aristotle describes the magnanimous man as one who is marked by a curious combination of truthfulness or candor (*ἀληθευτικός*) and irony (1124b26–31).

As already noted, Aristotle's discussion of the minor virtue of truthfulness takes place in the shadow of his account of magnanimity. By recalling this earlier peak in Aristotle's exposition of moral virtue, his present discussion is caste in a new and striking light. Most pertinent in this regard is the fact that irony—that trait for which Socrates stands as Aristotle's sole exemplar in the present context—cannot always be understood as a deficiency but is sometimes employed in a measured way by those who embody the highest human excellence.

PRUDENCE

Aristotle's third and fourth references to Socrates occur within the context of his consideration of the relationship between prudence and moral virtue as a whole. It will prove useful to summarize Aristotle's own teaching on this matter before turning to his remarks about the Socratic one.

Aristotle's consideration of prudence and moral virtue (1144a6–1145a11) might be likened to a revolving door which can be entered from either of two sides. On the one hand, prudence requires moral virtue, since it is moral virtue

7. At the outset of the *Apology*, Socrates ironically acknowledges that he is a clever speaker but, unlike his accusers, he speaks cleverly with reference to the truth (17a–b). In fact, Socrates is initially presented in the *Apology* as an unusual combination of *ὁ αὐθέκαστος*, who will speak plainly in his accustomed manner, and *ὁ εἴρων*, who acknowledges his ability to speak cleverly. In the defense which follows, the Platonic Socrates proceeds to give the reader a remarkable demonstration of great subtlety clothed in simple, straightforward speech.

which furnishes the good at which a prudent man aims. Prudence discovers the particular means through which that good is attained. Since the good only appears as such to the good man, the absence of moral virtue means that the good for which one strives will be defective. Whereas such an individual may be clever in the choice of means to attain his end, he cannot be called prudent unless the end at which he aims is the one given by moral virtue. On the other hand, Aristotle maintains that moral virtue cannot exist without prudence. Although Aristotle acknowledges that the dispositions for particular moral virtues are somehow already present by nature, he points out that even good natural dispositions (*αἱ φυσικαὶ ἕξεις*) can be harmful without the guidance of intelligence. Aristotle uses the image of a man with a powerful frame who has lost his sight and as a consequence meets with a particularly heavy fall when he moves. It is precisely prudence which supplies guidance or "moral vision" for one with a strong natural disposition for virtue. If someone possessing natural excellence (*ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετή*) acquires prudence, then the disposition which previously only resembled virtue becomes virtue in the full or sovereign sense (*ἡ κυρία ἀρετή*). Hence, Aristotle concludes, if it is true that prudence requires moral virtue it is also true that moral virtue in the proper sense does not exist without prudence.

After offering this helpful but not entirely satisfying account of the relationship between prudence and virtue, Aristotle considers and amends the opinions of others on this subject. He speaks first of Socrates, maintaining that his line of inquiry was right in one way but wrong in another. Socrates was mistaken in thinking that all virtues were forms of prudence, although he spoke well in maintaining that they cannot exist without prudence (1144b17–21). Aristotle explains that Socrates conceived of the virtues as rational principles (*λόγους*), supposing all of them to be forms of knowledge (*πάσας ἐπιστήμας*) (1144b28–30). If Socrates overstated the relationship between reason and virtue, Aristotle thinks that his contemporaries understate it. They maintain that virtue is a disposition determined in accordance with right reason and that right reason is what is meant by prudence. In this case too, Aristotle finds it necessary to offer a slight modification. Virtue does not merely conform to right reason as to something external (*κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον*), rather virtue is accompanied by right reason (*μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου*) (1144b25–27). The rational principle from which virtue takes its bearings does not exist outside the virtuous man, it is rather something within him which enables him to be virtuous.

Aristotle adopts a middle position between the Socratic and contemporary views. On the one hand, Aristotle criticizes the paradoxical Socratic identification of virtue with knowledge, although he agrees with Socrates that virtue cannot exist without being accompanied by a rational principle. Moreover, although unwilling to identify all the virtues with prudence, Aristotle does acknowledge that the one who possesses this single virtue necessarily possesses

all the rest (1145a1–2). On the other hand, in contradistinction to his contemporaries, Aristotle maintains that one does not possess moral virtue simply because he acts according to some rational principle (for example, commands issued by a prudent lawgiver) since moral virtue in the full sense cannot exist without prudence.

We would do well to try to grasp something of the significance of these different positions and most especially the difference between Aristotle and Socrates on this question. In the *Meno*, the Platonic dialogue to which Aristotle appears to be referring in the present instance,[8] Socrates begins his conversation with Meno by confessing complete ignorance about the nature of virtue (71b). Socrates' statement startles, not to say scandalizes, Meno and understandably so since it flies in the face of a conventional civic education as well as the common experience of decent persons, both of which lead most people to assume that they know what virtue is. Socrates is, however, undaunted by Meno's ridicule and adds to his initial admission of ignorance that he has yet to meet *anyone* who knows what virtue is (71c). One could hardly describe this manner of inquiry as conciliatory. Indeed, in light of this latter remark, Socrates' confession of ignorance almost sounds like a boast. At the very least, Socrates' remarks are intended to challenge or provoke Meno to begin an investigation of something which he believes he already understands.

In the *Meno* (as in other dialogues), Socrates' insistence on knowing and subsequent confession of ignorance is shown to have a direct bearing on his own way of life. As long as one cannot claim to know what virtue is, the most important activity would seem to be the attempt to discover what it is (something which Socrates is not very successful in getting Meno to do precisely because and to the extent that Meno remains unconvinced of his own ignorance). Such an activity, one could argue, properly takes precedence over the effort to conform one's actions to the admonitions of famous teachers, great statesmen, or even the laws of the city itself. Perhaps the life of inquiry should be regarded as the only truly "virtuous" life whereas all others, to borrow from the final image of the *Meno*, are merely lives lived among shadows.

In contrast to Socrates' jarring and provocative approach to the question of virtue,[9] Aristotle addresses this question in a way which is likely to be much more acceptable to his gentlemen readers. Aristotle sheds light on the common but complicated experience of decent persons by clarifying that experience to a great extent and only gently suggesting the limits of that clarification. Aristotle had warned at the outset of his study that it is the mark of a well-educated

8. In the *Meno*, Socrates undertakes an investigation of virtue. Socrates' paradoxical identification of virtue and knowledge emerges in the course of this dialogue, where it takes the particular form referred to by Aristotle in the present context: namely, the identification of virtue with prudence (88a–89a).

9. It may be appropriate to recall that the frustrated Meno likens the effect of Socratic argument to that of the torpedo fish which numbs anyone who comes into contact with it. It is also interesting to note that Socrates in no way disavows the propriety of this comparison (80a–d).

person to expect only that degree of precision of which a subject matter admits (1094b12–27). By de-emphasizing the problematic question concerning the precise relationship between knowledge and virtue, while at the same time bringing an appropriate clarity and rigor to his treatment of virtue as a whole, Aristotle is able to acknowledge the dignity of moral virtue without, however, offering final clarity or precision about the nature of the good. Perhaps we should understand Socrates' inquiry into the relationship between knowledge and virtue as an expression of Socrates' uncompromising desire for precise knowledge of his subject matter. Whether or not this is so, it is clear that in contrast to the impression conveyed by the surface of the Platonic dialogues, the life of moral virtue as it is practiced by gentlemen is not presented by Aristotle as a shadowy kind of existence, but as a way of life which is intellectually serious and capable of substantial happiness.

The disagreements between Aristotle and Socrates on this issue should not, however, obscure a deeper agreement. The well-known conclusion of the *Ethics* explicitly teaches that a life devoted to the practice of moral virtue is not the simply best or happiest way of life. Moreover, we should also bear in mind that what Aristotle does recommend to his readers as a serious, if secondary, way of life is the practice of moral virtue as it has been elucidated and amended by Aristotle the philosopher. In the present context, Aristotle modifies the contemporary view of virtue by moving closer to the Socratic one; he insists that virtue requires the active presence of some guiding principle. The major difference between Aristotle and his contemporaries on this question appears to be that Aristotle shifts the center of gravity away from those norms which exist outside an individual toward those which come from within. Aristotle's subtle emendation rules out the possibility that the standard for human excellence could be provided by one who simply obeys the laws of his regime. Such an individual might be a good citizen but he should not be considered a simply good man (cf. *Pol* 1276b16–1278b5, esp. 1277b25–29 and 1278a40–1278b5).

The fuller significance of this distinction is suggested by Aristotle's concluding remarks in this section. If it is true that sovereign virtue (ἡ κυρίως ἀρετή) cannot exist without prudence which perfects the deliberative part of the soul, Aristotle points out that prudence, even though it both presupposes and directs all the moral virtues, does not possess more authority (κυρία) than wisdom, nor does it govern the better part of the soul. To maintain otherwise, Aristotle says, would be like asserting that political science, since it governs everything in the city (including religious festivals), also wields authority over the gods (1145a6–11). Aristotle concludes his treatment of moral and intellectual virtue by holding up the wise man—and not merely the prudent one—as the embodiment of the most authoritative human excellence. This conclusion gently points to the limits of his preceding consideration. Although virtue in the sovereign

sense properly qualifies one to rule in the city,[10] the wise embody a higher and more authoritative human excellence. Although as citizens the wise are de facto subject to the political authority of those who rule, Aristotle quietly presents a famous, even strident, Socratic teaching on this issue; namely, those who rule, indeed the city itself, should be subject to the greater authority of the wise.

Before turning to the final three references to Socrates in the *Ethics*, it may be helpful to order (at least to some degree) the impressions conveyed thus far by viewing Aristotle's references to Socrates within the broader context of the *Ethics* as a whole. Aristotle introduced Socrates at the beginning of his consideration of moral virtue. Socrates' thesis about virtue first came to sight as a strange understanding of courage which Aristotle respectfully but emphatically corrected. Aristotle next referred to Socrates as an example of someone who spoke with irony, often confounding the most accepted opinions. Although Aristotle maintained that those who habitually indulge in understatement are in some way deficient, he also appeared to use this discussion to suggest something of the subtlety of the superior man since those who embody the highest human excellence also speak with irony. Aristotle's next reference to Socrates was at the end of his consideration of intellectual virtue. Although Aristotle does not simply endorse the Socratic view of virtue, it is clear that he is far from dismissing it. Whereas Aristotle introduced the Socratic paradox with reference to the particular virtue of courage (courage is knowledge), his consideration at the end of Book VI addresses that teaching in more general terms (virtue is knowledge; prudence is virtue). More importantly, whereas Aristotle's initial consideration of the Socratic paradox in Book III emphasized the relationship between virtue and the noble (as was appropriate since the horizon of inquiry was at that point restricted to a consideration of moral virtue), in Book VI Aristotle comes closer to considering the Socratic thesis on its own terms. (This is also appropriate given that the horizon of inquiry now embraces both intellectual and moral virtue.) It is within this broader horizon of inquiry that Aristotle voices considerable appreciation for Socrates' view without, however, entirely agreeing with it (moral virtue is not knowledge but must be accompanied by rational principle; prudence is not simply virtue but it does presuppose the presence of all the other virtues). Nevertheless, even the broader horizon of inquiry established in Book VI is limited as Aristotle himself acknowledges in his concluding remarks. Although it is especially the virtue of prudence which qualifies one to run the affairs of the city, Aristotle concludes his consideration of this virtue by acknowledging the existence of a still greater authority; namely, that which properly belongs to the wise who, by virtue of their godlike wisdom, embody the highest and most authoritative

10. Aristotle's example of a prudent man was Pericles who is said to have possessed a capacity for discerning what things were good both for himself and for mankind, a capacity which, Aristotle maintains, characterizes one who is capable of managing both households and cities (1140b8–11).

human excellence. Are we meant to think of Socrates who was condemned by the city for his wisdom—a wisdom which, although he insisted that it was merely human, was described as divine by those who condemned him (*Apology* 20e)?

Perhaps Socrates' teaching and mode of investigation regarding virtue are and must be considered imprudent from the point of view of the city. However, this still leaves open the possibility that from a different point of view—perhaps a more detached or transpolitical point of view—Socrates' paradoxical teaching and manner of inquiry may prove to contain still greater truth than we have been led to acknowledge thus far. In any case, it is at this point in Aristotle's study that he decides to undertake a "new beginning," one which promises a consideration of heroic, indeed a kind of divine, excellence (1145a15–33). We should not be surprised that Aristotle once again turns to the figure and teaching of Socrates. Aristotle's concluding remarks about Socrates in the *Ethics* are all found within the context of his new beginning in Book VII where for the final time Aristotle takes up Socrates' problematic thesis regarding the relationship between knowledge and virtue.

INCONTINENCE

Aristotle's final references to Socrates occur within the context of his discussion of continence/incontinence. His general consideration of this theme is divided into three parts. Aristotle lists a variety of opinions regarding continence and incontinence (1145b8–20), brings to light six problems (*ἀπορίαι*)[11] entangled in those opinions (1145b21–1146b8), and then attempts to disentangle them (1146b8–1152a36). It is the very first *ἀπορία* which is of greatest interest to us for it is here that Aristotle returns to the problem raised by Socrates: How is it possible for someone to act in a morally wrong way at the same time that he correctly supposes that what he is doing is wrong? Aristotle elaborates the problem by citing the view of those who say that one cannot act in this way if he knows (*ἐπιστάμενος*) the act to be wrong since, as Socrates supposed, it would be strange if, while knowledge was present, something else should overpower it and drag it around like a slave (1145b21–24). In fact, Aristotle observes, Socrates used to combat this view altogether (that a man could know what is right and do what is wrong) in such a way as to imply that there was no such thing as incontinence (1145b25–27). Socrates believed that

11. *Ἀπορία* can also be translated by "dilemma" or "antinomy" and is likened by Aristotle to a knot or tangle (*δεσμός*) which binds the intelligence (*Meta* 995a27ff. cf. *NE* 1146a21–27). Wherever the fuller connotations of the word are essential for understanding the argument, I have retained the Greek. For a discussion of the meaning of *ἀπορία*, see H. H. Joachim, *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. D. A. Raes (London: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 219, and John Burnet, ed., *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1900), pp. xl–xli.

no one acts contrary to what is best knowing that what he does is bad; one only acts against what is best out of ignorance.

We are now in a position to observe that of the seven references to Socrates in the *Ethics*, all but one (Aristotle's reference to Socratic irony) pertain to the problematic Socratic thesis regarding the relationship between knowledge and moral goodness. At the very least, Aristotle's sixfold reference suggests something of the weight and seriousness which he attaches to this Socratic teaching. To this we might add that although Aristotle has referred to the Socratic thesis several times, it is only at this point that he deals with it in a thematic way. It is within the context of his thematic treatment that Aristotle indicates the most radical or jarring aspect of Socrates' approach to the question of moral goodness; it led him to deny the very existence of incontinence.[12] In fact, as Aristotle frames the issue for a final time before offering his own evaluation, he no longer hesitates to call attention to the strange or extreme character of the Socratic stance. Indeed, he expresses sympathy for those who continue to experience Socrates' outlandish teaching on such an important matter with something like frustrated indignation—the Socratic view of this matter, Aristotle asserts, is clearly at odds with the most obvious facts (1145b27–28)! Given the character of Aristotle's previous references to this Socratic teaching as well as his expression of its apparent inconsistency, the thematic treatment which follows is surprising. It would be difficult to construe Aristotle's final evaluation as anything other than a rehabilitation and even endorsement (although qualified) of the Socratic view, notwithstanding the fact that it is at odds with the most obvious things.

Given the subject of this study it is not necessary to list each of the five other *ἀπορίαι* which Aristotle finds to be entangled in current views regarding incontinence. However, it is worth noting that whereas Aristotle lists six *ἀπορίαι*, his own consideration of them follows neither the order nor the list which he has just furnished. Although Aristotle's treatment does address all the *ἀπορίαι* which he has brought to light, he orders his thematic treatment in a new way, presumably one which reflects the relative importance which he attaches to the various *ἀπορίαι* which he has raised. What is most striking about Aristotle's order of consideration is the emphasis which it places on the Socratic paradox. As Burnet incisively points out, it is as if Aristotle says, "We have first to deal with the great *ἀπορία*, *πότερον εἰδότες ἢ οὐ*; and then we can take all the rest together."[13]

12. The radical character of Socrates' denial of incontinence is even more evident in light of his explanation of what actually occurs. Socrates' analysis of incontinence leads him to assert that there is no good apart from pleasure and that virtue consists in knowing how to choose the greatest pleasure. See *Protagoras* 351c–361c, esp. 357a and 358b. The harsh implications of the Socratic consideration of incontinence are not only unacceptable but even antagonistic to the best sensibilities of decent persons. Although regrettable, it is not surprising that Socrates' mode of inquiry eventually elicited the condemnation from his fellow citizens.

13. Burnet, *Ethics*, p. 298.

Aristotle's thematic treatment of Socrates' teaching is divided into a preface and four (difficult and abbreviated) arguments which lead to his final evaluation (1146b24–1147b19)[14] It is sufficient for our purposes to summarize the conclusions of each of these arguments, noting especially their bearing on Aristotle's final evaluation of Socrates.

After a preface in which he dismisses the argument of those who adhere to the Socratic thesis in a modified form, Aristotle offers three dialectical (*λογικός*) arguments. The first argument concludes with the assertion that it would not be surprising if someone were to act against knowledge which he possessed but was not currently using, although it would be strange (*δεινός*) if he acted against knowledge while he was actively beholding (*θεωροῦντα*) it. Aristotle's second argument amounts to a technical rendition of the first. It would not be strange if one knew both universal and particular propositions in a habitual way but, in a particular case, considered only the universal and not the particular. (For example, one might know that dry food is healthy, but fail to realize that the food before one was dry.) Aristotle adds, however, that it would be astonishing (*θαυμαστόν*) if the individual in question knew in the sense that both universal and particular propositions were apprehended as concrete particulars. Aristotle's analysis thus far differentiates different ways of knowing. However, he has not yet joined the issue since it is only the last kind of knowing that is involved in incontinence; namely, when one undertakes a particular (that is, concrete) action which he knows (in some sense) to be wrong.

In his third argument Aristotle speaks of the kind of knowing which characterizes someone who is asleep, mad, or drunk. Aristotle likens this type of knowing to young students who correctly reel off formulae but without understanding the significance of what they are saying. The incontinent, Aristotle says, fail in the same way. They may act against what they know but that knowledge is in some way defective for it has not become part of them or, to

14. Commentators generally agree that these four arguments break up into two types: the first three are *λογικός* (based on the distinction between having and exercising knowledge) whereas the fourth is *φυσικῶς*. However, there is a remarkable degree of difference in the way these arguments are evaluated. Robinson maintains that the *φυσικῶς* explanation—although it is often used by Aristotle to present a topic from a distinct and "better" point of view—has in this case no real bearing on what Aristotle takes to be a logical puzzle: Robert Robinson, "Aristotle on Akrasia," in *Ethics and Politics*, Vol. 2 of *Articles on Aristotle* (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), pp. 84–87. On the other hand, Burnet maintains that the first three arguments are essentially dialectical whereas the *φυσικῶς* explanation reveals Aristotle's real answer to the problem (*Ethics*, p. 299). Walsh maintains that by grouping together these four arguments, Aristotle indicates that there is no fundamental difference between these two approaches: James Walsh, *Aristotle's Conception of Moral Weakness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 99–100. Randall makes the general suggestion that Aristotle normally follows a pattern of investigation which moves from the *λογικός* or "talker" to the *φυσικῶς* or "natural philosopher" as the inquiry is brought into the wider context of nature: John Randall, *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 59–61. I have found Randall's general observation to be borne out in the present case.

express this in more precise Aristotelian terms, it is a kind of knowing which is not characterized by *σύμφυσις* (1147a22). While each of Aristotle's arguments explain how it is possible to act against what one knows to be right (in opposition to the Socratic view), it should also be observed that each of these arguments points to another way of knowing—perhaps the kind of knowing which Socrates sought—which, Aristotle says, it would be surprising, even astonishing, if one were to oppose by one's actions.

Aristotle's final argument addresses the Socratic paradox from the viewpoint of the natural philosopher (*φυσικῶς*). Aristotle describes a physiological state in which rational control is temporarily overcome by passion or pleasure, a state comparable to that produced by drunkenness or sleep. What is most pertinent for our purposes is that Aristotle's analysis clearly shows that the one acting under the influence of passion or pleasure either does not possess knowledge or possesses it in a defective way, much like a drunken man who might repeat the sound moral maxims of Empedocles without their altering his behavior in the least. Aristotle's conclusion is striking: "We seem to be led to the position which Socrates sought to establish—it is not knowledge in the sovereign sense (*κυρίως ἐπιστήμη*) which is overcome in an incontinent act, nor is such knowledge dragged about by passion" (1147b14–17).

For all the difficulty of Aristotle's particular arguments in this section, their overall effect is clear. On the one hand, Aristotle argues that it is in fact possible to act against "right opinion." In opposition to the Socratic paradox, Aristotle maintains that incontinence both exists and is intelligible. On the other hand, Aristotle's consideration also brings to light a kind of knowing which apparently cannot be overcome by the emotions. While disagreeing with Socrates in such a way as to shed light on an all too familiar aspect of human experience, Aristotle also begins to suggest the proper way to understand a much less familiar Socratic maxim. What initially seemed to be outlandish is now revealed to have seemed so to the extent that one lacked a proper appreciation for the kind of knowing which Socrates sought. Whereas Aristotle's disagreement with Socrates helps to clarify the experience of incontinence, Aristotle's final vindication of Socrates provides his readers with some appreciation for "sovereign knowledge" as it is sought by the philosopher—that rare and in someway godlike knowledge which Aristotle had (in his previous reference to Socrates) attributed to the wise.

The particular arguments which Aristotle makes in this section address the question of moral goodness within a horizon which is broader than that which has hitherto constrained his inquiry. Aristotle no longer restricts himself to the horizon of gentlemen but shows himself willing to consider the question of moral goodness from the perspective of natural philosophy. It is within this broader horizon of inquiry that Aristotle attempts to bring his readers from an initial frustration with the patently outlandish character of Socratic inquiry to some, even partial, appreciation for the less than obvious truth to which that

inquiry was devoted. In effect, Aristotle's justification of the Socratic paradox provides his readers with a greater appreciation for the requirements of knowledge in a strict sense, that is, knowledge as it is sought by the philosopher.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to suggest that Aristotle's presentation of Socrates in the *Ethics* is both more careful and more sympathetic than is often acknowledged. The more typical evaluations regarding Aristotle's repudiation of the Platonic Socrates as well as his culturally determined understanding of human excellence do not do justice to the suppleness of Aristotle's mode of inquiry in the *Ethics* in particular and his political writings generally.[15] It is by taking seriously the apologetic dimension of Aristotle's political writings that both his awareness of the limitations of the code of gentlemen and his appreciation for the Socratic mode of inquiry assume their full and proper force. I have attempted to show that in the course of the *Ethics* Aristotle seeks to bring his readers to some positive appreciation for Socrates' life and teaching. On the one hand, he mutes and in some cases corrects the most disturbing aspects of Socrates' teaching on moral virtue, approaching those teachings in a way which reflects his own concern to preserve and foster the best sensibilities of his gentlemen readers. On the other hand, Aristotle directs his readers to an appreciation for the seriousness of Socratic inquiry, however outlandish and galling it might initially appear. Without trying to persuade his readers that the "gadfly of Athens" was in fact the city's greatest benefactor, Aristotle's double appreciation for the dignity of moral virtue as it is lived by gentlemen and the life of radical inquiry as it was embodied in the life and death of Socrates is uniquely suited to bring his readers to a new and positive appreciation for the Socratic way of life. For Aristotle, as for Plato (although in a way which differs from Plato), Socrates continues to personify the public face of philosophy. Aristotle's prudent rehabilitation of the exemplar par excellence of the philosophic life in the *Ethics* can be understood as part of his larger effort to secure an at least partial acceptance for the place and importance of philosophy in the city.

15. Consider, in addition to MacIntyre and Jaeger (loc. cit.), John Randall who identifies Aristotle's teaching on human excellence with "the values, the norms or ideals of Greek culture the ethic of an upper class in a slave society." *Aristotle*, p. 248.

Rousseau's Pure State of Nature

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Heinrich Meier's important new edition of the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*[1] invites us to rethink Rousseau's account of the state of nature, and more particularly of what he calls the "pure" state of nature.

Meier provides us with the most definitive text of the *Discourse* to date. He has collated the two 1755 editions and the posthumous 1782 Moultou and Du Peyrou edition which incorporated Rousseau's numerous corrections and additions; he has re-edited the *Letter* to "Philopolis," the pseudonym under which Charles Bonnet criticized the *Discourse*; the *Reply* to Le Roy, whom earlier editors had referred to as "An Unknown Naturalist" until Ralph Leigh identified him; the letter to Perdriau of 28 November 1754 about the Epistle Dedicatory; and all known fragments and drafts of the *Discourse*. The French texts are accompanied by Meier's facing German translations, and by extensive footnotes. They are preceded by a long Introductory Essay on "The Rhetoric and Intention" of the *Discourse*, and followed by a very complete and useful index in French to key terms and concepts.

It may at first appear surprising that the most authoritative edition of the *Second Discourse* should be the work of a scholar not writing in French. Yet one is almost immediately reminded of how indebted Rousseau studies are to the labors of "foreign" scholars for standard editions of the texts: C. E. Vaughan's two-volume *Political Writings* remained unrivaled for over half a century; G. R. Havens brought out the first critical edition of the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*; the only modern and complete edition of the polemical writings occasioned by the *First Discourse* is Ludwig Tente's three-volume *Die Polemik um den ersten Discours von Rousseau in Frankreich und Deutschland*; Ralph Leigh's splendid edition of the *Correspondance complète de Rousseau* will surely remain definitive for a very long time to come. Meier's edition now claims a place in this short and distinguished list.

Starobinski's edition of the *Discourse* in the Pléiade *Œuvres complètes* had, since its appearance some twenty years ago, generally been regarded as the standard edition of the text. Meier has corrected errors and oversights in the Pléiade text; he has included additional drafts and fragments; and his notes

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Diskurs über die Ungleichheit / Discours sur l'inégalité: Kritische Ausgabe des integralen Textes. Mit sämtlichen Fragmenten und ergänzenden Materialien nach den Originalausgaben und den Handschriften neu ediert, übersetzt und kommentiert.* By Heinrich Meier. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1984, xcii + 532 pp.); hereafter referred to as Meier.

are informed by a keen sensitivity to the political character of Rousseau's argument. Not all of his corrections will significantly affect even a minute scholar's understanding of the text. But every conscientious student of the *Second Discourse* will henceforth have to take his edition into account.

Indeed, this is primarily a study edition. It does not bring us face to face with Rousseau's text, or with an unadorned translation of the text; rather, it presents us with that text learnedly and exhaustively footnoted. The notes provide detailed editorial information, identify sources and references, situate given passages in their broader context, or call attention, sometimes rather pointedly, to Rousseau's real or presumed meaning and intentions.

Meier is particularly sensitive to the relations between authors and readers, in other words to problems of rhetoric. Both in his Introduction and in numerous notes throughout the book he reminds us of the ever-present threat of civil and ecclesiastical censorship under which Rousseau and his contemporaries wrote, and he calls attention to the places where that threat clearly influenced the text of the *Discourse*. At the same time, he is mindful of the self-censorship one would expect from the author of the *First Discourse*. That self-censorship manifests itself perhaps most clearly in the distinction which Rousseau draws between his different addresses: Geneva, in the Epistle Dedicatory (pp. 118–28); the likes of Plato and Xenocrates whom, in the Exordium and in the concluding paragraph of Part I, he calls his "Judges," and in the penultimate paragraph of the *Discourse* he calls "attentive readers" (pp. 140, 169, 197); and those whom, in the last paragraph of Part I, he calls "vulgar readers" (p. 169, cp. p. 135). Thus, while many commentators continue to see the Epistle Dedicatory to Geneva as nothing more than Rousseau's somewhat naive, idealized vision of his native city, Meier convincingly restates the view that it is a sophisticated and self-conscious political document designed to help heal the deep divisions between the party of the Citizens and the ruling patriciate that had repeatedly brought the city to the brink of civil war during the preceding half century. In the letter to Perdriau which Meier includes in his volume, Rousseau very clearly states that such had indeed been the intention of the Epistle Dedicatory.

Now, the most perplexing rhetorical problem posed by the *Discourse* is how to make coherent sense of what Rousseau says about the state of nature: is it conjectural or is it factual; what are the consequences of deciding that it is the one rather than the other; what may be Rousseau's reasons for stating his argument in a way that appears to leave this an open question? The issue arises with the very first passage which Meier examines closely in the Introductory Essay he devotes to "The Rhetoric and Intention" of the *Discourse*, namely Rousseau's often quoted invitation to the reader to begin by setting aside all the facts.

> It did not even enter the mind of most of our philosophers to doubt that the state of Nature had existed, whereas it is evident, from reading the Holy Scriptures, that

> the first Man, having received some lights and precepts immediately from God, was not himself in that state, and that if the Writings of Moses are granted the credence owed them by every Christian Philosopher, it has to be denied that, even before the Flood, Men were ever in the pure state of Nature .
>
> Let us therefore begin by setting aside all the facts, for they do not affect the question. The Inquiries that may be pursued regarding this Subject ought not be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasonings; better suited to elucidate the Nature of things than to show their genuine origin (p. 139).[2]

Meier agrees with the long line of scholars who have seen that the facts we are here invited to set aside are what might be called "the biblical facts." He further agrees with those scholars who have argued that the biblical facts are the only facts we are invited to set aside in the *Discourse*, and that we should therefore not accept at face value Rousseau's repeated assertions that his account of the state of nature in Part I of the *Discourse* is conjectural, but should, instead, take that account as having been intended to be factual.[3] That reading is open to question.[4]

1.1 The invitation to set aside all the facts is certainly an invitation to set aside "the biblical facts:" "Let us *therefore* begin . " But Rousseau's formulation also indicates a distinction between the biblical account—"the Writings of Moses"—on the one hand, and the theological interpretation of that account—"the credence owed them by every Christian Philosopher"—on the other. He sets aside the theological interpretation of the biblical account far more categorically than he sets aside the account itself.

Just before inviting the reader to set aside all the facts, he had remarked that

2. All otherwise unidentified page references throughout this essay are to *The First and Second Discourses together with the Replies to Critics and the Essay on the Origin of Languages*, edited, translated, and annotated by Victor Gourevitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); references to the Pléiade edition of Rousseau's *Œuvres complètes* are indicated by *OC*, followed by volume and page numbers.

3. For Rousseau's use of "conjecture," see *op. cit.*, Index. Diderot had but lately called for bold, basic scientific experiments, which he called "conjectures," but had originally thought of calling "reveries:" " I will call *Revery* what others might call a *System*." *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature*, Varloot and Diekmann eds., in *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. IX (Paris, 1981) p. 49, n.T, and nos XXXI–XXXVIII. Half a century later, Dugald Stewart came to speak of "*Theoretical* or *conjectural* history; an expression which coincides pretty nearly in its meaning with *Natural History*, as employed by Mr. Hume—see his Natural History of Religion—and with what some French writers have called *Histoire Raisonnée*." "Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith" (1793); in *Works* (1829), VII, 31f. cp. VI, 4; discussed by Hans Medick, *Naturzustand und Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1978), especially in Exkurs II, pp. 305–13; R. L. Emerson surveys "Conjectural History and Scottish Philosophers," in *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers 1984 Communications historiques*, pp. 63–90; and Nietzsche is writing "*Naturgeschichte der Moral*" in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part VI.

4. As C. E. Vaughan had already indicated: *The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1915, Vol. I, p. 13, n. 3.

it had never so much as occurred to most of our philosophers to doubt that the state of nature had existed, although "Christian Philosophers" have to deny that man was ever in the pure state of nature. Now, the "state of nature" and the "pure state of nature" are not, strictly speaking, the same state. As Rousseau well knew, the expressions "state of nature" and "pure state of nature" play a role in two very different traditions, the theological tradition, and the philosophical tradition. More precisely, Christian theologians traditionally distinguish between the state of pure nature (*pura natura* or *in puris naturalibus*), the state of corrupted or fallen nature, and the state of restored nature or of grace. By mid-seventeenth century the status of the "state of pure nature" had become a central issue in the differences dividing the Jansenists and the neo-scholastics. The neo-scholastics had come to use "state of pure nature" to refer to the state, actual or conjectural, of man or of the world without—prior to—supernatural destination, aspiration, or assistance. They had accordingly also come to distinguish between natural law considered from the point of view of pure nature or the unaided human reason, that is, purely natural law; and natural law considered from the point of view of grace which, although it is supernatural rather than natural, is nevertheless said to be natural "in a relative sense."[5] The Jansenists, on the other hand, categorically rejected the very possibility of a state of pure nature. Jansenius, borrowing a metaphor of Augustine's, allowed no more difference between the state of pure and the state of fallen nature than between being undressed and being naked, and he regarded all speculation about the state of pure nature as tantamount to a revival of Pelagianism.[6] Rousseau is evidently alluding to this debate when he says that the biblical account does not allow for the pure state of nature; and when he adds that therefore what he will say about mankind and about the earth

5. " . quia etiam gratia habet suam propriam essentiam, et naturam, cui connaturale est lumen infusum, cui etiam connaturale est non solùm dirigere homines ad rectam, et honestam, ac debitam operationem supernaturalem, sed etiam depellere tenebras, et errores circa ipsammet legem purè naturalem, et sub altiori ratione praecipere ipsiusmet legis naturalis observationem. Sic ergo lex naturalis duplex distingui potest, una purè naturalis, alia simpliciter supernaturalis, naturalis autem respectivè, per coparationem ad gratiam." Suarez, *Tractatus de Legibus, et Deo Legislatore* (1612), I, 3, xi, (cp. II, 8, i); while this view may be taken as representative, Suarez does warn that

> the philosophers have not recognized man's supernatural end, but have dealt with a certain felicity in this life, or rather with a certain state conducive to living it in peace and justice . . . However, since it is a doctrine of the faith that men are ordained to the supernatural end of the future life by fitting means that are to be sought after in this life, sacred theology rightly infers that this natural law is necessary for a vastly different reason, and that men require more positive laws than those that philosophers recognize (*op. cit.*, I, 3, x);

see also the passage from Suarez's *De Gratia* quoted by Starobinski, *OC* III, 1303.

6. Cornelius Jansenius, *Augustinus*, 1640 (Minerva Nachdruck, 1964), Tome II, the last 3 books, pp. 678–980; p. 679; "Statum purae naturae in Eclesiam introduxerunt Pelegiani," I, 6, xi, p. 361. For the background of these debates, Étienne Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vrin, 1943), p. 193 n. 1; Henri de Lubac, S. J., *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1965), especially pp. 140–44, 152–65, 274f., 284–87; also Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 184 n. 23.

"abandoned to itself" (pp. 140, 142) will be conjectural, he uses the same formula as that used by innumerable theologians who took part in that debate. The issue is most commonly debated in terms of the kind of grace, that is, of freedom of will or of choice, Adam might initially have enjoyed. Rousseau is silent regarding grace, and he postpones any consideration of freedom of choice until much later in the *Discourse* (p. 148). Here he speaks, instead, of Adam prior to "the lights and precepts" which he received "immediately from God," where "precepts" clearly at the very least refers to God's:

> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (*Genesis* 2:17);

and "lights" clearly at the very least refers to the lights needed to understand and to heed that precept.[7] In a passage which he added while the *Discourse* was in press, Rousseau guardedly indicates that the biblical account—but especially the Divines' interpretation of that account—will make sense only to

> . . those who will see in the intention of giving from the beginning a morality to human actions which they would not have acquired for a long time, the reason for a precept indifferent in itself and inexplicable in any other System: Those, in a word, who are convinced that the divine voice called all Mankind to the enlightenment and the happiness of celestial Intelligences . (p. 213).

The biblical account—but especially the Divines' interpretation of that account—is at odds with what did or would have happened naturally, to man "abandoned to himself."

> To demur against a useless and arbitrary prohibition is a natural inclination, but which, far from being in itself vicious, conforms to the order of things and to man's good constitution; since he would not be able to attend to his preservation if he had not a very lively love of himself and of the preservation of all his rights and privileges as he received them from nature. He who could be anything would wish nothing but what would be useful to him; but a feeble Being whose power is further limited and restrained by law, loses a part of himself, and in his heart he reclaims what he is being deprived of. To impute this to him as a crime is to impute to him as a crime that he is what he is and not some other being; it would be to wish at one and the same time that he be and not be. For this reason, the order infringed by Adam appears to me to have been not so much a true prohibition as a paternal advice; a warning to abstain from a pernicious and deadly fruit. Surely this idea conforms better to the idea one should entertain regarding God's goodness, and even

7. On "precepts," cp. *e.g.*, Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIV, 12 (quoted in note 8 below); Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, 90–108 *passim*; on negative precepts, Ia IIae, q2 art. 2, *ad sec.*; Suarez, *op. cit.* II, 10, i; the dictates of Hobbes's natural law are still "precepts": *Philosophicall Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*, or *De Cive* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, the Clarendon Edition of the Philosophical Works of Thomas Hobbes, Vol. III, 1983, H. Warrender ed.), *e.g.*, ch. III *passim*; "A LAW OF NATURE, (*Lex Naturalis*,) is a Precept or generall Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden " *Leviathan*, ch. 14; for Rousseau's use of "precept," see *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, Index.

to the text of *Genesis*, than do the ideas which Divines are pleased to prescribe to us; for with regard to the threat of the double death, it has been shown that the expression *morte morieris* has not the emphatic meaning which they attach to it, and is only a hebraism [also] used elsewhere [in Scripture], where such an emphasis would be out of place.[8]

The invitation to begin by setting aside the facts is, then, indeed, an invitation to set aside the biblical facts; but it is more particularly an invitation to set aside the orthodox—"the Divines'"—interpretation of these facts: their claim that Adam sinned when he did no more than act according to his nature, and their account of the consequences of Adam's deed. Without explicitly referring to the theological debates surrounding this issue, Rousseau proceeds to give an account of mankind abandoned to itself alone (p. 141). Since on his rather strict reading, the writings of Moses do not allow for man's ever having found himself in that state, he compares his account to the "hypothetical and conditional reasonings" which "our Physicists daily make regarding the formation of the World." It is hypothetical and conditional because otherwise it would clash head-on with the Divines' interpretation and so invite their censure. But it would be a serious error to conclude that that is the only reason why it is conditional and hypothetical, or, as Rousseau also frequently says, conjectural.

8. *A Christophe de Beaumont*, *OC* IV, pp. 939f., note. Regarding the "Divines'" interpretation, *e.g.*:

> If anyone finds a difficulty in understanding why other sins do not alter human nature as it was altered by the transgression of those first human beings, so that on account of it this nature is subject to the great corruption we feel and see, and to death, and is distracted and tossed with so many furious and contending emotions, and is certainly far different from what it was before sin, even though it were then lodged in an animal body—if, I say, anyone is moved by this, he ought not to think that that sin was a small and light one because it was committed about food, and that not bad nor noxious, except because it was forbidden; for in that spot of singular felicity God could not have created and planted any evil thing. But by the precept He gave, God commended obedience, which is, in a sort, the mother and guardian of all the virtues in the reasonable creature, which was so created that submission is advantageous to it, while the fulfillment of its own will in preference to the Creator's is destruction. And as this commandment enjoining abstinence from one kind of food in the midst of great abundance of other kinds was so easy to keep—so light a burden to the memory—and, above all, found no resistance to its observance in lust, which only afterwards sprung up as the penal consequence of sin, the iniquity of violating it was all the greater in proportion to the ease with which it might have been kept. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIV, 12 (M. Dods tr.).

The Vulgate's *morte morieris*, King James's "thou shalt surely die," *Genesis* 2:17 and 3:4, attempts to render the Hebrew "dying you will die"; regarding this expression, see R. Sacks, "The Lion and the Ass," *Interpretation*, 1980, 8:54; for the Divines' interpretation of the double death, see, *e.g.*, *Romans* 5:12–14, Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XIII, *passim*; for the heterodox—and polygenist—interpretation, see Isaac de La Peyrère *Proeadamitae* (1655), translated under the title *Men before Adam. Or a Discourse upon the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Verses of the Fifth Chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans. By which are prov'd, that the first Men were created before Adam* (London, 1656); and *Systema theologicum, ex Proeadamitarium hypothesi* (1655), translated under the title *A Theological System upon that Presupposition that Men were before Adam* (London, 1655). La Peyrère has his pre-Adamites living in the state of nature because they live without and before the Law: *Men before Adam*, ch. XVIII, p. 45.

1.2.1 In the philosophical tradition the expression "state of nature" is, for all intents and purposes, introduced as a term of art by Hobbes: "the state of men without civil society (which state we may properly call the state of nature)."[9] For all intents and purposes, that remains the most general and the most widely accepted definition of the expression in the philosophical tradition. "State of nature" so understood refers to at least four materially very different conditions, which it is important to distinguish: the state of men prior to the institution of civil society, and so to being civil-ized; the state of members of different civil societies in their relations with one another; the state of men after the dissolution of their common civil society; and the state of sovereign states in their relations with one another. Of these, the first is certainly the condition most commonly referred to by the expression "state of nature." Formally, then, both the theologians' and the philosophers' state of nature are defined by the absence of positive law, be it divine or human. Still, as Jakob Thomasius points out, Hobbes's "state of nature" most closely corresponds to what the theologians call the "state of corrupted nature"; he ignores what they call the "state of pure—i.e. prelapsarian—nature."[10]

9. *De Cive*, Preface (*ed. cit.*, p. 34); also "the naturall state of men," *Ibid.*, II, 1, Annotation, and II, 13 (*ed. cit.*, pp. 52, 68), which compare and contrast with the use of the expression "naturall state" understood as the right and proper state, *e.g.* III, 25 (*ed. cit.*, p. 72).

10. Thomasius's remark is reported by his student Leibniz, *Theodicy* I, 221; Pufendorf very explicitly acknowledges as much regarding his own account of the state of nature: see p. 31 below. In a ditty to which readers of the *Second Discourse* will recognize echoes, Voltaire appears to have deliberately run together the theological "state of pure nature" and the philosophical "pure state of nature":

> Mon cher Adam, mon vieux et triste père,
> Je crois te voir en un recoin d'Éden
> Grossièrement forger le Genre humain
> En tourmentant madame Eve, ma mère.
> Deux Singes verds, deux Chèvres pieds fourchus
> Sont moins hideux au fond de leur feuillée;
> Par le soleil votre face halée,
> Vos bras velus, votre main écaillée,
> Vos ongles longs, crasseux, noirs et crochus,
> Votre peau bise, endurcie et brûlée,
> Sont les attraits, sont les charmes flatteurs
> Dont l'assemblage allume vos ardeurs.
> Bientôt lassés de leur sale aventure,
> Sous un vieux chêne ils soupent galament
> Avec de l'eau, du millet et du gland;
> Ce repas fait, ils dorment sur la dure:
> Voilà l'état de la pure Nature. *Le Mondain* (1736), lines 46–59

However, elsewhere Voltaire also speaks of " various places in America where mankind remained in the state of pure nature." *Essai sur les mœurs* (1765), Ch. 2 (i.f.).

In 1752 the thesis of one abbé de Prades was censured by the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne as well as by the Archbishop of Paris; it was condemned to be burned by the Paris Parliement; and Charles de Caylus, Bishop of Auxerre, circulated a Pastoral Letter against it. Diderot, posing as the abbé, wrote a *Defense* of the thesis in the form of a reply to the Bishop's

1.2.2 On several occasions Hobbes does speak of a state " . . before such time as men had engag'd themselves by any Covenants or Bonds . ," and he refers to that state as the "bare" or "meere" state of nature.[11] His sometime secretary, Samuel Sorbière, in whose French translation of the *De Cive* Rousseau would have studied Hobbes, renders "bare state of nature" as *état pure-*

Pastoral Letter. The following passage from that *Defense* illustrates the confusion that could result from wittingly or unwittingly running the two senses of "pure state of nature" together. Again, readers familiar with the *Second Discourse* will recognize verbal echoes of these lines in it.

> It seems to me that before accusing me of substituting some fantastic being for man [as depicted] in *Genesis*, it would have been more to the point to inquire whether my thesis dealt with the first man, or with one of his descendants; with man placed in the earthly paradise, or with man wandering over the face of the earth; with innocent man, enlightened and favored with the most extraordinary gifts from heaven, or with corrupted man, banished, and emerging with difficulty from dark ignorance. If M. D'Auxerre had taken this trouble, he would have seen that since man as he now is, is the only man known and acknowledged by the adversaries I had to combat, it was the only man I could place before them; for a discussion can only begin with agreement on some point; and there simply cannot be two reasonable sentiments about the present condition of human nature viewed in terms of its intellectual faculties and the origin of its knowledge. He would have seen that, since I had to derive the successive progress of these [intellectual faculties and knowledge], and to bring man from the moment when he is without any ideas, to the pitch of perfection when he is acquainted even with the profundities of religion; from the point of imbecile nature when he appears to be lower than a number of animals, to the state of dignity when he so to speak has his head in the heavens and is raised by revelation to the rank of the celestial intelligences; I could not take as my model the man who emerged perfect from the hands of his creator, and by himself alone possessed in one instant more enlightenment than his entire posterity together will acquire in all future centuries. If M. D'Auxerre had condescended to make this one observation, he would have spared me many other observations; and his long *Pastoral Letter* would have been shortened by some twenty pages of commonplaces about Adam's prerogatives and the advantages of the *state of pure nature* which clearly show that the point of my thesis escaped him; that he has not understood anything about what modern philosophers mean by the *state of nature*, and that one could easily hold ideas that are more catholic than his about how theologians should understand the *state of nature*.
>
> In the meantime, and until the Sorbonne instructs him regarding the latter, I shall inform him of what the former is according to the new philosophy. The *state of nature* is not the state of Adam before his fall; that momentary state must be the object of our faith and not of our reasoning. What is at issue among philosophers is the actual condition of Adam's descendants considered *in herd* (*en troupeau*), and not *in society*; a condition which is not only possible but remains actual, in which all savages live, with which it is entirely permissible to start when one sets out to discover philosophically, not the vanished grandeur of human nature, but the origin and order of its knowledge, in which one recognizes that man has distinctive qualities that raise him above the beast; others that he has in common with it and that keep him on the same level [as it]; finally, defects or, if one prefers, less lively qualities that lower him beneath [it]; a condition which lasts more or less long depending on the circumstances that may lead men to form political societies and to move from the *herd state* to the *state of society*. By *herd state (état de troupeau)* I mean the state where men, brought together by the simple prompting of nature, like monkeys, deer, and crows, etc., have not formed any conventions that subject them to duties, nor established any authority that might compel compliance with conventions; and where ressentiment—that passion with which nature, which attends to the preservation of the beings, has endowed every individual in order to render him formidable to his kind—is the only curb of injustice." *Suite de l'apologie de M. l'abbé de Prades*," in Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, Diekman, Proust, Varloot, eds., Vol. IV (1978), pp. 333f.

ment naturel or "purely natural state." The difference between "the state of nature" without qualification and "the mere or bare state of nature" consists in this, then, that while the state of nature as such is the state of men without common political bonds, the mere or bare state of nature is the state of men without any acknowledged bonds whatsoever. It would for example, be a state without—prior to—the family properly so called, insofar as the family properly so called is by institution.[12] However, even in the *De Cive*, Hobbes does not consistently adhere to the distinction which he here draws between the "bare" or "meere" state of nature, and the state of nature as such. For the most part he uses only the more general expression, and refers to any state short of civil society as the "state of nature."

In conformity with that practice, Pufendorf, in his turn, defines the state of nature as the state

> in which everyone is conceived to find himself at birth by abstracting everything that changes the face of Human Life [and is] established either purely humanly or inspired to man by the Divinity; and among these we understand not only the various Arts together with all the commodities of Life in general, but also Civil Societies ;

so that man in that state would be as if he had fallen from the skies,

> . . entirely abandoned to himself; whose qualities of Mind and Body are as limited as they are now found to be when they have neither been cultivated, nor been assisted by his kind or favored by the extraordinary care of the Divinity.

Pufendorf also refers to the state of nature so defined as "the state of nature considered purely and simply in itself.[13] He draws a sharp distinction between this state of nature—" . . . discovered by Reason alone . "—and " . . . the more particular and detailed enlightenment provided by Revelation on the same subject . . . "

Elsewhere Diderot refers to what he here calls the *herd state* as the "pure state of nature": *Essai sur le mérite et la vertu*, Part II, sect. 2, note 2; on "herds," cp. Rousseau, *Discourse, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, p. 172, cp. pp. 173, 215, Meier p. 178, cp. pp. 180, 328; but also Plato, *Statesman* 264a–267c; Aristotle, *Politics* I, 2, 1253a8, *History of Animals* 487b34, 488a20; on "celestial intelligences," see also the last paragraph of Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note X, quoted on p. 27 above.

11. *De Cive* I, x and Annotation; cf. *ibid.* II 18; V 2; and VIII I as well as *Leviathan* ch. 20 (p. 103 of the 1651 edition, cited in n. 16 below); Robinson Crusoe was at first " reduced to a meer state of nature." Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Penguin, 1965), p. 130.

12. Leibniz therefore says, "Mr. Hobbes calls the *natural state (l'état naturel)* that which has the least art; perhaps not taking into account that human nature in its perfection involves art (*porte l'art avec elle*)." *Theodicy*, I, 221.

13. *Droit de la nature et des gens*, J. Barbeyrac tr. (second ed., revised and considerably enlarged. Amsterdam: Pierre de Coup, 1712), II, ii, §§ 1, 2, 4. Pufendorf goes farther than the Hobbes of *De Cive*, according to whom men in the state of nature are as if earthborn with respect to "engagements" only: "Let us return again to the state of nature, and consider men as if but even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly (*like* Mushromes) come to full maturity without all kind of engagement to each other." *De Cive* VIII, 1.

> For example: in order to represent Man's primitive constitution, from which the foundation of natural right is deduced, one abstracts from the *Creation* that is taught us by Sacred History, and figures the first Man fallen, so to speak, from the skies, and [possessed of] the same inclinations men nowadays have on coming into the world; since reasoning alone can take us no farther .
>
> . Hence I say that in expounding Natural Right one has to consider *Man as he is since the Fall* . [14]

Rousseau accepts Pufendorf's premises and sometimes even uses the same formulations as, for example, when he, in his turn, speaks of mankind and of the earth "abandoned to itself" (pp. 140, 142). Further, like Pufendorf, he follows Hobbes's practice of for the most part referring to the state without any common superior or acknowledged authority "on earth,"[15] in other words the state where "each is judge is his own case," as the "state of nature." However, sometimes, as in the first passage quoted (pp. 24f.), he calls the state without "moral or political inequalities," hence without "moral or political" authority or rule, and indeed without any "moral" relations whatsoever, the "pure" state of nature.[16] Formally, then, his "pure" state of nature corresponds to Hobbes'

14. *Les devoirs de l'homme et du citoyen (The Duties of Man and Citizen)*, J. Barbeyrac tr. (Amsterdam: Pierre de Coup, 1735); Author's Preface, §§ III, VIII; cp. the passage from the Exordium of the *Second Discourse* cited p. 24 above; Pufendorf's statement can be read as an almost word for word rejection of the orthodox position: cp. e.g. Suarez, cited in note 5 above; indeed: "Among other things, dear Sir, I find it rather amusing that he [sc. Veit Ludwig v. Seckendorf] sets forth the theory of the state of integrity [or pure nature]; for when that theory is stated distinctly in terms of our theologians' hypotheses, human life appears so different from what it is now, that there is scarcely any agreement between our natural laws and theirs." ("Unter andern m[ein] h[ochgeschätzter] H[err] sachen gefället mir wohl, daß Derselbe [sc. v. Seckendorf] theoriam status integri ausführet; denn wenn solche ex hypothesibus nostrorum Theologorum distincte delineiret wird, bekommet das menschliche leben eine solche differente gestalt von dem itzigen, daß unsere leges naturales zu ienen sich am wenigsten reimen soll.") Letter to Christian Thomasius, 9 April 1687, *Briefe Samuel Pufendorfs an Christian Thomasius (1687–1693)*, E. Gigas ed. (Munich & Leipzig: Oldenbourg, 1897), p. 5.

15. For example "Religion commands us to believe that since God himself drew Men out of the State of Nature immediately after the creation, they are unequal because he wanted them to be so." *Second Discourse*, Exordium, in *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, pp. 139f.; " promises to do or to forbear are conventional acts which go outside the state of nature and restrict freedom." *Emile* II, *OC* IV, 336, Bloom tr., p. 101; " by claiming the right to be obeyed [,] children leave the state of nature almost upon being born . " *Nouvelle Héloise*, V. 3, *OC* II, 571.

16. In addition to the passage from the Exordium (p. 139) quoted on p. 24 above, the expression "pure state of nature" occurs in the following contexts: " the immense distance that must have separated the pure state of nature from the need for Languages " p. 154, Meier p. 120; " . the goodness suited to the pure state of Nature was no longer the goodness suited to nascent Society . " p. 176, Meier p. 192, which compare with " the pure state of nature is that of all [states] in which men would be the least wicked, the most happy, and the most numerous on earth." Unpublished so-called *Political Fragment*, II # 1, *OC* III, p. 475, Meier p. 422 #14; " a new State of Nature, different from that which we began in that the first was the state of Nature in its purity, whereas this last is the fruit of an excess of corruption." p. 197, Meier p. 262; " whether in the pure State of Nature the woman is commonly with child again . " and " it is rather difficult to believe that chance encounters or the impulsion of temperament alone would have produced as frequent effects in the pure State of Nature as in that of conjugal Society "

"bare" or "meere" state of nature, and it corresponds even more closely to Pufendorf's "state of nature considered purely and simply in itself:" it, too, is a state without—and conceivably prior to—rule, bonds, covenants, and hence artifice or conventions of any kind.

In sum: the alternative to the theologians' state of pure nature is the state of corrupted nature, whereas the alternative to Rousseau's pure state of nature is the state of men engaged in "moral" relations with one another, and in particular the state of civil society. At the same time, Rousseau's state of nature, but especially his pure state of nature, differs from the other philosophers' conceptions of these states primarily because of his insistence on the decisive differences between pre-civil or savage man on the one hand, and civil-ized man on the other.

1.3 The greater the differences between them are assumed to be, the more problematic will be inferences based on the men around us about what men may "originally" have been. Rousseau is the first to have clearly seen, or at least to have clearly stated the central paradox of what has come to be known as historicism: that the reasons why historical inquiries are said to be necessary, are the very same reasons why such inquiries are necessarily conjectural (p. 129).

He is thus led to reflect on how difficult it is

> to disentangle what is original from what is artificial in man's present Nature, and to know accurately a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never did exist, and about which it is nevertheless necessary to have exact Notions . ("Preface," p. 130).

Note XII, #3, p. 223, Meier p. 358, which compare with Hobbes's " state of meer Nature; where there are supposed no Lawes of Matrimony; no Lawes for the Education of Children; but the Law of Nature, and the naturall inclination of the Sexes, one to another, and to their Children." *Leviathan*, ch. 20, p. 103. To my knowledge, this is the only occurrence of the expression "*state* of nature" in the *Leviathan*, where Hobbes's preferred expression is *condition* as in "natural condition" or "condition of mere nature." Rousseau did not know the *Leviathan* at first hand.

"Pure state of nature" in the exclusively formal, legal sense, does not occur in the *Second Discourse*. It does occur in the *Discourse on Political Economy*: " . as soon as one man claims to subordinate another without regard to the laws, he immediately leaves the civil state and places himself in relation to that other in the pure state of nature where obedience is never prescribed except by necessity." [19]; cp. "But if the Prince is above the laws[,] he lives in the pure state of nature and owes accounts neither to his subjects nor to anyone for any of his action." Unpublished fragment known as *The State of War*, *OC* III, p. 603.

According to some readers, any attempt to understand Rousseau's "pure" state of nature must also account for every occurrence of "primitive" as in "primitive state" or "primitive condition." Yet in at least one critical passage they are manifestly not interchangeable: *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.* p. 176, quoted on p. 36 below. However, in the *Second Discourse* "man in the pure state of nature" is interchangeable with "natural man" (*op. cit.* pp. 130, 132. 168, 207). In the *Émile*, by contrast, Rousseau warns "The difference is considerable between natural man living in the state of nature, and natural man living in the state of society" (*OC* IV, 483, Bloom, tr. p. 205), which is as much as to say that "the pure state of nature" has not the status of fact; and would seem to be the reason why the expression does not occur in the *Émile*.

Now, the state of nature broadly speaking, the state of man "without civil society," certainly did exist, does now exist, and will continue to exist. It is, most particularly, the state of "the Savage Peoples known to us" (pp. 176; 165, 173; Meier pp. 190; 156, 180).[17] But a state of man without—and conceivably prior to—any acknowledged authority, rules, covenants, or moral relations, and hence without—or prior to—artifice or convention of any kind, may well not ever have existed; it certainly does not now exist; and it is most unlikely to exist hereafter. Human life may always, everywhere, necessarily, be a mixture of the natural and the artificial or conventional, and it may be perfectly "natural" that this be so. In order to know the state of man free of artifice or convention, one is therefore compelled to conjecture.

Such conjectures will, of course, not be arbitrary. Still,

> Let my Readers . . . not imagine that I dare flatter myself with having seen what seems to me so difficult to see. I have initiated some arguments; I have hazarded some conjectures . . . (p 130).

However compelling one may find Rousseau's conjectures in Part I of the *Discourse,* they remain conjectures. He knew that they are conjectures; he said that they are conjectures; and he very clearly spelled out the reasons why they necessarily are conjectures quite independently of the biblical account, of the risks involved in contradicting or "abstracting from" it, or of any rhetorical considerations. They are conjectures because of the nature of the problem he set himself.[18]

The difficult *rhetorical* question is: when—and why—does Rousseau fail to make it clear whether he is speaking about the "pure" state of nature or about the state of nature without qualifications. One effect, and presumably one intention of his failure to do so, is to leave readers with the impression that his account is far more radical than it in fact is. But unless one remains attentive to the distinction between the two states, it is impossible to make consistent sense of the *Discourse*, let alone of its relation to Rousseau's other writings on these subjects.

17. Rousseau is not alone in using "savage" interchangeably with "in the state of nature," in contrast to "in the civil state" and hence "civil-ized"; cp. for example, Hobbes, *De Cive,* VIII, 18; or " . in the wild State of Nature . " " wild People must have an Instinct to understand one another, which they lose when they are civiliz'd." Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, Part II, The Sixth Dialogue; F. B. Kaye ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), Vol. II, pp. 286, 285; and some naturalists—*e.g.* Buffon and, a full century later, Darwin—classify animals as either "in the state of nature" or "domestic." The political implications are clear, and Rousseau repeatedly calls attention to them.

18. Harald Weinrich reaches a similar conclusion on strictly linguistic grounds: the verb forms in Part I of the *Discourse* are primarily discussive (*besprechend*), and in Part II predominantly narrative (*erzählend*). "Erzählte Philosophie oder Geschichte des Geistes: linguistische Bemerkungen zu Descartes und Rousseau." *Geschichte—Ereignis und Erzählung*, R. Koselleck and W.-D. Stempel eds. (Munich: W. Fink, 1973), pp. 411–26; see pp. 424f.

2. In the last paragraph of Part I Rousseau considers how best to proceed when

> . . . two facts given as real are to be connected by a sequence of intermediate facts . . . that are unknown or believed to be so . . . (p 169).

In Meier's view the "two facts given as real" are what he calls "the starting point" and "the end point" of the development which Rousseau sets out to reconstitute in the *Discourse*. He takes the "starting point" to be the account of man in the "pure" state of nature that took up so much of Part I of the *Discourse*, and the "end point" to be the account of man in contemporary despotisms. Although he acknowledges that the first is not a "fact given as real" in the same sense that the second is, he proceeds, here and throughout his commentary, as if it were.[19] Is it a fact in any sense of the term? Does not Rousseau's remark about the "two facts given as real . . . " allow for, indeed does it not require a different, more natural and more plausible reading?

Rousseau is outlining what he proposes to do in Part II of the *Discourse*, and how that plan is related to what he did in Part I:

> to consider and bring together the various contingencies that can have perfected human reason while deteriorating the species, make a being wicked while making it sociable, and from so remote a beginning, finally bring man and the world to the point where we now find them (p. 168, Meier, p. 166).

He then goes on to review some of the difficulties he faces in carrying out this plan in view of

> . . . the impossibility of on the one hand rejecting certain hypotheses without, on the other, being in a position to attach to them the certainty of facts; . . . two facts given as real [that] are to be connected by a series of intermediate facts

In the context of this program, it seems more natural and plausible to read the remark about the "two facts given as real" as saying: "man and the world

19. See Meier, footnote 212, p. 168; cp. footnotes 94, 202, 215, 448; so, too, L. Strauss: "At the end of the First Part of the bipartite work, Rousseau calls the state of nature a 'fact': the problem consists in linking 'two facts given as real' 'by a sequence of intermediate and actually or supposedly unknown facts.' The given facts are the state of nature and contemporary despotism." *Natural Right and History, op. cit.*, p. 267 n. 32; so, too, V. Goldschmidt, *Anthropologie et politique: Les principes du système de Rousseau* (Paris: Vrin, 1974), pp. 390f., 755. J. Derrida, following J. Mosconi, also interprets Rousseau's pure state of nature as the initial or earliest, i.e. "factual" stage of the state of nature. Most of the difficulties he encounters in his deconstruction of Rousseau's accounts of origins can be traced to that interpretation. A further problem with that interpretation is perhaps most succinctly indicated by the fact that Derrida routinely refers to Rousseau's pure state of nature as the state of pure nature, an expression and a concept that may be found in Buffon (see p. 55), Voltaire, or Diderot (see note 10 above), but never in Rousseau: *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), e.g., pp. 329f., 337, 357f., 387; *Of Grammatology*, G. Spivak tr. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 231f., 236f., 252f., 274; J. Mosconi "Analyse et genèse: Regards sur la théorie du devenir de l'entendement au XVIIIe siècle (1)," *Cahiers pour l'analyse* No. 4, 1966, p. 75.

. [at] the point where we now find them" is one fact given as real: there are political societies, some of which have disintegrated into the most extreme despotism and may therefore be said to have returned to the state of nature in the formal sense of that expression (p. 197). It is another fact given as real that there are "savages" whose way of life is such as modern travellers and ancient sources have reported; in other words, there is a historical, that is, a pre-political "state of nature."

In this factual state of nature,

> . . everyone punishing the contempt shown him in a manner proportionate to the stock he set by himself, vengeances became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel. This is precisely the state reached by most of the Savage Peoples known to us; and it is for want of drawing adequate distinctions between ideas and noticing how far these Peoples already were from the first state of Nature, that many hastily concluded that man is naturally cruel and that he needs political order in order to be made gentle [*l'adoucir*], whereas nothing is as gentle [*doux*] as he in his primitive state when, placed by Nature at equal distance from the stupidity of the brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man . (p. 176).

The many who drew this hasty conclusion erred because they attributed to savage man the needs and passions of civilized man. They fallaciously reasoned *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. As a result of this error, they also erred regarding natural right and the true foundations of the body politic (pp. 131, 132, 133, 153, 159f., 224f.). In particular, they mistakenly assumed that the manifest cruelty and bloodthirstiness of most of the savage peoples known to us are ingredient to human existence. They failed to recognize that they are derivative, the by-products of complex and possibly contingent developments in men's material and "moral" lives. They failed to recognize that "most of the savage peoples known to us" are not men in the "first state of nature." Reason and tradition alike point to conditions more primitive than those of the savage peoples known to us. Rousseau therefore assigns most of the savage peoples known to us to a second stage of the state of nature, a stage which begins with the establishment of separate, stable, sedentary families settled in huts (p. 173), and which by and by gives way to a third and final stage in the state of nature with the introduction of metallurgy and agriculture (p. 177), the enclosure and division of land (pp. 179, 170), and the attendant and irreversible division of labor (pp. 177, 179f.). The second or middle stage of the state of nature, the stage of "most of the savage peoples known to us," is also the stage of "beginning" or "nascent" society (pp. 176, 182).[20] In the preceding, first stage of the state of nature, men lead a nomadic life in more or less loosely structured bands or "troops" (pp. 173, 262f.) possessing languages "approximately like those which various savage nations still have today" (p. 173), languages which

20. But never "société sauvage": Meier, footnotes 237, 238.

contain at least some articulated, that is, conventional and instituted sounds, and which therefore count as human languages proper in the strictest sense (pp. 173, 244, 248). Their life is certainly not simply free of artifice and conventions. It certainly does not represent the "pure" state of nature, understood as the state without—and conceivably prior to—all artifice and convention. Rousseau never claims to have any facts regarding such a state or stage. The only means by which to get to know it, the only means by which "to disentangle what is original from what is artificial in man's present nature," is, as he frequently says, to "meditate" on the available facts and alternatives, and to try to frame hypotheses which cannot be refuted, even if they cannot be asserted as facts. The quest for the putative pure state of nature is a thought-experiment, a systematic "bracketing" of all artifice and of all moral needs and relations; and hence also of all the conditions necessary for artifice and moral needs and relations: "[b]y stripping the Being so constituted . " (p. 141; Meier, p. 78). It is an exercise in "analysis." The course of this regressive analysis is guided by the two facts "given as real": the savages "known to us," and civil or civilized man. The most distinctive feature of this regressive analysis is the effort to avoid drawing any *post hoc ergo propter hoc* inferences as, in Rousseau's view, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, and indeed all of his predecessors did. As far as possible the conclusions of the regressive analysis will be confirmed by facts. But the farther the analysis moves beyond the state of the savages known to us, the farther the realm of fact recedes and fades into conjecture. The aim of the analysis is in any event not to establish fact. It is to extrapolate to the limits or conditions of humanity. These limits or conditions are not in any sense of the term "facts," let alone "facts given as real."[21] They are "general

21. Rousseau sketched the rhetorical and methodological strategy of the *Second Discourse* in a fragment believed to have been drafted a full ten years earlier:

> The books of the Philosophers are filled with Laws and maxims . pertaining to two general methods. One, which they call synthesis or method of composition by means of which one goes from the simple to the composite and uses to teach to others what one knows; the other which they call Analysis or method of resolution and which one uses in learning what one does not know; for example, when inquiring into a family's genealogy, one traces it backward from the present, relation by relation, ancestor by ancestor, to its origin; that is the Analytic way. After which a table is drawn up, with the one who has been discovered to be the founder of the house at its head, [and] moving forward generation by generation right up to the present, that is synthesis I would, then, wish always to begin my discussions with the weakest proofs. In some fields, the most convincing arguments are drawn from the heart of the matter itself; such are questions of Physics. Knowledge of the nature of plants may, for example, well be furthered by knowledge of the soil in which they thrive, the fluids that nourish them, their specific properties, but their mechanism and springs will never be properly known without examining them in themselves, without considering their total internal structure, their fibers, volvules, tracheae, bark, pith, leaves, flowers, fruit, roots and, in a word, all the parts that go into their makeup. In moral inquiries, by contrast, I would begin by examining the little we know about the human mind, taken in itself and considered singly, I would gropingly derive from it some few obscure and uncertain conclusions, but soon abandoning this dark labyrinth, I would hasten

causes" or "principles":[22] at a minimum, beings who are physically constituted as the human beings we know are constituted, whose needs and powers are in balance, who are therefore materially and psychologically self-sufficient, that is, free, hence morally and politically equal, and thus "good"; and who are

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to examine man in his relations and derive from them a host of luminous truths that would dispel the uncertainty of my arguments and would be seen in an even clearer light by comparison. "Idée de la méthode dans la composition d'un livre," *OC* II, pp. 1244f.; see also, *Émile* III, *OC* IV, 434, and *Émile* V, *OC* IV, 837; Bloom tr. pp. 171, 459, with the warnings: *Discourse*, 159f., and *OC* III, 611f.

Consider also Hobbes's account of his procedure:

> There is a certain Clue of Reason, whose beginning is in the dark, but by the benefit of whose Conduct, we are led as 'twere by the hand into the clearest light, so that the Principle of Tractation is to be taken from that Darknesse, and then the light to be carried thither for the irradiating its doubts. As often therefore as any writer, doth either weakly forsake that Clue, or wilfully cut it asunder, he describes the Footsteps, not of his progresse in *Science*, but of his wandrings from it. And upon this it was, that when I applyed my Thoughts to the Investigation of Naturall Justice, I was presently advertised from the very word *Justice*, (which signifies a steady Will of giving every one his *Owne*) that my first enquiry was to be, from whence it proceeded, that any man should call any thing rather his *Owne*, than *another mans*. And when I found that this proceeded not from Nature, but Consent, (for what Nature at first laid forth in common, men did afterwards distribute into severall *Impropriations*) I was conducted from thence to another Inquiry, namely to what end and upon what Impulsives, when all was equally every mans in common, men did rather think it fitting, that every man should have his Inclosure; And I found the reason was, that from a Community of Goods, there must needs arise Contention whose enjoyment should be greatest, and from that Contention all kinds of Calamities must unavoydably ensue, which by the instinct of Nature, every man is taught to shun. Having therefore thus arrived at two maximes of humane Nature, the one arising from the *concupiscible* part, which desires to appropriate to it selfe the use of those things in which all others have a joynt interest, the other proceeding from the *rationall*, which teaches every man to fly a contrenaturall Dissolution, as the greatest mischiefe that can arrive to Nature; Which Principles being laid down, I seem from them to have demonstrated by a most evident connexion, in this little work of mine, first the absolute necessity of Leagues and Contracts, and thence the rudiments both of morall and of civill Prudence. *De Cive*, Epistle Dedicatory, Warrender ed., pp. 26f.

For the background of the contrast between the analytic and the synthetic methods, see Richard Kennington, "Analytic and Synthetic Methods in Spinoza's *Ethics*," in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza. Studies in philosophy and the history of philosophy*, Vol. 7, R. Kennington ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980), pp. 293–318.

At the end of Part I of the *Discourse*, Rousseau speaks of having dug to the genuine state of nature, *le véritable état de nature* (p. 166), which Meier translates *der wahrhafte Naturzustand* (Meier, p. 161); but in his note 80, p. 166, he "quotes" that passages as if it spoke of the true—*der wahre*—state of nature, an expression which Rousseau nowhere uses; see also notes 215 and, especially, 135 and 448. A similar error unfortunately slipped into *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, p. 344, note *ad* II[4]; also, p. 29 line 7, and p. 130 line 19, where for "true" read "genuine." Admittedly it is difficult to translate *véritable* consistently; and in at least some cases, Rousseau may have chosen it in preference to *vrai* for reasons of euphony. However, that cannot have been his reason for choosing to speak about *la véritable jeunesse du Monde*, "the genuine youth of the World" (p. 177), which, as Meier notes (p. 194, note 240) directly alludes to Lucretius, but which, it must be added, does so by taking issue with him. It would seem that, at least in the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau uses *véritable* to indicate a contrast with the broad tendency of an

"perfectible"—perhaps even almost unlimitedly so (p. 149): potentially human animals, or what in hindsight will prove to have been potentially human animals.

2.1 Rousseau sometimes speaks of "natural" man as in the "animal" state, or condition. For the most part, his "animal state" more or less corresponds to Hobbes's "brutish," as in: " . . . and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[23] It is not necessarily a pre-human or even a particularly primitive human state. Most of the facts which Rousseau cites in support of his conjectures about man in the animal state are not facts about animals or putative animal beginnings, but about the savages "known to us" who are, as we have seen, "at equal distance from the stupidity of the brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man" (p. 176). Thus the very first time he mentions the "animal state", he is contrasting the development of the senses in savage and in civilized men:

> Self-preservation being almost his only care, his [*sc.* savage man's] most developed faculties must be those that primarily serve in attack and defence By contrast, the organs that are perfected only by softness and sensuality must remain in a state of coarseness which precludes his being in any way delicate; and since his senses differ in this respect, his touch and taste will be extremely crude; his sight, hearing, and smell, most subtle: Such is the animal state in general, and according to Travellers' reports, it is also the state of most Savage Peoples (p. 147; Meier, p. 96).

In other words, "the animal state" is—or, more precisely, is also—the state of peoples which, though they may not be civilized, certainly do have language, arts and artifacts, and *mœurs*, morals or customs. The hierarchy or acuity of their senses may point to the condition of the lower animals.[24] However, their moral life places them at a considerable remove from it.

The "animal state" would, then, appear to be coextensive with the "state of

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alternative account: his is the account of the *véritable état de nature* in contrast to that of the jurisconsults, of Hobbes, and of Locke, because he bases it on reflections and arguments that avoid the fallacies which his predecessors committed; so too, the *véritable jeunesse du monde* is the second, not, as Lucretius had said, the first stage in the history of man and the world; animals which unreliable travelers say are beasts, may perhaps be *véritables* savage men (p. 215).

22. On "general causes" and "principles," see *Fragments politiques, OC* III, 529, and *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, Index; cp. also *OC* III, 604 and var.(b), and "Idée de la méthode," *op. cit., OC* II, 1246. The relation of fact and principle in the *Discourse* is a central theme of Victor Goldschmidt's important study *Anthropologie et politique: Les principes du système de Rousseau*. Unfortunately his account of that relation is, in the final analysis, incoherent because he too fails to observe the distinction between the state of nature broadly speaking, and the pure state of nature; see n. 19 above.

23. *Leviathan*, ch. 13, *op. cit.*, p. 62; also "For the savage people in *America*, except the government of small Families, the concord whereof dependeth on naturall lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in this brutish manner " *idem*, p. 63.

24. Buffon had recently drawn a comparison between the acuity of man's senses and the animals': *Discours sur la nature des animaux* (1753) (*Discourse on the Nature of Animals*), in *Œuvres philosophiques*, J. Piveteau ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 325b36–326b18.

nature." At times Rousseau extrapolates from this state to the conjectural "pure" state of nature:

> Savage Man . will then begin with purely animal functions: (X) to perceive and to sense will be his first state, which he will have in common with all animals. To will and not to will, to desire and to fear will be the first and almost the only operations of his soul . .
>
> the only evils he fears are pain, and hunger; I say pain, and not death; for an animal will never know what it is to die, and the knowledge of death and of its terrors was one of man's first acquisitions on moving away from the animal condition (pp. 149f.; Meier, pp. 104, 106).

Regardless, now, of how this remark about the animals' ignorance of death is to be reconciled with Rousseau's account of pity (pp. 160f.), the claim that animals are ignorant of it is, as Starobinski rightly reminds us in his Pléiade edition note, a commonplace. Human beings who are—or are presumed to be—ignorant of death may be said to be in the animal state. That is why Fontenelle had but lately spoken in these terms of a boy born deaf-mute.

> He did not really know what death is, and he never thought about it. He led a purely animal life, entirely absorbed by sensible and present objects, and by the few ideas he received through the eyes.

"Animal" here refers to the condition of a human being, albeit to that of a human being whose capacities are limited—or, more precisely, undeveloped —precisely because, as Fontenelle points out, he lacks language. But as Fontenelle goes on to report, before long the boy in question gained hearing, and as soon as he did, he learned language and achieved full human status. Both Condillac and Buffon had quoted and discussed this report in contexts which Rousseau knew well. Indeed Condillac speaks of it in a chapter specifically devoted to the issue which Rousseau raises in the immediate sequel to the remark about death in the animal and the human condition: the confirmation of conjecture by fact.[25]

When he does draw comparisons between animal and human behavior at its most primitive, Rousseau invariably does so with qualifications (pp. 160f., 173); or, as when he compares animal and human sexuality, he does so in order to underscore the differences, not the similarities between man and the other animals (pp. 221–23 regarding which see pp. 51f. below; 165f.; cp. 153 with 222f.).[26]

Formally speaking, man may be said to be in the animal state or condition as long as—to the extent that—he remains under the sway of exclusively

25. Buffon, *De l'homme*, M. Duchet ed. (Paris: Maspéro, 1971), pp. 199f.; Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* Part I, section 4, chapter 2, § 13.

26. In contrast, for example, to Plato, *Laws* VIII, 836c; a passage cited by Pufendorf in connection with his assertion that conclusions about human conduct based on animal behavior persuade only the vulgar: *Droit, op. cit.* II, 3, § 1 *i.f.*

"physical" impulsions, that is to say subject to the law of nature or of the stronger (pp. 132f., 175f., 184f.); he may be said to have left the animal state insofar as he acts in terms of "moral" relations and constraints within the context of society and in particular of civil society, in other words insofar as he becomes "sociable" and civil-ized.[27]

Certainly nothing Rousseau says about man in the animal state or condition permits us to conclude that he thinks that man in the "pure" state of nature, man isolated, speechless, and without artifice or moral relations of any kind, is a fact "given as real." He never goes beyond positing and discussing man either in the "pure" state of nature, or in what by analogy might be called the "pure animal state"—"the state of animality" (p. 224)—as an hypothesis or a conjecture.[28]

2.2 In a Note which many readers have found especially striking, Rousseau, reflecting on the "varieties which a thousand causes may produce, and indeed have produced in the human species," is led to wonder whether

> various animals similar to [or like] men [*semblabes aux hommes*] which travellers have without much observation taken for Beasts, either because of some differences they noticed in their outward conformation, or merely because these Animals did not speak, might not indeed be genuine Savage men [*de véritables hommes Sauvages*] whose race, dispersed in the woods in ancient times, had had no occasion to develop its virtual faculties, had not acquired any degree of perfection, and was still in the primitive state of Nature (Note X, pp. 214f.).[29]

The reports which prompted these musings and which Rousseau goes on to quote at some length, tell of animals similar to man ([*qui*] *ont une ressem-*

27.

This passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and by endowing his actions with the morality which they previously lacked. It is only when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion and right succeeds appetite that man, who until then had looked only after himself, sees that he is forced to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although in this state he deprives himself of many advantages he holds from nature, he gains such great ones in return, his faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas enlarged, his feelings ennobled, his entire soul exalted to such a degree that if the abuses of this new condition did not often degrade him below that from which he emerged, he should ceaselessly bless the happy moment that wrenched him from it forever, and out of a stupid and limited animal made an intelligent being and a man. *Of the Social Contract*, I, 8; cp. *Geneva ms.*, *OC* III, p. 292.

28. Writing to the Archbishop of Paris, Rousseau says that in the *Discourse on Inequality* he describes man as initially "bête," that is to say "stupid" or "dumb," but not, as some commentators erroneously and tendentiously have it, "a beast": *A Christophe de Beaumont*, *OC* IV, 936; consider also *Essay on the Origin of Languages, (Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, p. 268n) and compare with *Discourse on Inequality*, Note X (*ibid.*, p. 217). Meier, incidentally, very correctly calls attention to the fact that Rousseau never refers to man as a beast.

29. This is the Note which Rousseau appended to the passage quoted on p. 40 and which opens: "Savage Man will, then, begin with purely animal functions. "

blance exacte avec l'homme) walking through the forest in Indian file, gathering around fires, building themselves shelters, and burying their dead; of African "orangs" so similar to man (*si semblable[s] à l'homme*) that some travellers—but not the natives—thought them offsprings of humans and monkeys; of stories that some of these beings force themselves on girls and women; and of Merolla's report that the natives occasionally capture savage men and women, which Purchas, after many others, says must be the Ancients' *satyrs*. The picture labelled "Orang Outan" accompanying these reports in the *Histoire des Voyages* in which Rousseau read them, depicts a strikingly human-looking—"anthropomorphic"—being. It is not difficult to see how Rousseau, reflecting on such reports, might have been led to conjecture that they are really reports of encounters between members of the same species who, although they look or act strange and wild in one another's eyes and especially in the eyes of the traders and adventurers on whose accounts he for the most part depends, are nonetheless human. Nor is it difficult to see how he might have gone on to wonder why the travellers who report about animals that exhibit such striking similarities to our species (*des conformités frappantes avec l'espèce humaine*) should nevertheless be reluctant to call them human beings. He is thus led to suggest—discreetly, as the commentators point out, but also, one cannot help suspect, tongue in cheek—that the question whether orangs or similar animals belong to the human species could be settled to the satisfaction of the "crudest observers" by a simple experiment which, as he adds, could be performed innocently only if its outcome were known from the outset.

In order to understand such musings, one has to bear in mind that the question whether orangs or similar monkeys (*singes*) might be lost tribes of primitive men simply did not mean for Rousseau and his contemporaries what it means for us. There is no plain French or German equivalent for the distinction between "monkey" and "ape". As Tinland, in particular, has pointed out,[30] and as Meier reminds us, the most learned men of the time had seen fewer apes and knew less about them than any visitor of a modern zoo. They did not even know enough about them to challenge the travellers' reports of orangs in Africa. They did, however, know, and Rousseau specifically mentions, that *orang-outan* is Malay for *man of the woods* (p. 216): and he certainly knew that *homo sylvestris* is how Lucretius referred to "the first men."[31] So that when he wonders whether the orang might be a variety of man he must be understood to wonder whether certain animals described by travellers as closely resembling man—Rousseau's and Linnaeus's "anthropomorphic"—and called "men of the woods" by the natives who knew them best, might not be just that. That does not seem to be such an extravagantly bold suggestion. Nor does it seem particularly bold to go on to wonder in this context

30. F. Tinland, *L'homme sauvage* (Paris: Payot, 1968), pp. 94–97.

31. *On the Nature of Things*, C. Bailey ed., *e.g.* V, 967, 970.

whether other apes, called pongos and enjokos, and said to be like the orang, might not be primitive human beings. Nor, again, does it seem particularly bold to wonder whether the travellers called certain animals apes—or, more precisely, "monkeys"—rather than men because they were stupid. After all, he quite rightly stresses that most of these travellers are themselves not particularly bright or trustworthy. Rousseau's point is not that human beings are "really" apes, let alone that they are "descended" from apes, but that most traders, adventurers, and missionaries are likely to be crude observers who might well mistake unfamiliar-looking-and-acting members of their own kind (*leurs semblables*) for apes, just as Purchas, the compiler of one of the major anthologies of travellers' reports, calls "satyrs" the beings which Merolla, a sensible, educated, Franciscan missionary, reporting at firsthand, said were "Savage men and women" (pp. 216, 218). His concern in this Note, and throughout the *Discourse* as a whole, is not with what man may have in common with beasts or, for that matter, with "celestial intelligences," but with what differentiates them from beasts and celestial intelligences, with the full range and variety of humankind; and it is out of this concern that he invites his reader to consider the possibility that some of the beings which crude observers call apes, or sylvans, or fauns or satyrs, may, as he put it in a later addition to the text, prove to be "neither beasts nor gods, but men" (p. 218; cp. p. 213, cited p. 27 above).

Meier recognizes how central this concern with the full range and variety of mankind is to the *Discourse*, and he very correctly points out that Rousseau deliberately excludes from consideration questions about evolution or transformism which contemporary readers are particularly likely to raise. Yet his own emphases and comments repeatedly prompt his readers to raise these very questions. In particular, he maintains that Rousseau's readiness to envisage the possibility that some of the beings which crude observers call apes or satyrs may be human beings marks the culminating point of the *Discourse*, and that the fact that it does conclusively proves the *Discourse*'s "philosophically radical and scientifically serious character."[32] By imposing this particular order on the text, by reading it as asserting that it is "a fact given as real" that man's "starting point" is the state of animality (note 211, pp. 168f.), and as culminating in the conjecture that orangs, or pongos, or enjokos, are that starting point, Meier invites the transformist or even evolutionist reading of the

32. Meier believes that Rousseau thought so too, and that he indicated as much by placing these reflections at the very center of the Notes which he appended to the text: in the middle paragraph of his middle Note (Meier, *op. cit.*, note 409). He gives no other evidence of his claim that this is the philosophical highpoint of the *Discourse*. Yet in the very same passage in which he stresses the importance of the message in the middle paragraph, he acknowledges that Rousseau had stated the general point fully and clearly in the very first paragraph of his Note. The fact that he restates it in the middle paragraph would therefore seem to be a case of order arising by chance; as well as to confirm Montaigne's warning in the title of the middle essay of the *Essays*.

Discourse which elsewhere he expressly—and rightly—says Rousseau had excluded from consideration (cp. notes 92, 94).[33]

Certainly Rousseau's conjecture, if that is not too strong a term, in Note X, that troops of what travellers say are apes, might be lost tribes of primitive man appears to be more radical than the superficially similar conjecture at the end of Part I of the *Discourse* where, speaking about presumably isolated, self-sufficient individuals in a world in which everyone was in the same position, he says that he considers it possible that natural man's potential faculties might have remained eternally dormant (p. 168, Meier p. 166). In Note X, by contrast, he is evidently prepared to envisage the bolder and more puzzling possibility that "perfectibility" and man's other potential faculties might remain dormant even in individuals and groups in contact with men possessing language, arts, and an at least rudimentary, "nascent" society. In part the conjecture appears to be especially bold because, to repeat, we read it as if it were about orangs, chimpanzees, and gorillas, and as if Rousseau knew that it was; whereas what he did know was how little he and his contemporaries knew about these beings, and he repeatedly stresses that the reports which set him to musing on this subject are apt to be misdescriptions of human beings who are

33. It is instructive, in this connection, to contrast his conjectures with Kant's:

> What might be nature's aim in letting children come into the world with much crying, since in the bare state of nature [*im rohen Naturzustande*] this exposes both mother and child to the utmost danger? For a wolf or even a pig attracted by that cry could devour the child if the mother is away or exhausted by the birth. Indeed, no animal other than man (as he now is), would *loudly announce* its existence at birth, which seems to have been ordered by the wisdom of nature with a view to preserving their species. Therefore it has to be assumed that in the early [or first] epoch of nature the children of this class of animals were not noisy; but that their being noisy made its appearance later, in a second epoch, when both parents had already attained the [level of] culture [required] for domestic life, without our knowing how and by means of what causes nature brought about such a development. This observation leads far: *e.g.*, to wondering whether, in the wake of a great natural revolution, this second epoch might not be followed by a third, when an orang outan or a chimpanzee might fashion the organs used in walking, manipulating objects, and speaking, into a human frame containing an organ for the use of the understanding, and gradually develop itself through social culture. *Anthropologie*, Part II, section E, note. Cassirer ed., VIII, p. 222; M. McGregor tr. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), p. 188.

Quite aside from the fact that for transparent prudential or rhetorical reasons Kant projects into the hypothetical future what he clearly thinks occurred in the past, he here speaks about what he calls the bare state of nature categorically and as a fact given as real; Rousseau never speaks that way about what he calls the pure state of nature; and Kant's frankly transformist speculation is without parallel in Rousseau. The only possible hint of anything like it in the *Discourse* is the word "still" at the beginning of Note III:

> The changes which a long practice of walking on two feet may have produced in man's structure, the similarities that can still be observed between his arms and the forelegs of Quadrupeds, and the inference drawn from the way they walk, may have given rise to some doubt which way of walking must have been most natural to us (p. 201).

However, the entire point of the Note is that the upright posture has always been natural to man.

only slightly—if at all—stranger than, for example, the pygmies must have been—and indeed were—to the travellers who first came across them. He is skeptical about the reports that they cannot maintain a fire (p. 227; cp. 268*). The fact that they do not speak may no more prove that they lack language, than the fact that children crawl on all fours or that feral men run about on their hands and feet proves that man is a quadruped (pp. 218, 216; 201–203). Rousseau's conjecture in this Note is apt to appear especially puzzling because we tend to think of humankind as one. Yet insofar as these conjectures point to speculations about human origins, they point in the direction of the polygenist rather than of the transformist hypothesis. Rousseau had introduced the conjectures in this Note with the reflection that both ancient and modern reports very clearly indicate that prior to conquests, migrations, and commerce, when peoples lived more isolated, they differed in appearance, size, shape, bearing, and ways far more than they do now (pp. 214f.).[34] When, after these reflections, he goes on to wonder whether the beings which travellers have said were beasts might not be savage men anciently "dispersed" in the woods, the remark has to be read in conjunction with the remark in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*:

> I call 'first' the times of men's dispersion, regardless of the age one chooses to assign to mankind at that period (p. 260, n.1),

and the indication, two pages below, that the dispersion is post-Noahdic (pp. 262f., 264). In other words, he indicates that he is in effect bracketing the Bible's ten antediluvian generations; hence he is in effect also bracketing the Bible's account of a single common origin of mankind. Rousseau was certainly acquainted with polygenist speculations.[35] The conjecture that troops of apes

34. Cp. *Émile* v, *OC* IV, p. 830, Bloom tr. pp. 453f. and *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, p. 267*.

35. In a later Note (XVI, p. 228) he refers to an episode from the *Relation du Groenland* (1647) by the most notorious early polygenist, Isaac de la Peyrère, although he prudently avoids naming the work or its author. La Peyrère and Grotius engaged in a polemic about whether the people inhabiting America when Columbus discovered it, were native to the Continent or Greenlanders who had migrated. Grotius argued that they were Greenlanders—or Norwegians, or Icelanders: *De Origine Gentium Americanorum* (1642). La Peyrère argued that they were not, and could not be (*Relation, op. cit.*, pp. 272, 275f.). The episode which Rousseau cites from the *Relation* recalls that debate. It tells of Greenlanders and Icelanders who had been taken no farther than to Denmark, where they became so homesick that some died of it outright, while others died trying to swim back home. The moral of the story is that people so attached to their homeland would certainly not have settled in faraway America. One issue in the debate was whether the Americans were descended from Adam, or not. Grotius held that to deny that they were was to undermine religion. La Peyrère was on record denying on scriptural grounds that they need have been: *Men Before Adam, op. cit.*, ch. VIII; *A Theological Systeme, op. cit.*, Book IV, ch. 14. In a later addition to the *Discourse*, Rousseau refers by name to Jan de Laët, the other polygenist who was engaged in a polemic with Grotius on how America might first have been populated (*Discourse, Replies, Languages*, p. 147n). Regarding the polygenist thesis, see also Pufendorf, *Droit*, II, 2, §§ 7, 8. Buffon, after reviewing the arguments for and against America's having been settled by migrations from Greenland or across the Bering Strait, concludes with the elegant equivocation

might be lost tribes of primitive men is perhaps less implausible in the context of the polygenist hypothesis and its corollary, that the varieties of man may be different subspecies. Be that as it may.

The question whether orangs, pongos, enjokos or, for that matter, satyrs, and fauns are varieties of man—regardless of how such varieties are accounted for—might be answered by mating one of them with an acknowledged human being. Rousseau gives no indication of what he expects the outcome of such an experiment to be. While he leaves open the possibility that orangs and satyrs might be men, he is careful to leave equally open the possibility that they might not be. He says no more than that the outcome would convince "the crudest observers." Since throughout much of this long Note he explains why he thinks that most travellers are crude observers who cannot be trusted when they say that orangs and similar creatures are apes or satyrs, he is clearly inviting his reader to conclude that the outcome of this experiment would convince even men of the meanest capacity that very Calibans may be human beings. But it is not at all evident that he expects the outcome to settle the issue for reasonable observers. As he points out, the true outcome could, in any event, not be known for at least one, and possibly not for several more generations. For it would remain to be seen whether there is an offspring; and, in case there is one, whether it is a mere sport of nature, a "monster" in the language of this Note, or whether it can have offsprings of its own. Let us suppose that it can have them, and so proves to be a member of the species.[36] That would be the only fact which the experiment can possibly establish. It certainly cannot transform the conjectures about the pure state of nature into fact, any more than it can transform into fact the conjecture that orangs or similar beings might be lost tribes of savage men anciently dispersed in the woods who have lived for centuries on end in herds or troops in at least occasional contact with native populations, without developing any of their virtual faculties.

2.2.1 Once we enter into the spirit of such conjectures, we have to allow that if the issue of the experiment should prove to be a human being, its "animal" parent may well be a descendent of outcasts from human communities who after several generations forgot language and whatever arts they may

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that, "even independently of the theological reasons," the Americans' origin "is the same as our own." *De l'homme*, M. Duchet ed., p. 311, cp. pp. 309–21; cp. Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs*, ch. 146 (i.p.). For a detailed and thoughtful early account of these debates, see Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, "Dissertation préliminaire sur l'Origine des Amériquains," *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roy dans l'Amérique septentrionnale*, Paris: Nyon Fils, 1744, Vol. I, pp. 1–43; the most authoritative current account of these debates is Guilliano Glozzi, *Adamo e il nuovo mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia comme ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500–1700)*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1977.

36. "A species [is] nothing but a constant succession of individuals that are similar [*semblables*] and together reproduce " Buffon, *Histoire naturelle*, Vol. IV (1753), article "The Donkey," in *Œuvres philosophiques, op. cit.*, p. 356a52–54. For full references to the relevant learned literature, see *e.g.* Meier, nn. 406f.

have possessed,[37] rather than the descendant of potential human beings living for countless centuries together without ever acquiring language or arts of any kind. Its being a human being who had lapsed—or relapsed—into a more primitive stage would certainly be consonant with what Rousseau means by "perfectibility."[38] It would, incidentally, also be consonant with the natives' story that apes remain silent out of prudence.[39]

Rousseau invites such speculations when, in order to underscore how unreliable he thinks the travellers are who report that orangs and pongos are apes, he adds that these same travellers would probably have said the same about a feral child who "gave no sign of reason, walked on his hands and feets, had no language, and formed sounds in no way resembling those of a man" (p. 218). Still, it is most unlikely that he thought of entire bands or troops of orangs and pongos as human beings who had relapsed from a state of greater to one of lesser "perfection." However, he does, on one occasion, appear to consider the more radical alternative of a total loss by all men of all human acquisitions. He had apparently rejected this possibility just before inviting his readers to set all the facts aside, on the grounds that the biblical account requires us to deny it.[40] Yet in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*—which

37. "Isolated individuals living on desert islands have been known to forget their own language." *Discourses, Replies, Languages*, p. 264. "At his first coming on board with us, he had so much forgot his Language for want of Use, that we could scarce understand him " Woode Rogers, reporting the rescue of Alexander Selkirk who had lived abandoned on Juan Fernandez Island for nearly four and a half years, and whose story served as Defoe's model; in Angus Ross ed., *Robinson Crusoe, op. cit.*, p. 306.

38.

> Why is man alone liable to become an imbecile? Is it not that he thus returns to his primitive state and that, whereas the Beast, which has acquired nothing and also has nothing to lose, always keeps its instinct, man, losing through old age or other accidents all that his *perfectibility* had made him acquire, thus relapses (*retombe*) lower than the Beast itself? (p. 149, Meier pp. 102–104);

cp. also Diderot's reference to " the point of imbecile nature when he [sc. man] appears to be lower than a number of animals " in the passage quoted in note 10 above.

39. Brue tells of a species of red monkeys called *Patas* by the natives who are persuaded that they are "a species of savage men who refuse to speak out of fear of being put to work and sold into slavery." *Histoire générale des voyages*, Bk. VI, ch. VI (Paris: Didot, 1746), Vol. II, p. 521; see also Bk. IX, ch. VIII (Vol. IV, p. 239).

> Yesterday I had a visit from the Pastor who, upon seeing that I spoke only in French to him, did not wish to speak to me in English, so that the interview went by with hardly a word being spoken. I rather like this expedient: I will resort to it with all my neighbours, if I have any, and even if I should learn English I will never speak anything but French to them, especially if it is my good fortune that they know not a word of it. That is more or less the ruse of the monkeys which, the Negroes say, do not wish to speak, although they are capable of doing so, for fear that they might be made to work (Rousseau to Hume, 29 March 1766, *Correspondance complète*, R. A. Leigh ed., Vol. XXIX, p. 66).

40.

> . if the Writings of Moses are granted the credence owed them by every Christian Philosopher, it has to be denied that, even before the Flood, Men were ever in the pure state of Nature,

was not published during his lifetime—he ignores these theological reservations, and refers to the dispersion of Noah's descendants as just such a relapse into the primitive condition.[41] That "relapse" is a transparent rhetorical

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unless they by some extraordinary Occurrence relapsed into it; a Paradox most embarrassing to defend, and altogether impossible to prove (p. 139 Meier p. 70).

They would presumably not be in the pure state of nature after the Flood, because of God's covenant not to visit any more floods on the earth and its inhabitants (*Genesis* 8:20, 9:9–19), and of the attendant sharp distinction God now drew between man and beast (*Genesis* 9:2–4); it would manifestly be a paradox to have men relapse (*retomber*) into a state they presumably had never been in; but if they were in that state, it would be impossible to prove that they had lapsed into it from some other state, and in particular from a state of grace.

41.

Adam spoke; Noah spoke; granted. Adam had been taught by God himself. When they separated, the children of Noah gave up agriculture, and the common language perished together with the first society. This would have happened even if there had never been a tower of babel. Isolated individuals living on desert islands have been known to forget their own languages. After several generations away from their country men rarely preserve their original language, even when they work together and live in society with one another.

Scattered throughout this vast desert of the world, men relapsed (*retombèrent*) into the dull barbarism they would have been in if they had been born of the earth. By following [the thread of] these entirely natural ideas the authority of Scripture can easily be reconciled with ancient records, and there is no need to treat as fables traditions that are as old as the people that have handed them down to us. (*Discourses, Replies, Languages*, p. 264; cp. *Genesis* 11:1, 6; 10:5, 20, and 19:31f.)

"Although it is known with certainty that the first men early learned the most necessary arts by a very particular effect of Divine Providence Mankind would not have escaped being rather miserable, if Civil Society had not been instituted . ", Pufendorf, *Droit, op. cit.* II, 2 § ii. After the mention of the "necessary arts," Barbeyrac, drawing on Pufendorf's treatise *De statu hominum naturali*, adds the following pertinent note:

That would appear to be the case from what is said, (*Gen.* 3:21) that *Unto Adam and also to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them*; that is to say, in the manner of the Hebrews, that he taught them to make coats. For how could these first men otherwise in so short a time have bethought themselves of such an invention and mastered it by their own efforts, lacking as they did all metal tools, and before the practice of killing animals had been established? From this one can, in my view, further infer that Divine Providence taught them several other things that were no less needful for Human Life, or less difficult to invent. Thus God having expressly commanded our first parents to cultivate the Earth and to eat their bread in the sweat of their brow, he must at the same time have taught them the nature of grain, the season for sowing, how to till the earth and to make bread, all of which they could have discovered by themselves only after protracted experience and reflection. According to History, the Ancient inhabitants of Greece, having lost the use of wheat by I know not what accident, for a long time lived off acorns and wild fruit before the Knowledge of Agriculture was restored among them. Yet the first child of Adam tilled the earth, from which it appears that this Art was already well known and hence that iron was also already in use. As for Fire, the ancient Greeks regarded its invention as so remarkable that they imagined a Prometheus to bring it down from Heaven. It is said about the inhabitants of the *Canary Islands*, of the *Phillipines*, and of the Island off China called *los Jardenas*, that they had no knowledge of Fire at all before the arrival of the *Spaniards*; and they had remained thus ignorant for perhaps several centuries

feint.[42] The question of whether Noah's descendants must not have preserved some memory of their former language and arts therefore does not arise. However, precisely because their "relapse" is such a transparent feint, it is particularly striking that Rousseau has them relapse not into a "pure" state of nature, but into living in families, and possessing "domestic languages" from the first (pp. 260, 272). At the same time, since this lapse or relapse presumably has all mankind begin—or begin anew—from the same primitive state, it does not answer the question about how troops of men in a presumably "pure" state of nature could have lived for centuries on end in contact with "perfected" human beings and yet not themselves have acquired language or developed *any* of their "virtual faculties." That may well be the reason why Rousseau leaves open the possibility that his experiment will not prove orangs to be humans in the pure state of nature.

2.2.2 But let us set all such speculations aside, and assume that after necessarily prolonged inquiries, they do prove to be human beings in the strictly biological, and only in the strictly biological sense, that, in other words, they do, indeed, prove to be human beings prior to the development of any of their "virtual faculties," prior to the acquisition of language, and of any other skills, arts and conventions; the experiment would still leave unanswered the question which Rousseau had challenged the Aristotles and Plinys of the age to resolve: "What experiments would be necessary in order to come to know natural man; and by what means can these experiments be performed within society?" (p. 130). For the mating experiment would immediately remove both parents and offspring from the "pure state of nature" and plunge

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together without being able to recover the use of something so necessary, either by putting their mind to it or by chance. See *Georg Hornius* [1620–1670], *De Origin[ibus] gent[ium] American[is]* Book I, chapter 8, and Book II, Chapter 9. There have also been nations which for a long time did not know the use of Iron although iron mines existed in their own country. It therefore has to be recognized that Divine Providence early taught the first Men these and other necessities of Life. So that if long afterwards Peoples were found among whom the use of some of these things was lost, this is due either to the fact that an arid land fell to their lot; or to the fact that a troop of people, having been forced by the violence of a few ambitious men whom they could not resist, to flee in haste to some remote and utterly desert land, found themselves deprived of all the implements they had been accustomed to use in the place they left; or to the fact that Colonists having gone to settle in some remote country neglected to take their implements with them; or by some accident lost them on the way, after which it was exceedingly difficult to replace them because frequent and regular commerce had not yet been established. However, some few have tried to make up for this loss by using as best they could other substances that are less well-suited to the purposes of Life. Thus several peoples of *America* use oyster shells, Animals bones or teeth, reeds, and similar things instead of Iron. See *Dapper* in his *Description of America*.

42. The device was common; again Pufendorf, *Droit*, II, 2, § iv; Condillac, in a context to which Rousseau refers in his *Second Discourse* discussion of the origin of language (p. 53): *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, Part II, section I, Introduction, with a covering reference to Bishop Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses*. As Rousseau points out in the passage cited in

them into a state of highly developed, structured social relations and culture.[43] It would therefore not enable us "to know natural man," and it would leave as conjectural as ever the question of how men might in fact have emerged from the "pure" state of nature, how perfectibility might in fact have come into play, how language and "moral" relations might have originated and developed naturally, in short what is or was the "genealogy" of the human heart,[44] and of man's humanity. Yet unless or until these questions are answered, the conjectures which the mating experiment is supposed to resolve necessarily remain what they were from the first: conjectures.

2.3 *The* test of how Rousseau understands the pure state of nature must be sought in his discussion of the origin of language, and hence of the origins of "moral" or social relations and in particular of the family. For the problem of the origin of language and that of "moral" relations are inseparable, and the question "which is first, society or language?" frames the discussion of the origin of language in Part I of the *Discourse*.[45]

2.3.1 In the body of the text, Rousseau formulates the issue as follows:

> The first difficulty that arises is to imagine how languages could have become necessary; for, Men having no relationships with one another and no need of any, one cannot conceive the necessity or the possibility of this invention if it was not indis-

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the preceding note, after the relapse men are in the condition they would have been in if they had been earthborn.

43.

> . since every progress of the human Species removes it even farther from its primitive state, the more new knowledge we accumulate, the more we deprive ourselves of the means of acquiring the most important knowledge of all, and . in a sense, it is by dint of studying man that we have made it impossible for us to know him (p. 129). For it is no light undertaking to disentangle what is original from what is artificial in man's present Nature, and to know accurately a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never did exist, which probably never will exist, and about which it is nevertheless necessary to have exact Notions in order accurately to judge of our present state. Whoever might undertake to ascertain exactly the precautions required to make solid observations on this subject would need even more Philosophy than might be thought; and a good solution of the following Problem does not seem to me unworthy of the Aristotles and the Plinys of our century: *What experiments would be needed in order to come to know natural man; and by what means can these experiments be performed within society?* Far from undertaking to solve this Problem, I believe that I have meditated upon the Subject sufficiently to dare answer in advance that the greatest Philosophers will not be too good to direct these experiments, nor the most powerful sovereigns to perform them; a collaboration which it is scarcely reasonable to expect, especially in conjunction with the sustained or rather the successive enlightenment and goodwill needed by both parties in order to succeed (pp. 130f.).

44. *A Christophe de Beaumont, OC*, IV, 936.

45. "The first difficulty that arises is to imagine how languages could have become necessary; for, men having no relationships with one another and no need of any " (p. 153); " . I leave to anyone who wishes to undertake it, this difficult problem: which was the more necessary, an already united society for the institution of Languages, or already invented Languages for the establishment of Society?" (pp. 157f.).

> pensable. I would be ready to say, as many others do, that Languages arose in the domestic dealings between Fathers, Mothers and Children: but not only would this fail to meet the objections, it would be to commit the fallacy of those who, in reasoning about the state of Nature carry over into it ideas taken from Society, always see the family assembled in one and the same dwelling and its members maintaining among themselves as intimate and as permanent a union as they do among us, where so many common interests unite them; whereas in this primitive state, without Houses or Huts or property of any kind, everyone bedded down at random and often for only a single night; males and females united fortuitously, according to chance encounters, opportunity, and desire, without speech being an especially necessary interpreter of what they had to tell one another; they parted just as readily (XII). The mother at first nursed her Children because of her own need; then, habit having made them dear to her, she nourished them because of theirs; as soon as they had the strength to forage on their own, they left even the Mother . (p. 153).

In other words, Rousseau proceeds on the premise that men and women have no "physical" or biological need to live together or to enter into any kind of society with one another. The survival of the species does not require it. The human female no more needs the continued company or assistance of the male, than he needs hers. In particular, she is by nature both inclined and able to provide for her offsprings entirely on her own.[46]

In the Note which he appends to this passage, Rousseau indicates how conjectural these propositions are. He criticizes Locke for apparently denying that the human female is indeed by nature capable of providing for herself and her offsprings entirely on her own, and for therefore apparently arguing in favor of a "physical" basis to "conjugal society" (pp. 221–25). More precisely: In several Notes to the *Discourse* Rousseau explores the possibility that anatomically, or "originally," humans are herbivores. It would seem reasonable to expect "conjugal society" among herbivores because they require more time and effort than do carnivores to forage and to feed their offsprings; and hence to expect a "physical" basis for having both parents contribute to the care of their offsprings. Yet, once again, the comparison between "physical" man and the other animals leads Rousseau to stress the difference, not the possible similarities between them: even if humans should by nature be herbivores, there is no "physical" basis for "conjugal society" among them. For the upright posture frees the hands and permits the mother to carry her child with her as she moves

46. See also the "Letter to Philopolis," in *Discourses, Replies, and Languages, op. cit.*, p. 237; Rousseau's reflection on this subject are continuous with Hobbes's reflections on parental authority, which conclude: " original Dominion over *children* belongs to the *Mother*, and among men no less than other creatures: The birth follows the belly." *De Cive*, IX, 3; after summarizing Hobbes's argument, Pufendorf speaks of " the purely Natural State (*l'État purement Naturel*), in which there is no conception of either Sovereign, or Family . " *Droit* VI, 2, § ii. Choderlos de Laclos elaborates Rousseau's reflections on the self-sufficiency of mothers in *De l'éducation des femmes*, II.3.

about for food or shelter; and she can do so by herself alone because she rarely bears more than a single child at a time. As Rousseau sees it, the point at issue between himself and Locke can therefore be reduced to the question: how frequently is the human female likely to be with child in the "pure" state of nature?

> A good deal of uncertainty surrounds the principal fact which serves as the basis for Mr. Locke's entire argument: For in order to know whether, as he claims, in the pure state of Nature the woman is commonly with child again and brings forth too a new birth long before the former is able to shift for himself, would require experiments which Locke has surely not performed, and which no one is in a position to perform. The continual cohabitation of Husband and Wife provides such direct occasion to expose oneself to a new pregnancy that it is rather difficult to believe that fortuitous encounters or the impulsion of temperament alone would have produced as frequent effects in the pure state of Nature as in that of conjugal Society . . . (p. 223).[47]

Locke of course does not speak—here or anywhere else—about the "pure state of nature," as Rousseau has him do. But what in the present context is most striking about Rousseau's criticism, is that he does not deny Locke's "principal fact." He is not prepared to go beyond saying that he finds it "rather difficult to believe" (p. 223). The issue could conceivably be settled by experiments, that is to say by fact. Once again, however, "no one is in a position to perform" these experiments. The reason why no one is in a position to perform them is not far to seek: to perform them would effectively put an end to the putative pure state of nature by immediately removing the parties from that state, and plunging them into a state of highly developed, structured social relations and culture. Once again Rousseau very clearly indicates why the pure state of nature cannot be known as a fact given as real. The principal question most immediately at issue is whether the child can fend for itself by the time the mother has to attend to the next one. Locke holds that it cannot. Rousseau argues that it may not be unreasonable to assume that in the pure state of nature it could. He assumes—or conjectures—that in that state childhood dependency would be—or was—less long-lasting than it is in our experience, and that nature would soon deal with children who cannot fend for themselves as the law of Sparta dealt with defective children (p. 142). The proposition that in the pure state of nature men and women would be—or were—so self-sufficient that they would not need—and therefore did in fact not—live together in any kind of society, is a frankly conjectural conclusion based on frankly conjectural premises. Rousseau tacitly acknowledges as much in the *Émile*:

47. A full discussion of Rousseau's criticism of Locke would have to take account, as Meier does (pp. 350–55), of the discrepancies between Mazel's French translation of the text which Rousseau used and Locke's original (*Treatises* II, §§ 79, 80); and of the context of Locke's remarks; but in addition, it would also have to take into account Locke's remarks in *Treatises* I, § 54, and *Essay* I, 3, §§ 9–12.

> children crawl and are weak for such a long time that the mother as well as they themselves would find it difficult to do without the father's attachment and the cares that are due to them.[48]

Men and women would, of course, not from the first live under one roof, united by "the sweetest sentiments known to men," conjugal and parental love (pp. 173f., cp. 153f.). Such a highly structured, sedentary family life certainly is a fact given as real. But reason and tradition alike suggest that the family, like other "moral" aspects of the life of the savage peoples known to us, was preceded by other, simpler ways. However, it does not follow that the only simpler alternative to the stable, settled family, is a roaming life of self-sufficient, solitary individuals without sustained contacts or communication with their kind, and hence without "moral" components of any kind. Rousseau assumes that before the institution of the family, men lived "dispersed among the animals" (p. 142) with few if any incest taboos.[49] Such a life is certainly more primitive than life in "conjugal society" properly so-called, and hence in at least one sense of "natural," it is more natural. Yet there is no reason to think of it as devoid of all artificial, conventional, or "moral" elements. On the contrary: all the evidence indicates that, with respect to "facts given as real," Rousseau considered the family in this broad sense of the term—and hence artifice or convention—to be coeval with human life, and hence to be, in this sense of the term, "natural."[50]

2.3.2 By contrast, the isolated, self-sufficient, and speechless beings of Part I of the *Discourse* are perhaps most accurately characterized as premises. On the premise of such beings, it is utterly impossible to conceive of how language could have arisen. Rousseau therefore invites the reader simply to accept that, as a matter of fact, "the invention of language" did become necessary.[51] Once that necessity is granted, a new and even greater difficulty arises:

> for if Men needed speech in order to learn how to think, they needed even more to know how to think in order to find the art of speech . (p. 154).

It would seem to make sense to maintain that the "invention" of language requires thought, for much the same reason that Rousseau's next comment, that

48. *Émile* IV, *OC* IV, p. 797; Bloom tr. p. 430.

49. Cp. *Essay on the Origin of Languages* in *op cit.*, p. 255. Before the division of land, " peoples wander and disperse in pastures and forests. Marriage will not be as stable among them as among us, where it is fixed by residence, and where the wife keeps house; they can therefore more readily change wives, have several of them, and sometimes mingle indifferently as beasts do." Montesquieu, *Of the Spirit of Laws*, XVIII, 13. On early incest, *Essay on . Languages*, *op. cit.*, p. 272 and note *ad loc.*; also Suarez, *op. cit.* II, xiii, 5.

50. Consider *Discourses, Replies, Languages*, *op. cit.*, pp. 260, 262f., 271f., *Of the Social Contract* 1, 2.

51. As did Condillac. He begins his reflections on the origin of language by imagining two infants left abandoned after the Flood: "As long as the children of whom I just spoke, lived separately ;" the next paragraph begins: "Once they lived together " He says nothing about how that change might have come about. Condillac, *Essai*, *op. cit.*, Part II, ch. 1, §§ 1, 2.

even the greatest minds bending their best efforts for centuries on end are scarcely likely to succeed in bringing language to the pitch of perfection of which it is capable (pp. 154, 157), makes sense. But upon reflection, the best minds' success in perfecting a language proves to be quite irrelevant to the problem. The best minds do their work within the context of an existing language; they work from "inside" language, so to speak. Rousseau's stated problem, by contrast, is to account for the "invention" of language from "outside" it. That problem, taken strictly, can not be resolved, and Rousseau fully recognizes that it cannot be.

According to the traditional view, the view that suggests itself on the assumption of the "way of ideas" which Rousseau here initially accepts, language is at least at first built up of names for the objects of our ideas: an object is singled out and identified at the same time as it is assigned a name (p. 154).[52] On this view it is impossible to assign names—or to account for assigning names—to "ideas which have no sensible object and which could therefore not be pointed to by gesture or by voice" (p. 154). Such objects could be publicly singled out and identified only if they already had a name or if they could be described. On either assumption, the institution of language presupposes the existence of language. This circle cannot be broken by assuming that language was instituted by common consent or by contract. True, language is communal. But any account of its beginnings—or, indeed, of the beginnings of any other practice or institution—in terms of contract is, once again, circular. For to establish a language is, in effect, to establish a community of discourse and understanding where, *ex hypothesi*, none existed before. But the institution of such a community presupposes a shared purpose—" . this unanimous agreement must have been motivated . . . " (p. 155); it presupposes some already existing community of understanding and discourse. The assumption that all mutual understanding rests on prior agreements leads to an infinite regress of such prior agreements. It is worth noting that the very first time Rousseau discusses contract, he stresses its defects as a description of how a new state of affairs comes into being. The very possibility of speech—or, more precisely, of language—presupposes a community which cannot be derived or deduced from some prior, more primitive condition. Nor can speech be derived or deduced from some hypothetically prior state of utter speechlessness. Its presence or absence can only be taken note of. Rousseau therefore speaks of "the almost demonstrated impossibility that Languages could have arisen and become established by purely human means" (p. 157), that is, invented. The formula suggests the traditional alternative: if not by human, then by divine institution.[53] Yet Rousseau recognizes that the successive failures of his efforts to elaborate a satisfactory account of the origin of language no more prove that the "invention" of language required the intervention of God or gods

52. Compare *e.g.*, Locke's *Essay*, III, 2.

53. Plato, *Cratylus* 438c.

(consider pp. 151f.) than the difficulty of explaining the invention of fire or the arts proves the truth of the Prometheus story. Admittedly the analogy is not on all fours: the object in raising the question about the origin of language is not to inquire into the origin of some one among many possible arts or conventions, but to inquire into the condition of the very possibility of art or convention. That is not an historical or empirical inquiry at all. The story of the successive efforts to pursue that inquiry as if it were empirical and of the inevitable failure of all such efforts, can certainly be read as the rhetorical equivalent—the "objective correlative"—of the slow, arduous progress of the mind and of language.[54] But read as argument, the demonstration that every attempt to assign an absolute beginning to language—or to mutual understanding, or to moral relations—is inevitably circular, serves as a conclusive *reductio ad absurdum* of the premise of wholly isolated, self-sufficient, speechless individuals, and so of the pure state of nature as a possible "fact given as real."

3. A regressive analysis that takes "the savages known to us" as its point of departure and confines itself to the realm of at least plausible fact, cannot go beyond the hypothesis that from the first men lived in loose-knit, nomadic families, bands or troops, and that

> [s]ome inarticulate cries, many gestures, and a few imitative noises must, for a long time, have made up the universal Language, [and] the addition to it, in every Region, of a few articulated and conventional sounds—the institution of which is, as I have already said, none too easy to explain—made for particular languages, crude, imperfect, and approximately like those which various Savage Nations still have today (p. 173).

In the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, Rousseau calls them "domestic" in contrast to "popular" languages (pp. 260**, 272).

Beyond this limit, regressive analysis proper must cease, and extrapolation takes its place. Buffon very clearly recognized what Rousseau meant when he spoke about the pure state of nature, and he very clearly articulated the difference between a regressive analysis which remains within the realm of fact alone, and one which, like Rousseau's, seeks to extrapolate to causes or principles:

> What we see is not the ideal but the real state of nature: is the savage living in deserts a placid animal; is he a happy human being? For we will not assume, as does a Philosopher, one of the proudest censors of our humanity, Mr. Rousseau, that there is a greater distance between man in pure nature and the savage than between the savage and ourselves; that the ages that elapsed before the invention of art and of speech were far greater than the centuries needed to perfect signs and languages; because it seems to me that if one wants to reason about facts, one has to set aside

54. "Regarding the natural state and the slow progress of the human mind, see the First Part of the *Discourse on Inequality*." *Émile* IV, *OC* IV, p. 556n., tr. Bloom, p. 258n.

assumptions and adhere to the rule of invoking them only after everything that Nature places at our disposal has been fully exhausted. Now, we find that by an almost imperceptible regression one proceeds from the most enlightened and polished nations to less industrious peoples, and on to others that are cruder but still subject to Kings and laws; from these crude men to the savages, who are not all alike, but rather exhibit as many differences as do politically ordered peoples; that some form rather numerous nations subject to chiefs; that others, living in a smaller society, are subject only to customs; that, finally, the most solitary and independent among them nevertheless form families and are subject to their fathers. An Empire, a Monarch, a family, a father, these are the two extremes of society; they are also the limits of Nature; if they extended farther, would there not have been found, in traversing all of the globe's solitudes, human animals deprived of speech, deaf to the voice as well as to signs, males and females dispersed, the young abandoned, and so forth? I hold that, short of claiming that the body's constitution was different from what it is today and its maturation much more rapid, it is impossible to maintain that man can ever have existed without forming families, since the children would perish if they were not helped and looked after for several years; whereas newborn animals need their mother only for a few months. This physical necessity alone suffices to prove that the human species could last and multiply only by means of society; that the association of mothers and fathers with children is natural because it is necessary. Now this union cannot fail to produce a mutual and lasting attachment between the parents and the child, and this in turn alone suffices for them to grow accustomed to gestures, signs, sounds among themselves, in a word to all the expressions of sentiment and need; which is also proven by fact, since the most solitary savages, like all other men, have the use of signs and of speech.

Thus the state of pure nature is a known state; it is the Savage living in the desert, but living in a family, knowing his children, known by them, using speech, and making himself understood.[55]

Rousseau fully agrees with Buffon about the facts. He disagrees with him about how to order and to account for them. He disagrees with him about principles.[56]

3.1 The aim of the *Second Discourse* is to ascertain the principles or causes which the facts instantiate or in the light of which they might be understood. In particular, "the pure state of nature" is not of a kind that is or can be as fact, and experiments cannot possibly confirm it as fact. It is original or

55. *The Carnivorous Animals* (1758), in *Œuvres philosophiques*, *op. cit.*, pp. 373b41–374a55; Buffon returns to these issues in a lengthy comparison between the orang outan and man in which he attends most particularly to the duration of infant dependency among them: *Nomenclature des singes* (1767) *op. cit.*, pp. 389a56–393b8. Choderlos de Laclos returns to the charge, arguing that Buffon has failed to prove that the pure state of nature *could* not be a matter of fact: *De l'éducation des femmes*, ch. 9.

56. For a parallel situation, consider also the disagreement between Rousseau and Buffon regarding the balance of nature: *Discourses, Replies, Languages, op. cit.*, p. 270 n. 1 together with the editorial notes, and the discussion in V. Gourevitch, "'The First Times' in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*," in *Essays for Richard Kennington, Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 1986, 11:123–46, pp. 137f.

primitive in the sense of being a principle or set of principles.[57] Principles can only be conjectured or thought. That is one reason why, after offering the mating suggestion for the benefit of the crudest observers, Rousseau goes on to say that serious observers will require reports from philosophical travellers, from such men as Buffon among others (p. 220, cp. 200f.),[58] in other words from the modern Aristotles and Plinys he had called for earlier. When such men say "this animal is a man" and "that is a beast," they will have to be believed.

The *Discourse* is a study in natural law or, more precisely, in natural right. According to Grotius's influential distinction, natural right can be established in either of two ways: a priori, in terms of the causes or, as he says, "by Arguments drawn from the very Nature of the Thing;" or a posteriori in terms of the effects or, as he says, "by Reasons taken from something external." In other words, it can be established either by an appeal to principles, or by an appeal to facts.

> The former way of reasoning is more subtle or abstracted; the latter more popular. The Proof of the former is by showing the necessary Fitness or Unfitness of any Thing, with a reasonable and sociable Nature. But the Proof by the latter is, when we cannot with absolute Certainty, yet with very great Probability, conclude that to be by the Law of Nature, which is generally believed to be so by all, or at least the most civilized, Nations. For, an universal Effect requires an universal Cause. And there cannot well be any other Cause assigned for this general Opinion, than what is called Common Sense.[59]

Grotius himself proceeds a posteriori, by an appeal to what he here calls the common sense of civilized nations, that is to say by an appeal to effects or to

57. Careful readers will have been alerted to Rousseau's meaning from the first: the famous formula, "[l]et us therefore begin by setting aside all the facts." (p. 139) echoes the remark, a few paragraphs earlier, that " . after setting aside the dust and sand that surrounds the Edifice " (p. 134) apparently arbitrary and accidental social relations are found to be intelligible and based on firm foundations. Unfortunately Rousseau's point gets blunted in Meier's translation, which renders the first *écarter* with *entfernen*, but the second with *beiseite lassen.* (Meier, pp. 61, 71).

58. Or like Claude Levi-Strauss, who defines the mission of anthropology and of all the human sciences as the quest for Rousseau's "pure state of nature:"

> Natural man is neither prior to society, nor outside it. Our task is to recover his form, which is immanent to the social state, outside of which the human condition is inconceivable; hence to formulate the program of the experiments that 'would be needed in order to come to know natural men' and to ascertain 'by what means these experiments can be performed within society.'
>
> But this model—that is Rousseau's solution—is eternal and universal. *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris, Plon, 1955), ch. 28 *i.f.*, p. 423; cp. ch. 29 *i.f.* p. 339; tr., J. and D. Weightman (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1974), pp. 392, 316; see, further, Hanns H. Ritter, "Claude Levi-Strauss als Leser Rousseaus," in eds. Wolf Lepenies and Hanns H. Ritter, *Orte des wilden Denkens* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 113–59; as well as Ton Lemaire, *Het Vertoog over de Ongelijkheid van Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Basisboeken Ambo, 1980), pp. 225–33.

59. *Of the Right of War and Peace* (1735 tr.), I, I, § xii. In the phrase "reasonable and sociable nature," the qualification "sociable" was added by Grotius's translator Barbeyrac.

facts. Hobbes, in an important passage which directly echoes Grotius's text, flatly denies that there is a common sense or practice of civilized nations, and he accordingly rejects Grotius's a posteriori in favor of the a priori way.[60] Rousseau, like Pufendorf and Locke before him,[61] fully accepts Hobbes's criticism of Grotius's a posteriori or "analytic" procedure, and of its assumption of a civilized common sense regarding right (pp. 159f.). He indicates his difference with Grotius from the very first: the epigraph on the title page of the *Discourse*, "What is natural has to be investigated not in beings that are depraved, but in those that are good according to nature," drawn from Aristotle's discussion of natural slavery, is cited by Grotius in support of his own a posteriori procedure. Rousseau accepts Aristotle's and Grotius's premise, but turns it against the conclusion which they draw from it.[62] Accordingly he proceeds a priori or "synthetically," by Arguments drawn from the very Nature of the Thing" as Grotius characterizes the a priori way, " . . derived from the Nature of things . . . " as he himself says he will do immediately after inviting us to set aside all the facts (p. 139), and as he says he did do at the end of Part I of the *Discourse* (p. 168, Meier, p. 166); or " . . deduced from the Nature of Man . . . " as in the Preface he says that one must proceed in order to establish natural right (p. 131), and as at the end of Part II he says he did proceed (p. 199, Meier p. 271).[63] Hobbes's a priori deduction of natural right is, in his

60. " if any man say, that somewhat is done against the Law of Nature, one proves it hence, because it was done against the generall Agreement of all the most wise, and learned Nations; but this declares not who shall be judge of the wisdom and learning of all Nations " Hobbes, *De Cive* II.1; "But howsoever, an argument for [sic] the Practice of men, that have not sifted to the bottom, and with exact reason weighed the causes, and nature of Commonwealths, and suffer daily those miseries, that proceed from the ignorance thereof, is invalid. For though in all places of the world, men should lay the foundation of their houses on the sand, it could not thence be inferred, that so it ought to be." *Leviathan* c. XX [*in fine*]; " politics and ethics, that is the science of the *just* and the *unjust*, the *equitable* and the *inequitable*, can be demonstrated *a priori*; because we ourselves make the principles, that is the causes of justice, namely laws and covenants, whereby it is known what the *just* and the *equitable* and the opposites, the *unjust* and the *inequitable*, are." *De Homine* X, 5.

61. Pufendorf, *Droit* II, 3, §§ vii, viii, ix; for a searching discussion see J. B. Schneewind, "Pufendorf's Place in the History of Ethics," *Synthèse*, 72 (1987); 123–55, esp. pp. 130–38; " . at best an Argument from what has been, to what should of right be, has no great force . " Locke, *Treatises of Government*, II, viii, § 103. "Where there is no property, there is no injustice, is a proposition as certain as any demonstration in Euclid: for the idea of property being a right to any thing; and the idea to which the name injustice is given, being the invasion or violation of that right; it is evident, that these ideas being thus established, and these names annexed to them, can as certainly know this proposition to be true, as that a triangle has three angles equal to two right ones." Locke, *Essay of Human Understanding* IV, 3, § 18; cp. §§ 19, 20, and IV, 4, §§ 7, 8, 9.

62. Grotius, *Of the Right of War and Peace* (1735 English tr.), I, I, § xii; cp. *Of the Social Contract*, I, 2. Barbeyrac had traced Grotius's *a posteriori* way to the procedure Aristotle follows in moral inquiry: in Pufendorf, *Droit* II, 3, § vii, note 1. Martin Hübner traces the history of the criticisms of Grotius's *a posteriori* method: *Essai sur l'histoire du droit naturel* (2 vols., London 1757, 1758), Vol. 2, pp. 55–82.

63. As Kant noted: "Rousseau proceeds synthetically and begins with natural man[,] I proceed analytically and begin with social (*gesittet*) man." *Handschriftlicher Nachlass*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1912–1923), Vol. XX, p. 14.

view, flawed because Hobbes had failed to attend sufficiently carefully to the difference between the needs and passions of men in the state of nature, and those of men in the civil state (pp. 159f.).[64] Like all of his predecessors, Hobbes had proceeded *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Rousseau will guard against doing so in his own quest for the principles:

> meditating on the first and simplest operations of the human Soul, I believe I perceive in it two principles prior to reason . . It is from the association and combination which our mind is capable of making between these two Principles, without its being necessary to introduce into it that of sociability, that all the rules of natural right seem to me to flow (pp. 132f.; Meier, p. 56).

In direct contrast to Grotius, who had said that an a priori account of natural right would establish "the necessary Fitness or Unfitness of any Thing, with a reasonable and sociable Nature," Rousseau asserts that it must establish the fitness or unfitness of things with a nature that is not—or, that, for the reasons already clearly stated by Hobbes, should not be assumed to be—reasonable or sociable.[65]

The pure state of nature to which he for all intents and purposes devotes Part I of the *Discourse* may be looked upon as his statement of his principles: self-sufficiency or natural freedom, and hence moral or political equality, by virtue of the natural balance of needs and powers and of the concert of self-preservation and pity, in short "natural goodness"; and the natural capacity for artifice and convention, and in particular for restoring a balance between needs and powers when it has been upset, in short "perfectibility". More precisely, Part I of the *Discourse* may be looked upon as Rousseau's statement of his principles conjectured into existence, bodied forth, and given a local habitation and a name.

These considerations, which could easily be expanded, may suffice to indicate why, and in what sense, Rousseau's pure state of nature, the state of man without any "moral" relations, artifice, or convention, is necessarily conjectural.

It is but one of the many merits of Meier's edition of the *Second Discourse* that it stimulates renewed reflection about the premises of that important and absorbing text.

64. So, too, Montesquieu, *Of the Spirit of Laws*, I, 2.
65. *De Cive*, I, 1; I, 2.

Tocqueville's Perspective

Democracy in America: In search of the "new science of politics"

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In a well-known passage, Hannah Arendt defended the thesis that the occidental tradition of political thought is marked by a clearly datable beginning and an equally clear-cut termination. "Our tradition of political thought had its definite beginning in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. I believe it came to a no less definite end in the theories of Karl Marx."[1] This may well be true. But in Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), Marx's contemporary and senior by 13 years, we see once more a thinker who has that bold thought shared by all who can properly be called "political thinkers": Everything depends upon government and upon politics—or, in other words, the most important of sciences is political science.[2]

Was Tocqueville a political scientist? It seems to me that this question, which might appear rather superficial and pedantic, opens a path not only to a more precise understanding of Tocqueville, but also to the reactivation of questions basic to the field.[3]

That Tocqueville was not a scientist; that even had he wished to be one he would not have been a good one; that his intentions were totally other than those of a political scientist; and that his work belongs to the history of political rhetoric—these are judgments to which authorities on Tocqueville, thorough admirers of the great Frenchman, feel themselves compelled. However, there is a significant line from Tocqueville which opposes this view. In the "Author's Introduction" to Part I of *Democracy in America,* Tocqueville writes: "A new political science is needed for a world itself quite new." (*"Il faut une science politique nouvelle à un monde tout nouveau."*)[4] This sentence, placed at a

1. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 17.

2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a (politics as the most important and leading science); Hobbes, *De Cive*, Preface ("certainly the most valuable"); Rousseau, *Confessions*, Book 9 (everything depends upon the art of government). What Friedrich H. Tenbruck has sketched as *"Die Glaubensgeschichte der Moderne" (Zeitschrift für Politik*, N.F. 23 [1965], pp. 1–15), is discernible in the succession of those sciences in which recent generations have placed their hopes, from political economy to ecology.

3. With regard to the wealth of facets in recent Tocqueville research, see Robert Nisbet, "Many Tocquevilles," *The American Scholar*, 46 (1976/77), 59–75.

4. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), hereinafter abbreviated as *D.i.A.* The citations in parentheses refer either to J. P. Mayer's *Œuvres Complètes*, *"édition définitive"* or to the Beaumont edition (B). (Users of the 1969 paperback edition should note that translations differ, as does the pagination.)

dramatic point in this highly dramatic introduction,[5] can scarcely be understood as anything but an indication of the ambition of its highly ambitious author. Should we not read Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and his entire corpus for that matter, as an answer to this need? This is the question I wish to answer.

To be able to do this, we must first deal with three established notions concerning Tocqueville's writings which would distort the view of his "new political science," assuming that it exists. The first is the opinion that there is no scientific intent underlying Tocqueville's work; that he is a liberal thinker of the first order, but not a scientist. To so characterize him, however, is to fail to recognize the peculiarity of his scientific purpose and to thereby misunderstand his continuing, timeless significance. The second view is closely linked to the first. He who sees in Tocqueville the liberal thinker in an age of emerging democracy and understands his book on America only as a "tract for the times," will be inclined to regard him as the great successor of Montesquieu. This picture of Tocqueville as Montesquieu's successor appears to be one of the most firmly settled views in the research on Tocqueville. In contrast, I would like to demonstrate that Montesquieu does not supply the key to an understanding of Tocqueville, and that to view him within this tradition leads to a failure to understand his modernity. Tocqueville's actual teacher, if one is to be ascribed to him, is Rousseau. The third obstacle standing in the way of an understanding of Tocqueville is the fixation on a problem that was not even his, i.e., the tension between freedom and equality allegedly central to his work. Tocqueville's actual problem was that of freedom and solidarity, of individuality and sociality; and it is here that his significance for our own age lies. I shall attempt to establish these three theses in order then to proceed with a systematic treatment of at least the basic ideas of Tocqueville's "new political science."

I

When an undisputedly great author remarks in the introduction to his principal work that an era which is quite new demands a new political science, it ought to be obvious that this suggestion is to be taken seriously and that the work itself may be readable as a response to this challenge. But such a reading seems to be anything but obvious.[6] Is there any scientific purpose at all behind Tocqueville's work? Even James Bryce, otherwise full of admiration for Tocqueville's book, could no longer recognize its scientific character. In

5. *D.i.A.*, p. 6 (*O.C.* 1, p. 5).

6. The first to follow this suggestion were Jack Lively in *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962) and Jürgen Feldhoff in *Die Politik der egalitären Gesellschaft. Zur soziologischen Demokratie-Analyse bei A. de Tocqueville* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1968), pp. 117ff.

Bryce's words, written in 1888, fifty-three years after the appearance of the first volume of *Democracy in America*: "Let it only be remembered that, in spite of its scientific form, it is really a work of art quite as much as a work of science . . . " And even more pointedly: "The *Democracy in America* is not so much a political study as a work of edification."[7]

George W. Pierson, again no petty critic, but a man who devoted his entire life to research on Tocqueville, comes to a similar conclusion.[8] Tocqueville's book on America is allegedly full of defects, and Pierson can only explain the book's rank and enduring acclaim by the personality of its author and by the fact that Tocqueville was a sociologist, one of the first in France. This is a dubious honor, as it results from identifying nothing but defects and errors in the classic.

It is to Otto Vossler that we owe the most thorough and informative attempt to prove the unscientific character of Tocqueville's work. His 1973 book on Tocqueville is again a testimonial of love and admiration for its object.[9] Yet he contends that whoever looks for a scholarly purpose and intent in Tocqueville's literary work is on the wrong track. Tocqueville is

> a Frenchman writing for France, for political education and therewith a better future for his countrymen. He aims for a political effect and is not seeking pure knowledge for knowledge's sake. He is not interested in science, but in practical political utility and success. . . He writes neither as historian nor as sociologist, but as concerned political educator and admonisher, as passionate Frenchman—and it is as such that both he and his work are to be judged.[10]

For Vossler, the determinative bar to Tocqueville's book on America being scientific lies in a sentence in the "Author's Introduction" to the first volume: "I admit that I saw in America more than America; it was the shape of democracy itself which I sought . . . so as at least to know what we have to fear or hope therefrom."[11] This sentence purportedly shows first, that Tocqueville did not seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge, second, that he sought knowledge for its practical utility, and third, that he pursued this knowledge for the sake of a particular object, France. As far as Vossler is concerned, each of these intentions separately, not to mention cumulatively, precludes Tocqueville's work from being scientific.[12]

7. James Bryce, "The Predictions of Hamilton and Tocqueville," in *Studies in History and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901), Vol. I, p. 325.

8. George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938).

9. Otto Vossler, *Alexis de Tocqueville. Freiheit und Gleichheit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1973).

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 83.

11. *D.i.A.* I, p. 12 (*O.C.* I, 1 p. 12).

12. Vossler never tires of testifying that Tocqueville is "no scientific mind, not a philosopher at all" (Vossler, pp. 91, 151). The demand for a new political science is thus not to be taken seriously.

Now it is certainly true that Tocqueville seeks scientific knowledge for its utility as an intellectual aid to France. But must this preclude it from being scientific in character? If I understand it correctly, no one strove for knowledge for the sake of knowledge until the middle of the nineteenth century. In no field of knowledge was knowledge for its own sake the central concern, but rather, it was always a matter of the knowledge's meaning, or, in Max Weber's terminology, its *Wertbeziehung*. The meaning could be theoretical, practical or technical. The *science politique* of Tocqueville still stands squarely in the tradition of political science as a practical-philosophical discipline.[13] As with everyone before him, the knowledge he seeks in this field is sought not for its own sake, but for the sake of correct action.[14] Nor can the fact that Tocqueville pursues his study of democracy in America for the sake of France keep it from being a scientific contribution to our understanding of the era.

Gerhard Krüger[15] has described the modern concept of science as being defined by the attempt to achieve the double emancipation from natural sensuous experience and from the bonds of the practical community surrounding the researcher. In the historical-political sciences, too, there has been no shortage of attempts to supplement the obviously fallible human power of judgment with more precise, universal instruments of measurement and observation. Outside the realm of quantifiable magnitudes (with which political science is only peripherally concerned), the results to date of these efforts have been minuscule. But the modern demand upon the researcher that he radically abstract himself from the "prejudices" and value standards of his political community has triumphantly prevailed. Oriented to the standard of theoretical science, "It must know," in Krüger's words, "in order to know, and not for the purpose of leading a social life."[16] Such an understanding of science is entirely foreign to Tocqueville. But can this justify denying him any scientific intention whatsoever, and thereafter, in the manner of Vossler, no longer looking for such an intention in Tocqueville's works? Tocqueville wants to become acquainted with democracy in America, to subject it to scientific examination, even if only "so as to know what we," i.e., the French of his time, "have to fear or hope therefrom." Hope and fear refer to a good, to the manner in which life is conducted in community—not just any sort of life in common, but that which is possible for the French. Only when such hope and fear legitimately enter into scholarly inquiry can the normative problems of politics, or if you will, the question of the ends toward which our lives are directed, be appropriately addressed.[17] For

13. Regarding this tradition, see Wilhelm Hennis, *Politik und praktische Philosophie*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart, 1977).

14. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095a5–6; 1103b27. The purpose of political knowledge is not changed in Machiavelli or Hobbes, either. They only radicalize it.

15. Gerhard Krüger, *Grundfragen der Philosophie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1958).

16. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

17. Hans Jonas argues for a "heuristic of fear" in *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1979).

Tocqueville this was self-evident. To take this fact as an indication of the unscientific character of his findings reveals more about our contemporary understanding of science than about Tocqueville.

The addressee of Tocqueville's book on America (his *ouvrage politico-philosophique*, as he always called it),[18] was certainly not the scientific community. It was directed toward those who were responsible for France's destiny. In Tocqueville's terminology, which is identical with that of Plato and the entire tradition, it was directed toward the "legislators," the "leaders" of France. The point of view, the scholarly perspective in Tocqueville's work, is also that of an imaginary legislator, of a statesman in search of the knowledge he needs. This has been one of the classical scholarly approaches to political science since Plato's *Laws*. In the United States Tocqueville seeks and finds lessons "from which we"—and that means especially the legislators—"can derive benefit." To ask questions in this manner was to take a scientific perspective and was not merely an attempt at popular education, which for the modern scholar is apparently the very epitome of an unscientific design.[19]

If one seeks to salvage to some extent the scientific character of Tocqueville's work by classifying it in the pre- and early history of sociology,[20] this, too, conflicts with Tocqueville's own understanding of his work. He spoke only very condescendingly of Saint-Simon and his school and of Comte. And what if not his self-understanding as a political scientist could have prompted him, in his capacity as president of the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, to deliver an important lecture on "Politics as Science"—which in any case provides us with a certain insight into his systematic understanding of the required "new" science. I will deal briefly with the contents of this lecture, Tocqueville's only extended statement concerning his idea of political science.[21] Confronted with the conventional objection that the field of politics is too polymorphous, too unstable to support the foundations of a science, Tocqueville distinguishes that which belongs to the art of statesmanship from politics as a science. Politics as a science is constant: the art of governing is elastic. Politics as a science "lies grounded in the very essence of man, in his interests, his capacities and his instincts, whose direction changes with the times but whose essence is unchanging, imperishable as his species itself." This science teaches "which laws best suit the general and enduring being of

18. Cf. James T. Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville's Democracy in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 83, 165.

19. This aspect of Tocqueville's scientific perspective is penetratingly analyzed by Seymour Drescher in *Dilemmas of Democracy: Tocqueville and Modernization* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), pp. 23ff. ("He was always a politician or a potential politician addressing other politicians and citizens" p. 25.)

20. Most forcefully, Jürgen Feldhoff, *op. cit.*

21. *Œuvres Complètes* (Beaumont edition), IX, pp. 111ff. The most important passages are in the collection edited by Albert Salomon, *Alexis de Tocqueville. Autorität und Freiheit* (Zürich: Rascher, 1935), pp. 138–52.

man." Tocqueville continues: The "greatness" (*grandeur*) of this science prevents many intellects from noticing it. However, if one were to observe "this significant science" attentively, the various elements of which it is composed would palpably emerge, and one would arrive at a precise conception of the whole.

For such an observer, the great writers would no longer present such a mass of confusion. Some, the very great, seek

> the natural laws of the societal body and the rights which the individual exercises, i.e., the laws which best suit the societal structures depending upon which characteristics they possessed from their origins and which they acquired. They seek the governmental systems appropriate according to situation, place and time. These are the great authors: Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rousseau, to mention only some of the most illustrious names.

But, he asks rhetorically, why must one demonstrate the existence of political science in a country where its power has made itself manifest on every hand?

> You deny the existence and deeds of political science! Look around yourselves!
>
> Who has so altered the face of the modern world that were your grandfather to return to earth, he would recognize neither the laws, the morals, the clothing nor the customs which he once knew—scarcely even the language which he once spoke? In short, who brought about the French Revolution, this most momentous event in history?

Was it the politicians of the eighteenth century, the princes, the ministers, the great feudal lords? Nothing of the kind!

> The great creators of this colossal Revolution were precisely the men of that time who had never taken part, even in the slightest degree, in the affairs of state. Everyone knows that political writers, political science and often even the most abstract science planted in the minds of all our fathers the new seeds from which suddenly grew so many political institutions and statutes unknown to their forefathers. Among all civilized peoples, political science gives birth to the general ideas, or at least lends them their form. From these then later arise the events in whose midst the politicians move and the laws which they think they are inventing. The barbarians are the only ones in whose politics one recognizes only practice. Our Academy, gentlemen, has the task of preparing a place for this useful and fruitful science and of determining its field of activity. This is its honor, but also a danger.

It is a danger for the very reason that this science could only prosper under the condition of freedom. Tocqueville's speech is a subtle treatment of the decline of freedom under the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon.

Now if one knows only (and I am getting ahead of myself) that a fundamental axiom of Tocqueville's political science was "that everything in politics is only derivative and symptomatic, except for the ideas and feelings of the people, which embody the causes of everything else,"[22] and if one does not know that Tocqueville was equally convinced "that political societies are not

22. Letter of October 26, 1853, in Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 215 (*O.C.* Beaumont VII, pp. 300f.).

the products of their laws, but are from the very beginning determined by the feelings, beliefs, ideas and habits of the hearts and minds of their members,"[23] then one will not be able to understand why he felt compelled to ascribe such greatness to this science. But if what he says in his speech to the Academy is true, i.e., that political science "forms something like an intellectual atmosphere around every society, which the spirits of the ruled and the rulers inhale and from which they alike, often unconsciously, draw the principles of their behavior,"[24] then it is understandable why he attributes such fundamental importance to this science and why he feels himself a part of it.

Nevertheless, one might question whether it is really to the point to ask whether Tocqueville should be read as a political scientist or a sociologist. Is not what Tocqueville has to say to us the same in either case? But this is not so. To read Tocqueville as a sociologist is to pose questions or ascribe questions to him which were not his. We can not really get a reply from an author who did not regard himself as a sociologist by posing him sociological questions. On the other hand, we can not receive or understand what he may have had to say to us if we refuse to receive it in the language which he speaks. Everyone knows that in translating a poem from one language to another, much is lost. But how much more must be lost when we are deaf to the questions expressed in the idiom of a particular science because we believe it will yield the correct and, for us, "relevant" scientific sense only when we have (to use the modern term) "reconstructed" the texts to conform to our own questions.

To understand Tocqueville as a sociologist is to fundamentally misunderstand him. For all truly political thought, the relationship between man and citizen is the central political problem, but for sociological thought it is a problem which no longer exists.[25] As successor to Machiavelli and Rousseau, Tocqueville fights once again the specifically Western struggle against the disjunction between the private and the public. He does this in the tradition, and using the categories, of classical political science. In a letter dated October 26, 1853, Tocqueville complains:

> We belong to another era. We are to a certain extent antediluvian animals which might soon be displayed in natural history museums to show how beings once looked that loved freedom, equality and honesty. All are strange tastes, which presuppose totally different organs on the part of this world's present inhabitants.[26]

It is a "totally different" manner of thinking which distinguishes the political science of Tocqueville from the incipient sociology of his time and from that of ours. Not that Tocqueville would automatically be understood if he were to be

23. Letter of September 17, 1853, in Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 214 (*O.C.* Beaumont VI, pp. 226f.).

24. The address to the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* in Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

25. This is the basic idea of Siegfried Landshut's *Kritik der Soziologie und andere Schriften zur Politik*, 2d ed. (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1969). See also his introduction to *Alexis de Tocqueville: Das Zeitalter der Gleichheit* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1954).

26. See note 22.

read as a political scientist; but one bars every possibility of understanding Tocqueville when one is not prepared to understand him as he himself wanted to be understood. Nothing in his work evidences an affinity, everything evidences a decided enmity, toward the emerging sociological thought of his time. In his entire work, Tocqueville's concern was nothing but an attempt to prevent the separation of man from citizen. He was not concerned, as his younger contemporary, Marx, was, with the elimination of this polarity in a definitive solution to this problem. More realistically than Marx, Tocqueville could only conceive of this problem's solution in the shape of egalitarian democratic tyranny. To prevent this form of solution to the problem was the driving force behind his passionate intellectual effort.

Just as access to an understanding of Tocqueville's thought is obstructed when we overlook the fact that he reflected on the problem of politics in the categories of classical political science, so also do we obstruct our access to him when we, as it were, give him the wrong genealogy in the history of political thought. Tocqueville himself precipitated this fate in a peculiar way.

II

Insofar as the effectiveness and brisance of a political thinker is concerned, his placement in a particular family tree is not a matter of indifference. A thinker in the tradition of Plato is more "exciting" than one in the tradition of Aristotle; and the relation of Hegel to Kant and of Marx to Ricardo is the same in this regard. In an often-quoted passage from one of Tocqueville's letters composed during the time he was working on his second volume on America, he wrote: "There are three men in whose company I find myself for a while each day: Pascal, Montesquieu and Rousseau."[27] Let us leave Pascal to one side. Diez del Corral has sympathetically investigated Tocqueville's connection to him.[28] That Tocqueville stands in the intellectual tradition of Montesquieu is a commonplace since Royer-Collard's comparison of the first volume of *Democracy in America* with *The Spirit of the Laws*. Tocqueville is the "faithful disciple of Montesquieu" (Raymond Aron), the Montesquieu of the nineteenth century. And Rousseau? An influence is "not identifiable" writes Otto Vossler,[29] who within the space of a few years published a large monograph on Rousseau and one on Tocqueville which especially emphasizes Tocqueville's

27. Letter to Kergolay on November 10, 1836; *O.C.* XIII, 1 p. 418. In Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

28. Luis Diez del Corral, *La mentalidad politica de Tocqueville con especial referencia a Pascal* (Madrid, 1965).

29. Vossler, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 204. Although Vossler emphasizes with such love of detail Tocqueville's attachment to his great-grandfather, Malesherbes, he mentions not one word concerning the close friendship between Malesherbes and Rousseau. If one accepts Vossler's thesis concerning Tocqueville, the "family man," Rousseau must have been rather close to him.

aristocratic family tradition. The same social origins, the same concern with freedom, the same open and unbiased spirit—what could be easier than to name Montesquieu and Tocqueville in the same breath? What could be more erroneous than to place Tocqueville, the great gentleman, in a closer relationship with the petty bourgeois from Geneva, the resentful outsider, the patriarch of the Revolution, Jean-Jacques? However, I know of no "epistemological-sociological" chain of reasoning that is more decisively misleading than this one.

Certainly, it is fruitful to compare Montesquieu and Tocqueville, especially with regard to Tocqueville's theory concerning the new forms of despotic domination. Certainly, the younger man stands in a sort of succession to the man born 116 years (and what years!) before him. Nor could he have anything against our seeing in him a new Montesquieu. Indeed, he wanted to accomplish something similar to what that great man of his own social station had achieved. But under what radically changed conditions! They are worlds apart with regard to their places in fundamentally different societies, and with regard to the experiences which each sought to intellectually master. "A new political science is needed for a world itself quite new." There can be no doubt that this sentence, which is our starting point and which contains a judgment of the old political science, is essentially directed toward Montesquieu. In *Democracy in America* there is a whole series of passages which begin roughly: "I am not speaking about . . . " and continue with familiar viewpoints of Montesquieu which Tocqueville classifies as indisputable, common sense positions not meriting further elaboration.[30] Typical of this sort of tacit dismissal of Montesquieu is Tocqueville's examination of honor in the United States, a classic example of a paradigm change. Montesquieu is not mentioned at all. At the beginning of Book 29 of *The Spirit of the Laws* is the statement: "I assert, and it appears to me, that I have written this work only for the purpose of proving this contention: The spirit of moderation must govern the legislator." Tocqueville writes in order to prove a totally different contention, namely, that equality, absent fortunate countervailing forces such as exist in America, could lead to the degradation of man. He seeks to cultivate understanding for moderation, the unavoidable mediocrity of democracy. He reconciles himself to it but is not fond of it. The weak, dull souls which it can produce trouble him, and all his maxims of statecraft aim at nothing other than the repeated creation of i centives to stronger spiritual sensitivity within the framework of unavoidable moderation. What he fears is that the citizens of democracies "may in the end become practically out of reach of those great and powerful public emotions which do indeed perturb peoples but which also make them grow and refresh them."[31] For that which is distilled from Montesquieu, he has nothing but scorn. "I have always considered what is called a mixed government to be

30. Cf., for example, *D.i.A.* I, p. 286 (*O.C.* I, 1 p. 326); II, pp. 608–609 (O.C. I, 2 p. 257).
31. *D.i.A.* II, p. 619 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 269).

a chimera."[32] And what, if not Montesquieu's theory of despotism, is the target of the following proud passage?

> The chief and, in a sense, the only condition necessary in order to succeed in centralizing the supreme power in a democratic society is to love equality or to make believe that you do so. Thus the art of despotism, once so complicated, has been simplified; one may almost say that it has been reduced to a single principle[.][33]

According to Montesquieu, the "principle," the pernicious motive, of despotic domination is, as we know, fear (*crainte*). Tocqueville's work on democracy closes with a dull "General Survey" that reads like a tortured exercise in diligence. The actual conclusion can be found at the end of Book IV, chapter 7, a continuation of Book IV, chapter 6, which bears the title "The Sort of Despotism That Democratic Nations Have to Fear." This, the actual conclusion of the entire work and, at the same time, of his analysis of despotism, reads (and I believe that one need not have learned to stalk the semantic nightingale from Leo Strauss to catch the allusion): "Let us then look forward to the future with that salutary fear (*crainte salutaire*) which makes men keep watch and ward for freedom, and not to that flabby and idle terror (*cette sorte de terreur molle et oisive*) which makes men's hearts sink and enervates them."[34] It is surely no coincidence that in the final sentence of a work dealing with modern despotism, fear is called "salutary."

In this penultimate chapter, Tocqueville compares the dangers of aristocratic times with those of democratic times. Naturally, he knew that *Federalist* No. 47 states: "The oracle who is always consulted and cited on this subject [of the preservation of liberty, and separation of powers] is the celebrated Montesquieu." But since Madison had written these words, the world had changed completely. The endangered good remained the same: freedom and human dignity. However, the dangers lurked elsewhere. They were harder to recognize in the age of equality than in the era of personal rule. Thus Tocqueville remarked: "Other dangers and other needs [than in aristocratic times] face the men of our own day. The political world changes, and we must now seek new remedies for new ills."[35]

Montesquieu had little to tell Tocqueville concerning either the identification of the new evil (the degradation of mankind in individualistic egoism and amour propre) or the new remedy (democratic sharing of responsibility). Rousseau, on the other hand, could tell him much. In all of Tocqueville I find not one sentence which would contradict Rousseau's teachings when these are correctly understood. On the contrary, there are countless of his lines which strike one as pasted-in excerpts from Jean-Jacques' work. For, all differences

32. *D.i.A.* I, p. 232 (*O.C.* I, p. 262).
33. *D.i.A.* II, p. 654 (*O.C.* I, p. 309).
34. *D.i.A.* II, p. 676 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 335).
35. *D.i.A.* II, p. 675 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 334).

aside, the latter's writings bear a fundamental affinity with Tocqueville's romantic soul.

In the fragments for the *Ancien Régime*, Tocqueville portrays the change in the ideas and feelings of the French between the king's relinquishment of absolute power and the beginning of the elections for the Estates-General.

> At first one thinks only of the formation of the Estates-General. Thick tomes are hastily filled with undigested erudition. One labors to reconcile the Middle Ages to the conceptions of the present. Finally, the question of the old Estates-General disappears completely. One discards the whole mess. In the beginning, one only speaks of how the powers might be better balanced, the relationships between classes better regulated. Soon, however, one follows, pursues, then frantically chases the idea of pure democracy. At first, Montesquieu is quoted and explained; in the end one speaks solely of Rousseau. He became the only teacher of the Revolution in its heyday and will remain such [36]

Thus, I believe that the key to understanding Tocqueville—his principles and his political maxims as they relate to the new despotism—is to be found in Rousseau insofar as it can be found in any "forerunner." Montesquieu may have been Tocqueville's mentor as far as the form or the analytic ordering of subjects is concerned.[37] Rousseau is Tocqueville's real teacher when it comes to substance, indeed, the substance which is at issue: human freedom.[38]

36. Quoted in Landshut, *Zeitalter*, p. 240.

37. George W. Pierson in *Tocqueville and Beaumont, op. cit.*, p. 769, reduces the influence of Montesquieu to the stylistic similarity of the chapter headings. A rebuttal of this aside of Pierson is undertaken by Melvin Richter, "The Uses of Theory: Tocqueville's Adaptation of Montesquieu," in M. Richter, ed., *Essays in Theory and History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 74–102. Richter sees Tocqueville as Montesquieu's successor primarily in terms of method, in an adoption of Montesquieu's analytic categories. But the differentiation of circumstances, institutions and morals is not peculiar to Montesquieu. We find it from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau, in every political thinker who approaches the ordering of a polity from the perspective of a legislator, i.e., with an eye to purpose and formative potential. It belongs to the unquestioned tools even of Rousseau, that is, the Rousseau of the "maxims of government," which Roger D. Masters worked out in *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976 [1968]).

Richter places Tocqueville in the context of that style of thought which J. G. A. Pocock has named "civic humanism." Machiavelli, Harrington, Montesquieu, the Scots, the Federalist, among many others are assembled by Pocock within a great community—"civic humanism." This connection is too tenuous to make Tocqueville the "pupil" of Montesquieu.

38. The thesis that Rousseau was Tocqueville's "teacher" naturally requires that one very clear distinction be made: Tocqueville writes in totally changed circumstances. Rousseau's revolutionary principles (popular sovereignty, freedom and equality) are now prevailing law. One must live with them and make them fruitful. Tocqueville's political world also stood open for change. It was no longer a matter of a prudential, practical-philosophical "*science du legislateur*," but rather of actual tasks and possibilities for the legislator, at whose disposition the constitutional and administrative order by and large stood.

How little Montesquieu and how much Rousseau signified for a theoretical mind of Tocqueville's time in understanding the contemporary world, is underscored by Lorenz von Stein. Von Stein (born in 1815 and thus ten years younger than Tocqueville) wrote in his *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789–1850* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1964): "Montesquieu

In this essay I cannot deal more closely with the fundamental agreement between Rousseau and Tocqueville's thinking—an agreement not extending to details, of course, but one consisting in the manner in which Tocqueville sees the problem of politics, the future of man under the conditions of equality. Examples must suffice. When one stumbles across a connection between Rousseau and Tocqueville, one is almost in danger of underestimating the differences which naturally exist between them: Rousseau, still under the conditions of the *ancien régime*, intellectually anticipated the society of equals, while Tocqueville encountered such a society in full development in America, self-confident and secure in its continued existence. Indeed, the belief that a large state could not exist as a republic (much less, a democracy) was one of the firmest convictions of political theory. Tocqueville saw before his eyes in America a huge empire, organized in a republican and democratic fashion, whose existence was less endangered than any of the great European monarchies. Further, it is without exception with Rousseau's categories that he explains this astonishing state of affairs and sees and understands what is happening in America. When he writes in summary that America's federal form allows it to enjoy "the power of a great republic and the security of a small one," it matches almost word for word a sentence from Rousseau's work on Poland.[39]

But more basically, which traditional thinker could have supplied Tocqueville with the categories he needed in order to understand the fundamental destiny of the new world, i.e., democracy? Or who could have helped him understand a country in which the will of the people expressed itself through the laws, public opinion, and the prejudices of the masses—a will limited by morals grounded in a religiosity of seemingly modest demands, but for that reason all the more powerful? Tocqueville's appropriated Rousseau's concept of freedom in describing the republic as defined by the "slow and quiet action of society upon itself," distinguishing it from constitutional monarchy, in which authority "in a sense outside the body social, influences it and forces it to progress." "In the United States the motherland's presence is felt everywhere."[40] All the maxims of Rousseau's political genius had aimed at produc-

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merely showed what the old constitution might have been, not what the new one was to be" (p. 108). Allan Bloom refers to the "intimate relation" between Tocqueville and Rousseau—a surprising discovery for him, as well. See his "The Study of Texts," in *Political Theory and Political Education*, M. Richter, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 135–37.

39. *D.i.A.* I, p. 264 (*O.C.* I, 1 p. 300); Rousseau, *The Government of Poland* XI, toward the end in *Œuvres Complètes*, Bibl. de la Pléiade III, p. 1010, translated with an introduction and notes by Willmoore Kendall (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), p. 72. To be sure, Montesquieu, too, saw the possibility of a federated republic which would benefit from the intrinsic health of (small) numbers and, at the same time, thanks to the federation, command the advantages of a great republic (*The Spirit of the Laws* IX, 1). Regarding this question of utmost importance to Tocqueville, cf. Schleifer, *op. cit.*, pp. 112–18.

40. *D.i.A.* I, pp. 53, 85, 362, (*O.C.* I, 1 pp. 56, 95, 412) ("*la patrie se fait sentir partout*")

ing this result. "It is a just observation," Tocqueville quotes Hamilton, "the people commonly intend the PUBLIC GOOD. This often applies to their very errors." Who could overlook the fact that Hamilton was quoting Rousseau?[41] According to Tocqueville, the society of equals stands before the alternative of the egalitarian, free republic and egalitarian despotism. For the individual, this alternative means being a citizen or a subject—*citoyen* or bourgeois. Tocqueville sees, as Rousseau had, the moral problem in a world in which equality has ruptured the ties of dependence and belonging. In every conceivable way, egoism must be broken, diverted, circumvented, by forcing men to concern themselves with others' affairs as well as their own. To lay upon men the bonds of brotherhood, or to tie these bonds anew, as the case may be, and to make them legitimate—this is Rousseau's central problem, formulated in the first lines of *The Social Contract*. And Tocqueville is concerned with the same thing. Perhaps the most frequently used word in Tocqueville's work is the word "bonds" (*liens*). No more than did Rousseau does Tocqueville wish to extinguish the individuality of the person. However, for the sake of morality and the nobility of the soul, man, who is threatened by "individualism" (Tocqueville's term for what Rousseau called *amour propre*[42]) and abandoned to his egoistic weakness in the egalitarian, anomic, "unfettered" society, must be surrounded in every conceivable way with the bonds of brotherhood. Only the political order which tears the individual out from behind the walls of his ego can secure these bonds and continually tighten them.

Tocqueville is no more a liberal than is Rousseau. To the extent that they are, they are liberals of a very special kind. Neither is interested in the governmental order from the perspective of bourgeois liberalism, i.e., out of the motive of securing freedom for the individual. Certainly the individual needs freedom and guarantees of this freedom, too. But this freedom is active, oriented to the social and political order, and its services are constantly laid claim to by the social and political order—the freedom of the *citoyen*, not of the bourgeois. What must be cultivated is the spiritual disposition to freedom, the "taste for freedom," the "satisfaction of being free," "dependent not upon man but upon God and the law." This freedom unites men; it is not the freedom of the individual who withdraws into his own private space.

Tocqueville shares with Rousseau a thoroughly pedagogical, formative view of the political problem. If Rousseau could say that Plato's *Republic* was the most magnificent book written on education, Rousseau's philosophical endeavor itself centered on nothing so much as the elevation of man to his true nature, needful to him and perhaps possible. As is well known, *The Social Contract* is presented in summary form in the *Émile*, a book which Tocqueville

41. *D.i.A.* I, p. 139 (*O.C.* I, 1 p. 156).

42. Jean-Claude Lamberti, *La Notion d'individualisme chez Tocqueville* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970).

must have known especially well; parallels to the *Émile* are particularly evident in the second volume of *Democracy in America*.[43]

The moral-educational probing is tied to something else which is important to an understanding of Tocqueville in the light of Rousseau. If we distinguish in politics or pedagogy between principles and maxims, the *Émile* is almost exclusively a compendium of instructions, of maxims of the pedagogical art. Indeed, the book presents itself thus in its first sentence: "This collection of reflections and observations, without order and almost without cohesion " *The Social Contract*, on the contrary, bears the subtitle, "or Principles of Political Right" (*ou principes du droit politique*). In the first sentence of *The Social Contract* one reads: "I wish to determine whether there can be in the civil order of life, any kind of principle (*règle*) for a legitimate and incontestable form of government."

Generally then, one sees in the political Rousseau only the man of the "principles"—Freedom, Equality, Popular Sovereignty—the doctrinaire of the *Contrat Social*. In Germany this is a tradition extending back to Kant. But *The Social Contract* is only a fragment of a planned larger work on "Political Institutions." That never completed work would in any case have dealt with much more than just principles. Even at the conclusion of *The Social Contract* itself, Rousseau writes, "After the true axioms of constitutional law are established and an attempt has been made to provide the state with its foundation " (IV,9). That is, there is to be a consideration of this foundation with the help of the maxims of the art of governing. Three-quarters of *The Social Contract* deals with the art of governing—not with principles as general rules, but with how to "lend drive and will" to the body politic, with what "must be done for its preservation" (II,6), and with how one must alter general goals according to the circumstances in establishing a good state (II,11). The perspective (what is fashionably termed the "theoretical interest" [*Erkenntnisinteresse*] but is more properly called the "need to know" [*Wissensbedürftigkeit*] from which the knowledge of political science in Rousseau's sense, beyond the question of universally applicable principles, is sought, is the perspective of the legislator, and, in the course of time, of the statesman. His knowledge, viewed as a whole, is empirical, substantive and saturated with experience. Like the Greek φρόνησις, it is prudential and practical in character, able to differentiate one situation from another. Precisely in these matters, Tocqueville could have learned at least as much from Rousseau as from Montesquieu.[44]

43. This is true above all of the third section of Volume II, which treats of the "Influence of Democracy on Mores Properly So Called."

44. Here I must let these suggestions and assertions suffice and hope at a later time to be able to portray in greater depth Tocqueville's "inspiration"—the term is perhaps more fitting than any other—by Rousseau. Only a completely rigidified picture of Rousseau, e.g., that of the theoreticians of "*identitären Demokratie*," could make the reference to their relationship appear so questionable. (Cf. the convention report by Jutta Höffken in *Politische Vierteljahrschrift*, 21 [1980], p. 410.)

III

Guided by Tocqueville's relationship to Rousseau we find the path into the deeper levels of his thought. What Rousseau says of himself in anti-Cartesian fashion, namely that he feels and senses before he thinks, is also true of Tocqueville. He considers men's feelings as more important, more fundamental to their life together, than their thinking, i.e., than their rationally considered rights and interests. "I am convinced," he writes in a previously quoted letter dated September 17, 1853, "that political societies are not the products of their laws, but are from the very beginning determined by the feelings, beliefs, ideas, and habits of the hearts and minds of their members, and that these latter are in turn formed through nature and through education."[45] Tocqueville's concerns do not originate in his head; the head is an organ of the worrying and hoping soul. Like Rousseau, Tocqueville is convinced "that the true greatness of man consists exclusively in the accord between the feeling for freedom and religious sentiment" and that the question at issue is "the enlivening and taming of the soul" (*ibid.*).

If that is so, Tocqueville's true problem can not be that of freedom and equality, as one reads everywhere. Just as our epistemological-sociological prejudices cause us to see Tocqueville in the tradition of Montesquieu instead of that of Rousseau, so do we ascribe to him a problem which is in fact the dominant real-historical problem of the nineteenth century and still to some extent of our century: the power struggle of the third and fourth estates, liberal bourgeoisie and proletariat, or if you will, of freedom and equality, liberalism and democracy. Real-historically, these were the stakes in the struggle over education, the franchise, power and taxes. From the side of the bourgeoisie, this struggle was reflected in the thought of men from John Stuart Mill to Max Weber and Carl Schmitt. But Tocqueville is no bourgeois. His situation, his philosophical instinct, and his bias toward freedom and human dignity, permit him the same distance from the real-historical conflicts of the period after the Revolution as Rousseau enjoyed in the period preceding it.[46]

Tocqueville always saw but one alternative for the future: either an unfree, egalitarian society of disconnected and weak individuals under the domination of a new despotism, or the free egalitarian society of those who remain free through close association. Each of these possibilities is defined by equality. They differ in the association, the spiritual and political league, which makes it possible for equals to preserve their strength and therewith their freedom. Democracy, the equality of conditions, furthers the danger of men succumbing

45 *O.C.* [B] VI, pp. 226f., in Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

46. Naturally, this must be taken with numerous grains of salt. Tocqueville the active politician had his place in the political class conflicts of his day—he always remained a "defender of property" (A. Jardin). Michael Hereth convincingly discusses the stale thesis that Tocqueville is the classical author for the opposition of freedom and equality. "Die Gleichheit als Gegner der Freiheit?" in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 31/80 (August 2, 1980), pp. 34ff.

to the *amour propre* of individualism. There is no road leading back to aristocracy, to a society founded upon an inequality which binds all men tightly together. Even the old, pre-democratic idea of freedom is finished. "According to the modern, the democratic, and—I dare say—the correct conception of freedom, every man has from his birth onwards an equal and perpetual right in everything which touches on himself alone," from which it follows "that the sovereign will can only proceed from the coming together of the decisions of all wills." "From this point on, obedience"—Tocqueville here means personally owed obedience—"has also lost its moral foundation; and between the manly and proud virtues of the citizen and lowly compliance of the slave there is no middle ground."[47]

Thus men's mutual detachedness, the other side of equality, threatens freedom; and Tocqueville's "new political science" sees itself faced with the specific task "of showing men what they must do to escape tyranny and degeneration once they become democratic." This, Tocqueville wrote in 1836—after the appearance of the first volume of *Democracy in America*—was the most general idea with which one could summarize the meaning of his book.[48]

IV

With that we can finally turn our attention to the task of representing, at least in outline, Tocqueville's "new political science." Tocqueville, and still more the Tocqueville literature (to which we owe so much for the understanding of the man), make this difficult. Tocqueville, like every political philosopher, wrote with a purpose: he wished to reconcile democracy and Christianity, convinced "that only freedom (I mean, moderate and regular) and religion, in a joint effort, can pull men out of the swamp into which democracy casts them as soon as one of these supports is missing."[49] He also wants to reconcile the men of his own class to democracy, and he does nothing which could detract from this purpose. Why call Rousseau the forefather of the revolution, why talk of fraternity, when this third concept of the revolutionary trinity has been so besmirched? But the linkage of freedom, equality and fraternity concerns Rousseau, and it is fraternity, the equivalent of the friendship which supports harmony in the πόλις, that points to those central ideas from which something

47. From the essay of 1836 on "L'État social et politique de la France avant et depuis 1789" (in Landshut, *op. cit.*, pp. 141f.). The strict rejection of all personal domination and thus of the subordination of one person to another in the new state of affairs (the core of Rousseau's concept of freedom) appears to me to be Rousseau's most important legacy. And just as with Rousseau, it is all the more crucial that those consequently abandoned to individual isolation (*Vereinzelung*) be joined together through intensive "social contracting." That is the fundamental idea, common to Rousseau and Tocqueville, of the "*science politique nouvelle*." The new science of associations is only its most important subdiscipline.

48. Letter to Kergolay, December 26, 1836 (*O.C.* XIII, 1 p. 431) Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

49. Letter of December 1, 1859 (*O.C.* [B] VII, p. 295). Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

like a "system" of his "new political science" can be inferred. In sentences which, once again, sound very "Rousseauan," the elderly Tocqueville wrote to a friend in 1856:

> You can hardly imagine, honorable lady, how painful and terrible it is for me to live in this moral isolation, to feel as if I were living outside the intellectual community of my country and time. Solitude in the desert would be no more difficult for me than this isolation in the midst of humanity. For, I will confess to you this weakness, isolation has always frightened me; and to be happy and even serene, I always had to live in a certain concord with others and to be able to count upon the understanding of my own kind—perhaps more than one can reconcile with wisdom. To me especially the line applies: "It is not good to be alone."[50]

Since Aristotle's definition of man as a being characterized by speech, i.e., characterized in a special way by sociality, and requiring the political community in order to develop fully as ζῷον πολιτικόν there have been many linkages made between anthropology and politics. They occur in the central themes of classical political philosophy, of modern rational natural law, and even in the work of Marx—at the end of these efforts and purportedly superseding them. None of them seems to me to be more valid or more modern in its "hoping hopelessness" than that of Tocqueville.

The bitterness of loneliness is a primeval human experience. Tocqueville affirms this; but he radicalizes an experience suffered so much more prevalently in modern society by making this oldest pronouncement of our Judaeo-Christian conception of human history the basis of his entire political thought: It is not only oppressive and sad—it is *not good*, it weakens and destroys spiritual strength and the soul of man if he is not torn from behind the walls of his ego into constant, social and brotherly responsibility. The broadest association in which this can be accomplished is the state. In aristocracy, this happened "naturally" on account of the historical abundance of social "*liens*." In the society of equals it must be pursued "artificially." However, this is only possible on a basis which is in each instance historically given and therefore fortuitous and contingent. America shows how it can be done, for there the circumstances, the laws, and morals, held off an even greater danger of isolation stemming from equality of conditions. It is the task of the legislator, of the "leaders of society" (from whose ideal perspective and for the sake of whose enlightenment Tocqueville's political science is pursued) to utilize all the ties in a given social fabric, to strengthen or "artificially" reestablish them in order to promote the bonds of brotherhood. Even when he insists that that which was "natural" in aristocratic society must be pursued "artificially" in the society of equals, Tocqueville is not a rational constructionist. Entirely within the footsteps of Rousseau, he seeks social ties within the given. To establish these ties

50. Letter of January 1, 1856, to Madame Swetchine (*O.C.* [B] VII, p. 295). Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

and protect them from harm is the task of the "leaders of society," just as it is the task of the educator to guide the pupil in accordance with his talents and the circumstances.

If the interpretation of Tocqueville's political science takes as its starting point the statement, "It is not good to be alone," we are past the relationship of freedom and equality and are dealing with human togetherness in mutual dependency and aid. Here lies Tocqueville's central thought, in the light of which everything else, even his doctrine of the new despotism, is explicable. I will clarify this by referring to the chapters on individualism in the second volume of *Democracy in America*.

In aristocratic societies, all men are linked to their fellow citizens above, below and inside their order of rank. In a manner of speaking, they are adjacent to one another. They are therefore almost always "closely tied to something outside themselves," and thus often ready "to forget themselves." In democratic ages, on the other hand, devotion to another human being would be rarer. "The bond of human affection stretches and loosens." Under the conditions of equality, every class comes closer to the others and mixes with them. Men become indifferent and "at the same time, alien to one another." "Aristocracy formed of all citizens a long chain that reached from the peasant up to the king; democracy breaks the chain and segregates each link unto itself."

> Thus, not only does democracy make men forget their ancestors, but it also clouds their view of their descendants and isolates them from their contemporaries. Even man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart.[51]

This is despotism's golden opportunity. Fearful by nature, it perceives in men's isolation the surest guarantee of its own duration. No vice of the human heart so suits it as does egotism. "A despot will lightly forgive his subjects for not loving him, provided they do not love one another. . . Despotism, dangerous at all times, is therefore particularly to be feared in ages of democracy."[52]

How is one to combat this? "Citizens who are bound to take part in public affairs must turn from their private interests and occasionally take a look at something other than themselves." In the common management of the community's affairs, everyone notices that "he is not as independent of his fellows as he used to suppose and that to get their help he must often offer his aid to them." One must endeavor to attract the esteem and affection of those in whose midst one must live.

> Those frigid passions that keep hearts asunder must then retreat and hide at the back of consciousness. Pride must be disguised; contempt must not be seen. Egotism is afraid of itself.[53]

51. *D.i.A.* II, p. 478 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 106).
52. *D.i.A.* II, p. 481 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 109).
53. *D.i.A.* II, pp. 481–82 (*O.C.* I, 2 pp. 110–11).

In America, the perfected democracy, Tocqueville sees that it is possible, was possible there at any rate, to combat the democratic isolation which leads morally to the numbing of hearts and politically to despotism. "The Americans have used liberty to combat the individualism born of equality; and they have won." By preventing the centralization of administration, America's lawgivers gave every region "its own political life so that there should be an infinite number of occasions for the citizens to act together and so that every day they should feel that they depended on one another. That was wise conduct."

Squarely on the path cut by Rousseau, Tocqueville virtually enthuses: The free institutions which the Americans possess and the political rights of which they make such active use

> provide a thousand continual reminders to every citizen that he lives in society. At every moment they bring his mind back to this idea, that it is the duty as well as the interest of men to be useful to their fellows. Having no particular reason to hate others, since he is neither their slave nor their master, the American's heart easily inclines toward benevolence. At first it is of necessity that men attend to the public interest, afterward by choice. What had been calculation becomes instinct. By dint of working for the good of his fellow citizens, he in the end acquires a habit and taste for serving them (*D.i.A.* II, p. 484).

The great means of spreading this inclination are the "associations," the unifying alliances, sometimes for political purposes but more importantly those "which arise in bourgeois life and have no political purpose." How important such alliances are for Tocqueville is generally known. It is precisely here that he seems to be continuing Montesquieu's teaching concerning the freedom-preserving function of the *pouvoirs intermédiaires*. But that is entirely incorrect; at least the context is so totally different that the reference to Montesquieu rather clouds the meaning of "associations" in Tocqueville's writings. The intermediate powers of Montesquieu only have their place in monarchy; their presence "forms the essence of the monarchical form of government" (*Spirit of the Laws* II,4). Mechanically, they are necessary to prevent the degeneration of monarchy into despotism. Because Tocqueville's concept of freedom is entirely different from that of Montesquieu, the task of Tocqueville's "associations" in preserving freedom, in morally establishing both community and freedom, is totally different. I can not demonstrate here how subtly Tocqueville distances himself from Montesquieu on this point. Tocqueville insinuates that even in relation to aristocratic society, to which alone Montesquieu's teaching applies, Montesquieu recognized only the cruder, more mechanical aspects of the limitation of power. These are "easy to comprehend."[54] There is in Montesquieu no discussion of the "less well-known but not less powerful barriers" of inclination, morals, religion, provincial prejudice, custom and public opinion, which had formed themselves like an "invisible ring" around the old power of

54. *D.i.A.* I, p. 286 (*O.C.* I, 1 pp. 326–27).

the state.[55] Montesquieu, child of the Enlightenment, had underestimated religion and thus failed to recognize the actual reason for the duration of despotic regimes, whose roots lay in religious feeling and not in fear. In the same way he misperceived the power of religious and moral restraints in constitutional monarchy, where they hindered despotic degeneration. Tocqueville's teaching concerning associations is also thoroughly imbued with the observational acuity and the moral spirit of Rousseau. This, as he emphasizes, "*science nouvelle*"[56] of the art of association becomes the "fundamental science"—*science mère*—in democracy.[57] The individual would sink into impotence and debility and culture itself would be threatened by barbarism if men did not avail themselves constantly of associations. "Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another."[58] These lines contain the true essence of Tocqueville's "political science."

This being so, it is clear that the true object of political science, its systematic center, must be the factors which promote or, as the case may be, oppose "human interaction." What brings men together? What drives them apart? The modern answer, already found in the Enlightenment and in Hobbes, is clear: interest. Tocqueville, no less than Rousseau, knew that to move men one must appeal to their interests.[59] But as on the one hand the "human mind" inclines to the banal, material and useful, so on the other hand it is "naturally drawn toward the infinite, the spiritual, and the beautiful. Physical needs hold it to the earth, but when these are relaxed, it rises of its own accord."[60]

Lasting ties can only be established on the basis of ideas, passions and feelings, which always bind men together, even if in hatred toward one another. When "[n]o longer do ideas, but interests only" bind men together (democracy's specific danger), "it would seem that human opinions were no more than a sort of mental dust open to the wind on every side and unable to come together and take shape."[61] When, as in France before the February Revolution, "restricted goals and points of view which are taken from private

55. *D.i.A.* I, p. 287 (*O.C.* I, 1 p. 327).

56. *D.i.A.* II, p. 486 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 114). The chapter entitled "Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life" begins with a clear distancing from the "*pouvoirs intermédiaires*" of the old regime: "*Je ne veux pas parler* " The designation of "*science nouvelle*" also distinguishes his teaching on "*associations secondaires*" (his consistent choice of words) from that of Montesquieu.

57. *D.i.A.* II, pp. 488, 494 (*O.C.* I, 2 pp. 117, 174). Tocqueville's belief in the power of associations must be viewed in the context of the manifold associational movements of the time (Buchez, Lacordaire, Lamennais, St. Simon and the early socialists). Tocqueville's position within the thought of his time has, in the absence of even a minimally satisfactory biography, virtually not been researched at all. An overview is provided by Maxime Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France*, Vol. II: *De Babeuf à Tocqueville* (Paris, 1962).

58. *D.i.A.* II, pp. 486, 487 (*O.C.* I, 2 pp. 114, 115).

59. Classically stated in *The Government of Poland*, Chapter IX (*op. cit.*, p. 79).

60. *D.i.A.* II, p. 424 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 44).

61. *D.i.A.* II, p. 396 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 15).

life and its interests" progressively take the place of "general views, sentiments and ideas,"[62] the common weal goes downhill, and revolution is just around the corner. What these lines from the well-known address of January 1, 1848, to the Chamber of Deputies express of contemporary political concern, also forms the deepest foundation of Tocqueville's political theory. That men must be bound together in the state by ideas and views held in common, that not interests but feelings and opinions form the social cement, that only they prevent isolation and the dissolution of the chain—this is the persistent theme of Tocqueville's truly theoretical work, the second volume of *Democracy in America*.

It is easily seen "that no society could prosper without such beliefs." Without ideas in common, there can be no common action; without common action, there are of course men, but there is no societal body.

> So for society to exist and, even more for society to prosper, it is essential that all the minds of the citizens should always be rallied and held together by some leading ideas; but that could never happen unless each of them sometimes came to draw his opinions from the same source and was ready to accept some beliefs ready made [*croyances toutes faites*].[63]

Dogmatic convictions are no less indispensable for man's "living alone than for acting in common with his fellows." It is not conscious choice which causes men to adopt most of their views without examining them for themselves—"the inflexible laws of his existence compel him to behave like that."[64] *La loi inflexible de sa condition*—one must search long and hard to find any more decisive anthropological declaration in Tocqueville.

Tocqueville's "*cogito*" is diametrically opposed to that of Descartes. One might formulate it as follows: "I am able to be a man among men because I, like all the others, accept most things unexamined." In the name of freedom and human dignity, Tocqueville rehabilitated prejudice. "[A]ny man accepting any opinion on trust from another puts his mind in bondage." "But," continues Tocqueville, "it is a salutary bondage, which allows him to make good use of freedom."[65] Men can not survive without dogmatic beliefs. Their possession is desirable; and of all dogmatic beliefs, regarded from a purely worldly and scientific perspective, religious beliefs are "the most desirable of all."[66] There is "hardly any human action . which does not result from some very general conception which men have of God, of His relations with the human race, of the nature of their soul, and of their duties to their fellows." These ideas are "the common spring from which all else originates." All religions which remain within this realm and do not strive to go beyond it "impose a salutary

62. Address to the Chamber of Deputies on January 27, 1848; Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
63. *D.i.A.* II, p. 398 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 16).
64. *Ibid.* (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 17).
65. *D.i.A.* II, p. 399 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 17).
66. *D.i.A.* II, p. 408 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 27).

control on the intellect," and though they do not save men in the next world, they "greatly contribute to their happiness and dignity in this."[67]

I shall leave to one side the many advantages which religion confers on democratic peoples in particular—the central point of comparison between America and France—and only direct attention once more to that central political idea which is almost a warranty of salvation: the combating of egotism by means of socialization. From Machiavelli via Hobbes, to Rousseau, the relation of the Christian belief in God to patriotism is the core problem of modern political theory. All three men tried, as Rousseau said of Hobbes in *The Social Contract*, "to reunite the two heads of the eagle." This is Tocqueville's problem, as well, and with Rousseau he can say: "Everything which destroys social unity is without value. All institutions which bring man into contradiction with himself are worthless." Tocqueville expresses it in a letter as follows:

> I should like it if the priests would tell men more often that they, even as Christians, belong to one of these great human associations which God has doubtless founded in order to make visible and palpable those ties by which individuals are bound to one another. These associations are called peoples, and their territory the motherland. I wish that we might stamp it deeply on each and every soul—everyone belongs first to this collective entity and only then to himself.[68]

Here is someone who actually believes he can look over God's shoulder—to see that God "doubtless" founded the great associations in order to make visible and tangible the ties, the *liens*, by which individuals are bound together. There must be no indifference regarding the motherland; nor dare one make of this indifference a spiritless virtue, "which weakens some of our noblest instincts." "When a people's religion is destroyed, doubt invades the highest faculties of the mind and half paralyzes all the rest." Such a skeptical state "inevitably enervates the soul, and relaxing the springs of the will, prepares a people for bondage."[69] Again and again he states that skepticism always seemed to him to be "the worst evil in the world."[70]

> What one finds most scarce today are the passions, genuine and powerful passions which hold life together and guide it. We can no longer desire, no longer love and no longer hate. Skepticism and humanitarianism completely paralyze us; make us incapable of performing either good or evil in a grand style; force us to flutter clumsily around a myriad petty things, of which not one attracts us, powerfully repels us or forcibly arrests us.[71]

67. *D.i.A.* II, pp. 408, 409 (*O.C.* I, 2 pp. 27, 28).

68. Letter dated October 20, 1856 (*O.C.* [B] VI, p. 347), in Salomon, *op. cit.*, pp. 226f.

69. *D.i.A.* II, p. 409 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 28).

70. Letter dated August 1, 1850 (*O.C.* [B] VI, p. 154) in Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 207. Certainly Tocqueville, as a modern man, must have repeatedly had to wrestle with skepticism within himself. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental misunderstanding to think that Tocqueville's way of thinking can be reduced to the formula of "skeptical liberalism" (thus, R. Leicht in Höffken, *op. cit.*, p. 408, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 26/27, 1980).

71. Letter dated August 10, 1841 (*O.C.* [B] VI, p. 117), in Salomon, *op. cit.*, pp. 197f.

V

Tocqueville has always been regarded as a great liberal thinker whose major concern was how freedom could be preserved in equality. That he, who was, if a liberal, then "a liberal of a new sort," would be in this manner misunderstood, was one of Tocqueville's constant worries. On March 22, 1852, he wrote:

> They are absolutely set upon making me a party man, although I am not one. They ascribe passions to me and I only have opinions; or better, I have only one passion —the love of freedom and human dignity.[72]

It is hard to see where the typical liberal aims could ever have been Tocqueville's. He had but one aim, and for its sake he sought to harness politics and the political order: "to combat the weaknesses of the human heart." The weakness of man lies in egotism; spiritual self-degradation follows upon it. The ever-present weakness of men is intensified by their isolation, the dissolution of the *liens* of the old society in the society of equals. Therefore, the "world itself quite new" demands a new political science. For not the ruler, but political rule, political life together is what must render our weakness assistance. It is precisely for this reason that political science is the most important of all the sciences.

The diagnosis of the new form of despotism has been regarded as Tocqueville's greatest achievement in the field of political science. One can only agree with this. However, his accomplishment is obscured, his institutional reflections are given undue weight, when he is viewed from the scientific perspective of our time and it is overlooked that Tocqueville is, precisely here, a political scientist in the tradition of Plato and Rousseau—a moral historian, or, if you will, an analyst of the order and disorder of the human soul in the age of democracy.

In order to make Tocqueville's concerns more understandable to the modern mind, we might do well to elucidate Tocqueville's analysis of egalitarian despotism with the help of the categories of Max Weber.

The evil with which Montesquieu was still confronted was absolute monarchy which threatened to degenerate into unrestricted personal rule, the "despotism" of Louis XIV and his successor. Tocqueville wrote within the context of any entirely different world: a democratic world, in which even caesaristic rule, such as that of both Bonapartes, legitimized itself in a plebiscitary-democratic way. This democratic caesarism no longer bears the character of personal rule, i.e., of personal loyalty. The chain is broken, the new master is faceless. He is not interesting, and Tocqueville had nothing to say about him. Thus Tocqueville writes that "despotism corrupts the man who submits to it much more than the man who imposes it,"[73] and, "I am much less interested in the question

72. Letter dated March 22, 1837 (*O.C.* [B] VI, pp. 70f.), in Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

73. *D.i.A.* II, p. 668 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 325).

who my master is than in the fact of obedience."[74] If we adopt Tocqueville's analytic tools for the recognition of despotic dangers, the "strong man" is of no interest. He is, as Tocqueville said of Napoleon I, a mere accident.

Tocqueville's theme is no longer personal domination, but in Max Weber's sense, rationally legitimated domination and the specific motives to submission which are necessary for it in the age of equality. In aristocratic times, the motives for submission and obedience to a certain extent follow the master; in democratic times, things are reversed. Here the motives for submission are the controlling theme; domination follows submission: *oboedientia facit imperantem*. The character of domination is not defined by the ruler, but principally, as in classical politics, by those who obey: either free men or slaves. Thus, Tocqueville's indifference regarding the character of the ruler.

Nowhere, at least not overtly (but remember that he is addressing the "leaders of society"[75]), does Tocqueville revert to what he considers an antiquated theme—the analysis of contemporary rule from a personal perspective. He seeks in vain for a word for the new sort of oppression which threatens democratic peoples, a word that would

> exactly express the whole of the conception I have formed. Such old words as "despotism" and "tyranny" do not fit. The thing is new, and as I cannot find a word for it, I must try to define it.[76]

What he describes are the small souls' motives for submission in a system of domination which legitimizes itself rationally, objectively, through increasing provision of security and social welfare. He never speaks of a personal "ruler," but rather of the "sovereign," the "tutelary power" or, most often, entirely matter-of-factly, the "central power." The image of "regulated, mild and peaceful servitude" which he draws is much more easily assimilable with some of the outward forms of freedom than one might think, so that "it would not even be impossible for it to build its nest in the very shadow of popular sovereignty." Men

> console themselves for being under schoolmasters by thinking that they have chosen them themselves. Each individual lets them put the collar on, for he sees that it is not a person, or a class of persons, but society itself which holds the end of the chain.[77]

Tocqueville could not yet form a mental picture of the extent to which men in the both democratic and technical-scientific civilization of our time would become slaves to the conditions of this civilization. The pampering of *amour*

74. *D.i.A.* II, p. 668 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 325).

75. Concerning who these might actually be, Tocqueville is as unclear as Rousseau was. Here lies the objective-sociological and theoretical dilemma of every political theory in the age of equality.

76. *D.i.A.* II, p. 666 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 324).

77. *D.i.A.* II, pp. 667–68 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 325).

propre, the encouragement of every sort of emancipation from one's duties to others, has become the guiding maxim of democratic politics in all Western nations. We have difficulties conceiving what Tocqueville could have meant by freedom. Tocqueville's freedom (here, too, in conformity with Rousseau) has nothing to do with freedom from distress, burdens or the circumstances in which man may find himself vis-à-vis nature or his own kind. But rather, it is a matter of independence, of man's self-reliance in little things. Rousseau prepared the path for him, but Tocqueville, among the theoreticians of politics, is nevertheless the first realistic analyst of that disenchantment of the modern world resulting from rationalism, industry, improved productivity and bureaucracy. Certainly, and he clearly says so, the concepts of despotism and tyranny do not fit. But what he describes is the illegitimacy of relations which are illegitimate and inhuman even when (and perhaps are made even more illegitimate because) they find popular approval.

Here is the key to the significance which Tocqueville attaches to morals in democracy. Political analysis must turn from the structures of rule to the structures of obedience. Thus, he says again and again that he is concerned not with the ruler, but with obedience. Nowhere—in any case not explicitly, although certainly implicitly—is Tocqueville concerned with the illumination of rule, but rather with that illumination which might awaken the souls of citizens. That is his actual theme, his only theme: How can we prevent the degradation of souls in an age of equality which has been willed by destiny? For Tocqueville as for Rousseau, man in his humanity is defined by his freedom. He can choose the high road or the low road. Keeping him from choosing the more comfortable path is what determines the many institutional suggestions and considerations to be found in Tocqueville. In themselves they are unimportant and dated.[78] What is important is that man's sense for the higher things he preserved and that his sensitivity to greatness be prevented from falling asleep. Therefore he writes at the end of his major work, and I quote it again:

> Let us then look forward to the future with that salutary fear which makes men keep watch and ward for freedom, and not with that flabby, idle terror which makes men's hearts sink and enervates them.[79]

The political world changes, "and we must now seek new remedies for new ills."[80]

This challenge toward the end of *Democracy in America* is a response to the demand for a new political science in the "Author's Introduction." Tocqueville formulates the theme of this science as an appeal to the "legislator":

78. Naturally, the institutions and empirical characteristics of America furnished him with the material for his principal work. And certainly the descriptions and reflections which these occasioned are fascinating and "classic." But the "*science politique nouvelle*," his basic philosophic-political concern, lies beyond these empirical characteristics.

79. *D.i.A.* II, p. 676 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 335).

80. *D.i.A.* II, p. 675 (*O.C.* I, 2 p. 334).

> It would seem that sovereigns now only seek to do great things with men. I wish that they would try a little more to make men great, that they should attach less importance to the work and more to the workman, that they should constantly remember that a nation cannot long remain great if each man is individually weak, and that no one has yet devised a form of society or a political combination which can make a people energetic when it is composed of citizens who are flabby and feeble.[81]

I believe that I have found what Tocqueville was really concerned with in some lines by Erhart Kästner (the Greek Kästner). They are in the volume of his literary remains, *Der Hund in der Sonne* ("The Dog in the Sun") and helped to give it its peculiar title. I would like to quote them:

> There is a wonderful line in Seneca: "*Calamitosus animus futuri anxius*"—deeply unhappy is the soul that anxiously thinks about the future. How true. He who thinks about the future is not happy. But to think anxiously about the future is human. It is a truth of the first order and one with which we must live: Only with the look toward the uncertain, the anxious care, the prospective view, the hope at worry's threshold, the fear for the future—only then does that which distinguishes man begin. Without thought for the future is the dog in the sun. There is no doubt that the dog in the sun has received unexpected honors in modern times. He has become the great promise. The leaders of peoples have promised the tormented and untormented the dog in the sun for so long that in some countries he has become the model. Gradually it is becoming clear what lies at the bottom of it—a colossal contempt for humanity.[82]

Tocqueville was not the first who saw through the new despotism, the degradation of man by modern civilization. This title belongs to Rousseau. But the service of having first elevated this theme of the dog in the sun, modern servitude, through a comprehensive analysis, to the central theme of political science—this accomplishment is most certainly Tocqueville's.

81. *D.i.A.* II, p. 676 (*O.C.* I, 2 pp. 334–35).

82. Erhart Kästner, *Der Hund in der Sonne* (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch, 1975), p. 5.

An Account of Recent Scholarship in Medieval Islamic Philosophy

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Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by F. W. Zimmermann. (The British Academy Classical and Medieval Logic Texts; London: Oxford University Press, 1981. clii + 287 pp.: $145.00.)

Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Nasr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fādila. A Revised Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, by Richard Walzer. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. vii + 569 pp.: $65.00.)

An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy. By Oliver Leaman. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. xii + 208 pp.: paper, $12.95.)

Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation. By Barry S. Kogan. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985. xi + 348 pp.: paper, $16.95.)

Al-Matn al-Rushdī: Madkhal li-Qirā'ah Jadīdah [Averroes' Corpus: Preface to a New Reading]. By Jamāl al-Dīn al-'Alawī. (Casablanca: Editions Toubkal, 1986. 245 pp.: paper, $12.00.)

The five books to be discussed here comprise two translations, one with an accompanying edition of the Arabic text; one general account of Islamic philosophy; one detailed analysis of a problem central to Averroes' metaphysical teaching; and one examination of the problems attendant upon the heretofore accepted divisions of Averroes' writings, especially his commentaries on Aristotle. In what follows, I will try to explain briefly what each book is about and identify its salient features. Aware that many readers of *Interpretation* will not be totally familiar with the details of scholarship about medieval Islamic philosophy, I will try to place each book within its scholarly context and draw attention to the larger questions that surround it or the particular philosopher to whose work it is addressed.

Abū Nasr Muhammad al-Fārābī (about 870–950) is generally considered to be the most important among the Islamic philosophers. If not the first, that honor going to Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. about 866), Farabi is certainly the one who most captured the imagination of his readers by his subtle investigations of all aspects of philosophy. His acumen was such that he

came to be known within the Arabic tradition as "the second teacher," the first being Aristotle.

Thanks to Muhsin Mahdi, Farabi's famous treatises *The Philosophy of Plato, The Philosophy of Aristotle*, and *The Attainment of Happiness* are now available in English. Another work, his *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, is available in a fairly reliable English translation; and part of his famous *Political Regime* has been aptly translated by Fauzi Najjar in the Lerner-Mahdi *Sourcebook in Medieval Political Philosophy*.

But few of Farabi's works on logic have been translated into English. Scholars were therefore desirous of having Zimmermann's translation of Farabi's *Commentary* and *Short Treatise* on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, almost desirous enough to overlook the extraordinarily high price of the work, providing it were reliable. Their hopes were in vain. Neither the translation nor the long introduction seeking to explain how Farabi may have gathered the ideas expressed in these works justifies the price. We are told in the introduction that Farabi was anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, and critical of Arabic thought in general. Zimmermann also claims that Farabi was unduly enamored of Greek thought and expression though aware of Greek to only a limited degree, ignorant of Syriac, and without knowledge of the basic features of Arabic grammar and style. To buttress this last point, Zimmermann calls upon what he takes to be his own superior mastery of Arabic to explain, painstakingly, how he would rewrite many of Farabi's examples (pp. cxxix–cxxxvii). He then goes on to revise Farabi's text in the translation via emendations, omissions, and additions.

Zimmermann is best at historical accounts, especially at recounting the tradition of Aristotelian commentary. Here, his wide reading and tedious attention to detail bear fruit. His concern with history is so pronounced, however, that he deems a sufficient explanation of an idea to consist in a relation of its genesis and historical context. Moreover, claiming that he intends to "facilitate" the evaluation of philosophical ideas rather than to "anticipate" it (xi:32–34), he limits himself to an indication of the sources known by Farabi that might have prompted Farabi's observations about Aristotle's text or to an explanation of how the general historical setting influenced Farabi's thinking.

Whatever the merit of such a procedure for instructing us about the history of thought prior to Farabi, it all too frequently leads Zimmermann to erroneous conjectures about what Farabi himself thinks. For example, Zimmermann presumes that since Farabi was a Muslim living from the late ninth to middle tenth century he must have considered Islam to be above question and philosophy to be universal religion. Unable to make Farabi's discussion of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*) in Chapter Five of *The Enumeration of the Sciences* mesh with that judgment, Zimmermann seeks a psychological explanation or an otherwise obscure incident to resolve the difficulty (see xliii, n. 2 with cxiv–cxv). Yet attention to Farabi's larger political teaching or reflection

upon Farabi's conception of the task of philosophy would have allowed Zimmermann to avoid such a pitfall.

By far the weakest part of the volume is the translation. Zimmermann's contempt for Farabi's style and confidence that his own grasp of Arabic style is superior lead him to revise, rather than translate, Farabi's text. He does so as much in the notes to the introduction and to the translation in citing from other texts as in the body of the translation. His revisions take the form of using a number of different English expressions to translate the same Arabic term and, conversely, the same English expression to translate a number of different Arabic terms; omitting inconvenient or difficult terms; and adding to the text by means of words and clauses placed in square brackets.

Plentiful as are Zimmermann's notes, he rarely uses them to explain what prompts these emendations or what might justify the omissions and additions. He even alters simple stylistic devices such as parallel constructions while ignoring more complex constructions, which are nonetheless unique to Farabi's style. When prompted by some unspecified urge, Zimmermann introduces Aristotle's name into the text as though Farabi had cited him. Most often, nothing calls for such an insertion; and the sense of the sentence would have been better expressed by indirect phrasing. Finally, Zimmermann passes over in silence major textual problems that might be resolved by reference to similar passages elsewhere in the text or simply emends them without comment.

Though it hardly compensates for the price, the one uncontestable merit of the book is the list of variants and of corrected readings for the Arabic text that Zimmermann appends to his work.

The appearance of Walzer's edition and translation was also a cause for great rejoicing among scholars. Though it was first announced in the early 1970s, its fate had been the subject of much speculation after Walzer's death in 1975. Gerhard Endress explains in a footnote that he and his colleagues—all students of Walzer—did nothing to add to or correct the manuscript completed by Walzer before his death except for attempting to fill in the cross-references left blank in the original, removing mistakes and inconsistencies in the printing, drawing up a bibliography from material cited in the footnotes, and compiling detailed indexes. However commendable such dedication on their part, it did not suffice to overcome many shortcomings.

Walzer holds that the way to understand Farabi is to find the source for his ideas. The introduction and commentary are thus replete with suggestions about what authors or texts might have prompted various thoughts by Farabi. His adherence to this type of explanation is so deeply rooted that when unable to identify a particular author or text, Walzer surmises the existence of an author or text yet unknown to us. Consequently, all the criticisms made of Zimmermann's exegesis apply to Walzer's.

Once again, the price of the volume is exceedingly high. The price seems all

the more unwarranted when the reader notes that the English text is merely a photocopy of a typescript with unadjusted margins and the Arabic text a photocopy of a carelessly copied text written by hand. Moreover, the Arabic text is sometimes so faint as to be nearly illegible.

Walzer's learning was vast, and he was widely known for his careful attention to historical detail. It is apparent, however, that his scholarship did not extend to political questions. He is so unclear about Farabi's basic teaching as to mistranslate the title of the work itself, the proper title being *The Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City* and not *The Perfect State* nor even—as he suggests in the Introduction, p. 1—"Principles [i.e. essential features] of the Views of the Citizens of the Best State" (brackets in the original). More importantly, when Farabi explains that in addition to the various cities opposing the virtuous city—rendered here by Walzer as "the excellent city"—there are "individuals who are weeds within cities," Walzer translates "individuals who make up the common people in the various cities" (pp. 253–55). The Arabic is without ambiguity (*min afrād al-nās nawābit al-mudun*) and should call to mind similar terminology in the *Political Regime* with an extensive explanation that leaves no room for thinking that "weeds" (*nawābit*) refers to "common people" (see *Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyyah*, ed. Najjar [Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964], p. 87:5–7 or *The Political Regime*, trans. Najjar, in Lerner-Mahdi, *Sourcebook*, pp. 41–42).

As with Zimmermann, then, so with Walzer, we await a better translation and explanation of a very important text by Farabi. In Walzer's case, it is even difficult to be grateful for the edition of the Arabic text. Too many errors have slipped into the text. Some are surely due to carelessness, but others can only be understood as instances of mistaken readings of the Arabic manuscripts.

With Leaman's volume, we reach the nadir of contemporary scholarship on Islamic philosophy. The errors in English, in the transliteration of Arabic, and in the rendering of key philosophical terms, not to mention the grievous infringements against conventional scholarly procedure, are so many that one wonders how this book was ever accepted for publication. Since its appearance the book has been the subject of several attacks, including a lengthy one by myself ("On Scholarship and Scholarly Conventions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 [1986], pp. 725–32).

The volume is divided into two parts of three chapters each, one part concerned primarily with theoretical philosophy and the other with practical. To introduce his readers to Islamic philosophy, Leaman starts from the arguments of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111)—best known for his writings on theological questions—about such issues as the creation of the world, the nature of the soul and its immortality, and God's knowledge of particulars. He then explains how philosophers like Farabi, Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna (980–1037), Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd or

Averroes (1126–1198), and Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) discuss these same issues.

Leaman offers no justification for his inclusion of a theologian and a Jewish philosopher in his introduction to Islamic philosophy. The exegesis provides none either, for the basic explanation is in no way enhanced by their presence. Had Leaman proceeded historically, he might have introduced his reader to the dialectical unfolding of Islamic philosophy and thereby justified including Ghazali and Maimonides. That is, he might have begun by identifying the arguments in Farabi and Avicenna that aroused the ire of their coreligionists and then explained how Ghazali took it upon himself to defend the faith by attacking philosophy and especially these two philosophers. In that way, he would have been able to concentrate on the same basic themes and yet place them within their proper intellectual context, all the while showing how a continuous debate was carried on through time. Then Leaman could have introduced Averroes, emphasizing his explicit attempts to refute Ghazali and rehabilitate philosophy or at least to defend its pursuit. At this point, in order to justify the inclusion of Maimonides in what is ostensibly an introduction to Islamic philosophy, Leaman might have made a slight digression to explain how Maimonides takes his own philosophical bearings from the issues set forth in this larger debate and draws extensively on both the Islamic philosophers and theologians.

The part of the book devoted to practical philosophy is no more successful. Leaman begins by considering the question of religious ethics and whether they are deemed to be subjective or objective. In Islamic philosophy, however, the topic of ethics arises in a totally different context. Leaman would have been better advised to begin with Farabi's account of the virtues in *The Attainment of Happiness* or in *The Political Regime* and to explain how moral virtue—that is, ethics—fits into that larger view. He could then have examined how that account is modified by Avicenna, attacked by Ghazali, and eventually rehabilitated by Averroes. Instead, he becomes immersed in a discussion of how ethics is perceived in Islamic jurisprudence and theology. This approach eventually leads him to Maimonides and to religious, but not necessarily philosophical, themes.

Leaman's final chapter, "How to Read Islamic Philosophy," is primarily an attack on those who engage in what he terms an "esoteric" reading of philosophy—namely, Leo Strauss, Ralph Lerner, and myself. For some reason, Leaman does not include that other well-known practitioner of esoteric reading, Muhsin Mahdi, in this coterie. His attack on Lerner consists of drawing an unwarranted inference from a phrase in the introduction to Lerner's translation of Averroes' *Commentary on Plato's "Republic"*. Strauss is attacked by means of puerile countersuggestions about how to read Farabi on Plato's *Laws* or explain Maimonides' procedure in *The Guide to the Perplexed*, suggestions that reveal more about Leaman's inadequate grasp of what Strauss is about in each

instance than about any shortcomings in his exegesis. But it is my interpretation of Averroes as set forth in the introduction to my *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977) that receives Leaman's most careful attention.

Since I have responded to his arguments in the review essay mentioned above, I will limit myself here to presenting the basic themes of his critique of the "esoteric" approach. Leaman thinks that reading philosophy is "just a matter of looking at the arguments, picking out interesting points and judging the strength or otherwise of the reasoning process which they contain" (p. 182). Those who prefer "seeking out what is hidden in the text by the author and . . put forward a dazzling variety of hermeneutic techniques" err, because they assume "that the conflict between religion and philosophy is of *overriding* importance to the construction of Islamic philosophy and all the arguments within that philosophy" (pp. 182 and 186, emphasis in the original). Leaman denies that the conflict was in fact terribly important and points to the many commentaries and expositions on Greek philosophers composed by the Islamic philosophers as proof. Those familiar with these writings will recall, however, that they serve to explicate issues central to the conflict between religion and philosophy. In fact, many of the texts Leaman refers to in the first part of his book are drawn from those very commentaries and expositions.

Kogan's book differs remarkably from Leaman's. It is a well-written, carefully argued, thoroughly researched, and very thoughtful study of Averroes' teaching about causal efficacy. The general exposition is enhanced by the careful attention Kogan pays to traditional and modern scholarship and the judicious use he makes of the Arabic and Latin sources.

The book is primarily concerned with the arguments set forth in the 3rd and 17th Discussions of Averroes' *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*Incoherence of the Incoherence*), that is, his famous reply to Ghazali's attack upon the philosophers in the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (*Incoherence of the Philosophers*). Kogan focuses upon these two Discussions in order to explain what it means to hold that (*a*) causes produce effects and (*b*) we can know they do so. As it is set forth here, the basic position implies that causes (*a*) act by means of an agent, (*b*) have only certain kinds of effects, (*c*) have a necessary connection with their effects, (*d*) are prior to them, and (*e*) explain their effects. Ghazali's desire to insist upon the divine character of all causal efficacy leads him to deny the preceding.

Competent and engaging as is Kogan's explanation, it is not without problems. The study opens with a general rhetorical appeal for the significance of the dispute by placing the argument about causal efficacy clearly within its broader context in the history of philosophy. Because he is intent upon following the philosophical argument in Averroes' book, Kogan rejects the basic exegetical task as nonphilosophical. Instead, he concentrates his efforts upon

entering into argument with Ghazali and Averroes. That procedure has the unfortunate consequence of depriving the reader of a coherent account of the texts at issue. Moreover, Kogan's insistence upon plunging immediately into the intricacies of the extraordinarily complicated problem of causal efficacy without placing it in a specific contextual setting prevents the reader from learning why it arises in the first place or how it fits into Ghazali's attack upon the philosophers and Averroes' defense of them.

In the conclusion, Kogan emphasizes how Averroes' response to Ghazali constitutes a critique of Farabi and Avicenna as well as of Ghazali and leads to Averroes' own teaching about causation. It is questionable, however, whether Averroes does use this book to criticize Farabi in the same manner as Avicenna. Though Kogan brings forth texts to support Ghazali's original charges against Farabi, he never pauses to investigate whether those texts reflect Farabi's position. Nor does he show that Averroes is as strong in his censure of Farabi as he is of Avicenna.

Still, given the excellence of the larger analysis, these criticisms are minor. Kogan has conducted a thoughtful and probing investigation of a highly complex problem, and for this he deserves high praise.

Jamāl al-Dīn al-ʿAlawī is best known for his publications of works by Averroes and Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh, otherwise known as Ibn Bājjah or Avempace (d. 1138). In 1983, he brought forth several treatises by Averroes on logic and physics contained in a manuscript from the Escurial Library. This collection, entitled *Maqālāt fī al-Manṭiq wa al-ʿIlm al-Ṭabīʿī* (*Treatises on Logic and Physical Science*), was published in Casablanca at Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyyah. The same year, two other books by al-ʿAlawī appeared, both on Ibn Bajjah. One was a detailed bibliography of Ibn Bajjah's works, *Muʾallifāt Ibn Bājjah* (*The Writings of Ibn Bajjah*), the other a presentation of several philosophical treatises by Ibn Bajjah, many of which had never before been published—*Rasāʾil Falsafiyyah li-Abī Bakr Ibn Bājjah* (*Philosophical Treatises of Abu Bakr Ibn Bajjah*); both books were published in Casablanca at Dār al-Nashr al-Maghribiyyah and in Beirut at Dār al-Thaqāfah. A year later al-ʿAlawī brought out a critical edition of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De Caelo* (*Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Samāʾ wa al-ʿĀlam*) based on the two extant Arabic manuscripts located in the Oxford Bodleian and the University of Leiden libraries; this volume was published in Fez at the Faculty of Literature of the University of Fez.

While engaged in this extensive publishing activity, al-ʿAlawī was also working on questions related to the way Averroes and other North African philosophers contemporaneous with him discussed philosophical questions, on their philosophical rhetoric as it were. These reflections have now come to fruition in a truly exciting book that reconsiders the whole corpus of Averroes'

writings, especially his philosophical writings, as these have come down to us in Arabic.[1] In his new book, al-ʿAlawī calls into question the way Averroes' writings about Aristotle have traditionally been divided into Short Commentaries (*Jawāmiʿ*), Middle Commentaries (*Talkhīs*, pl. *Talākhīṣ*), and Long Commentaries (*Sharḥ*, pl. *Shurūḥ*, or *Tafsīr*, pl. *Tafāsīr*).

It is not that al-ʿAlawī denies the validity of such a division or the nomenclature used to denote it. His point is both more limited and broader: more limited in that he questions whether certain writings really fall into this division and broader in that he wants to enlarge the division to include works like the logical and physical treatises he published in 1983. The latter he considers to be so many instances of Averroes coming back to precise questions first raised in one or another of his commentaries and attempting to resolve doubts that had plagued him in those earlier discussions. This aspect of al-ʿAlawī's argument is flawless. As he shows in the book and as the treatises themselves amply demonstrate, Averroes indeed uses these treatises for such a purpose.

The former point is somewhat more problematic, especially since it has as a corollary that writings now considered to be commentaries on Aristotle must be assigned new designations. According to al-ʿAlawī, only two groups of works fall into this category: the series of treatises on logic now identified as the *Short Commentaries on Aristotle's Logic* and the treatise now identified as the *Short Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*. He would give each of these a new title, namely, *Summaries on Logic* and *Summary on The Soul*. These new titles are meant to indicate in each instance that the work is the summary of a subject, not of a work or a series of works by Aristotle.

Since al-ʿAlawī's suggestions about the title of Averroes' treatises on logic have direct bearing on my *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetoric," and "Poetics"* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977)—a critical Arabic edition and an English translation of these works, with notes and an introduction—and on my current efforts to edit and translate all of the treatises in this collection, I would like to say something more about his argument. With respect to the logical treatises, al-ʿAlawī adduces three reasons for his proposed revision of the title: (1) that Averroes refers to them by the term "Summary" in another work; (2) that none of the old book lists assigns to them the title "Short Commentaries"; and (3) that they differ from his other Short Commentaries in structure and intent (p. 50; for the details and citations that follow, see pp. 49–57).

In the introduction to the *Three Short Commentaries*, I discussed the problems raised by points 1 and 2 at some length and concluded that they were not decisive (pp. 5–14). My argument there, in brief, was that Averroes' reference

1. The caveat about these works being in Arabic arises from the fact that many of Averroes' writings are extant only in medieval Hebrew or Latin translations, the original Arabic having been lost for a number of reasons.

to these treatises in the opening lines of his *Short Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* was of the nature of an allusion rather than a direct citation and thus not indicative of how he meant to name them. Secondly, the old book lists are notoriously inaccurate and can therefore not be used to determine titles that are questionable.

The third reason adduced by al-ʿAlawī does, however, raise major questions. These treatises on logic do differ from the other Short Commentaries in structure and intent. They differ in structure in that Averroes does not organize each treatise around a particular Aristotelian text. Instead, the first few treatises introduce the subject of logic in a manner that calls to mind Porphyry's *Isagoge*. In addition, when Averroes does begin to organize his discussion according to what might be considered Aristotelian texts, he speaks at length about Farabi and uses Farabian paradigms to explain the forms of syllogisms. He even goes so far as to invert the traditional Aristotelian order, placing the discussion of sophistry after that of demonstration and before that of dialectic —something tantamount to placing *On Sophistical Refutations* after the *Posterior Analytics* and before the *Topics*. He does something similar in the treatise on the soul in that he divides the work according to his discussions of the various faculties of the soul rather than the three books or chapters into which Aristotle's text is divided.

In the introduction to the treatises on logic, Averroes declares that his purpose "is to abstract from every one of the logical arts the arguments necessary for explaining" the subject matter. As he understands the subject matter, it consists of identifying how a concept is formed and an assent obtained in the logical arts of demonstration, dialectic, sophistry, rhetoric, and poetics. His reason for so limiting the scope of his investigation is that:

> it is especially necessary to have this extent of the art in order to study the arts that have already been perfected, in the way most of the arts have been in this time of ours.

He then goes on to observe that:

> to speak about the things that comprise and constitute these arguments is either useless for studying the arts that have already been performed or it is useful, but in the direction of what is more excellent rather than what is necessary and to pursue what is more excellent in this time of ours is almost impermissible. (The term "more excellent" here can in both instances also be understood as "superfluous" [*afḍal*].)

For al-ʿAlawī, it is especially significant that Averroes limits himself to speaking about what is necessary for an understanding of the logical arts in these treatises because he does something very similar in the treatise on the soul. At one point in the latter work, namely, at the end of the section entitled "The Discussion of Taste," he excuses himself for the brevity of the explanation and says:

> an exhaustive discussion of these things calls for a much more extended discussion than this, but with respect to these things our discussion is merely according to what is necessary. If God grants longer life and removes this distress, we will speak about these things in a way that is clearer, more distinct, and more exhaustive. Yet what we have written about these things is the extent necessary for human perfection and by which the first of the human ranks can be attained.

Averroes then adds: "For anyone able to grasp it, this much is a great deal in this time of ours." Taking this statement together with the opening lines of the treatise:

> our purpose in this discussion is to establish those arguments of the commentators about the science of the soul that we see as in greatest conformity with what is explained in physical science and most in agreement with Aristotle's purpose

al-ʿAlawī insists that these two works stand apart from the other works by Averroes known as Short Commentaries.

He notes, for example, that Averroes begins the *Short Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* by declaring:

> Our purpose is to turn to the books of Aristotle and abstract from them the scientific arguments, I mean, the most reliable ones, that constitute his doctrine; and we will omit anything in them taken from the doctrines of other ancients besides him.

All of this he cites as evidence that Averroes has a different purpose in the treatises on logic and on the soul than in the treatises he recognizes as Short Commentaries on physical science.

Now I dispute none of these citations. Nor do I deny that Averroes begins each of the treatises on Aristotle's other writings by making clear his intention to speak about a book rather than a subject matter. Rather, I differ from al-ʿAlawī in that I do not attach that much importance to these indications of structural differences and of intention. In the treatise on logic, it is clear that the ultimate goal is to explain Aristotle's understanding of the various logical arts. Averroes refers to Farabi as much to criticize as to praise and does so in order to clarify particular points of Aristotle's teaching. The same is true with the treatise on the soul.

Averroes' silence about commenting upon a particular book or books by Aristotle in these treatises does not appear to me to provide sufficient evidence of a different approach either, for I note that in the treatise known as the *Middle Commentary on De Anima* he says even less about his intention of commenting upon Aristotle's book. Instead, he speaks at length about the importance of studying the human soul and then begins to discuss Aristotle's book without further ado. The only indication that he is indeed commenting upon Aristotle's

De Anima is his use of "he said" (*qāl*) at the beginning of quotations from or paraphrases of Aristotle's arguments.[2]

Both the treatise on the soul and those on logic differ from the other Short Commentaries in that Averroes explicitly declares his goal as one of providing what is necessary to understand the subject matter rather than explaining Aristotle's doctrine. In both instances, the importance of the subject justifies this limitation. That same emphasis on subject matter seems to account for the structural differences noted above. He has no qualms about beginning to explain logic from something like a Porphyrean framework nor about reordering Aristotle's treatises, for he is intent above all on showing what the art of logic is and on correcting current misunderstandings of Aristotle's teaching. That same line of reasoning explains his inattention to the traditional tripartite division of Aristotle's *De Anima* in the treatise of the soul.

For these reasons, then, I differ with al-ʿAlawī about this aspect of Averroes' writings and continue to maintain that the treatise on the soul is properly entitled a *Short Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* and the treatises on logic *Short Commentaries on Aristotle's Logic*.

Nonetheless, despite this disagreement with his interpretation, I consider al-ʿAlawī's book a major contribution to the study of Averroes. His emphasis on these formal characteristics of the treatises draws our attention to two important minor themes in Averroes' teaching, namely, his conviction that the arts have already been perfected in his time and his intimation that there is something exceptional about his time. Both themes are present in his *Commentary on Plato's Republic* as well, but their significance for Averroes' broader teaching is not yet clear. Perhaps al-ʿAlwaī's conjectures about the date of composition of the different parts of the corpus and the various programs of commentary followed by Averroes at various stages in his life are relevant. However that may be, he clearly provides a solid overview of the Arabic part of the corpus and makes it possible for scholars with knowledge of the Hebrew and Latin parts to investigate whether these confirm or deny his many suggestions about Averroes' activity as a commentator of Aristotle.

2. This work, incidentally, is extant only in Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts—Arabic written in Hebrew characters—and was not examined by al-ʿAlawī. The treatises on logic are likewise extant only in Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts except for my previously cited edition and translation of three of them. His reference to a phrase from the introduction to these treatises (p. 51, n. 6) mistakenly cites the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale manuscript as a source. At this point, however, that manuscript has a major lacuna.

Discussion

This is the first of what, it is hoped, will be several rounds of discussion of Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind.* *The editors of* Interpretation *welcome comments from the author as well as from interested readers generally. The editors regret that compelling practical reasons kept Werner J. Dannhauser and Clifford Orwin from contributing to the present round of discussion, and hope that they will find it possible to take part in a subsequent one.*

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Socratic Reason and Lockean Rights

The Place of the University in a Liberal Democracy

WILLIAM A. GALSTON

I

Like Rousseau after the publication of the *First Discourse*, Allan Bloom awoke to find himself famous. Like Rousseau, he challenged his age at the point of its greatest and most unexamined pride. He dared to suggest that "our virtue"—untrammeled tolerance—is in fact the most destructive of vices. And what an attack! By turns passionate, ruminative, scornful, sorrowful, Bloom took on his subject in a manner utterly contemptuous of current fashion, and virtually guaranteed to enrage.

Remarkably, his book did not enrage. Instead, with rare exceptions, it was reviewed in tones ranging from respectful to rapturous in the nation's most respected newspapers and journals, and it quickly soared to the top of the best-seller lists. *The Closing of the American Mind* is more than a book, it is an event—one of those rare literary deeds that reveals the doubts, the fears, and the longings of its audience. The reception of this book deserves an inquiry of its own, as an indication of the deep foreboding just beneath the complacent surface of contemporary culture.

The Closing of the American Mind has three distinguishable, though intimately related, strands: a detailed description of modern American society, v ewed through the prism of university students; an historical-analytical explanation of the ills revealed by that description; and finally, a proposed cure for those ills. These elements are linked because, as Bloom characteristically insists, "Concreteness, not abstractness, is the hallmark of philosophy. All interesting generalizations must proceed from the richest awareness of what is to be explained" (p. 255). In this respect, and in many others, *The Closing of the American Mind* is a defense of a distinctive conception of teaching, of learning, and of the modern institutional structure—the university—that shelters and sustains these activities. The book is concrete, not just objectively, so to speak, but also subjectively. It is an intensely personal and self-revealing account of one man's way of life. It is not, as some have argued, a jeremiad; it is Bloom's Apology.

II

On the level of description of contemporary society I will have relatively little to say in this essay, not because I am sure Bloom is right but because I do

not possess the requisite evidence to say he is wrong. (In one area, though, I do have some evidence, and I feel constrained to remark that his account of the alleged lack of natural connection between fathers and their children [p. 115] conforms neither to my own experience nor to my observation of the men of my generation.) If there is a difficulty, it lies in the scope rather than the accuracy of Bloom's description. He states that his "sample" consists in students at the twenty or thirty best universities—the future elite. But he sometimes speaks as though what he says about these students is true of American society as a whole. Based on my own experiences, which include lengthy and systematic discussions with "ordinary Americans" across the country, I have concluded that there is much less relativism, much more respect for traditional understandings of individual rights, moral virtues, and the family than might be inferred from a sample of young elite students.

Bloom is not unaware of this difficulty, and he appears to respond to it as follows: Influential changes of opinion begin at the top and gradually filter downward. First comes dangerous philosophy, then the corruption of the intellectuals, then the students, political leaders, and finally the general public.

Although this thesis is not wholly implausible, it is not the whole truth. American society today is the arena of a struggle between those who advance, and those who resist, the trends Bloom rightly deplores. During the past decade, in fact, there has been a popular revolt against the perceived moral relativism of the elites, and the gap between popular and elite beliefs is now very wide. Of course it is troubling that so many of those who are likely to be socially and politically influential do not have healthy opinions. But the public is capable of resisting what it does not like. In a democracy—for better as well as for worse—it is the people who ultimately rule.

III

Why has the elite American mind deserted its founding convictions—the rights of man, the Bible—in favor of an openness that cannot make moral distinctions and eventually undermines all convictions? Bloom's official answer, which provides the plot line for much of his book, is that relativistic German philosophy gradually imposed the yoke of alien thought on what had been a sturdy Enlightenment tradition.

But this can hardly be the full answer. To begin with, the enormous success of this popularized Nietzscheanism forces us to wonder what needs it gratified and whether the unsullied American mind was really so well-ordered—to ask, that is, *why* this Continental victory occurred. Bloom suggests two seemingly contradictory but ultimately reconcilable answers. First, Nietzsche as mediated through Freud interpreted the higher in light of the lower, an approach that proved especially popular in a democracy "where there is envy of what makes special claims, and the good is supposed to be accessible to all" (p. 232). But

second, an Americanized Nietzsche provided an essential corrective to early democratic theory, whose low but solid foundation failed to flatter democratic man sufficiently, by holding out the possibility that everyone could be creative, autonomous, a source of new values—the very definition of nobility in a trans-moral, postphilosophic age (p. 144). In short, Nietzsche as received in this country simultaneously undermined the grounds of aristocracy and offered us all the opportunity of being aristocrats.

These suggestions, in turn, make me doubt that the story can simply be the victory of foreign corruption over domestic health. It is more nearly adequate to say that vulgarized Nietzschean thought activated latent problems, and accelerated indigenous trends, already present in American life. Indeed, Bloom provides us with an impressive catalogue of such phenomena. Liberal tolerance fosters relativism when it seeks to widen its scope by placing more and more claims to superiority outside the realm of knowledge (pp. 30–31). Liberal freedom fosters relativism when it seeks to become absolute by denying all rational limits (p. 28). Democratic egalitarianism fosters relativism by denigrating heroism and delegitimating rank-ordering among human beings (pp. 66, 90). Egoistic individualism fosters relativism by denying natural relatedness among, and duties toward, other human beings, a trend exacerbated by the liberal-contractarian view of the family (pp. 86, 112). In short, Bloom's own account suggests that modern liberal democracy is not stably well-ordered unless it is somehow mitigated by external forces (religion, traditional moral restraints, aristocracy) with which it is at war and which it tends to corrode (see especially pp. 251–252).

That this is in fact the deeper stratum of his argument is suggested as well by another set of considerations. Liberal democracies are the natural home of the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois existence, says Bloom, is defined by the effort to expunge dangerous passions—for aristocratic distinction, for political power, for religious truth—in the name of tranquil and commodious living: "Neither longing nor enthusiasm belong to the bourgeois" (p. 169). But of course these natural desires cannot be wholly eradicated, and they thus find stunted, distorted expression in democratic societies (pp. 183, 329ff.). The appeal of Nietzsche, like that of Rousseau, is to the part of the soul that bourgeois existence leaves fallow, or lays waste. The gateway to the mind of America did not have to be rammed open by alien philosophy, the Enemy Without, for it was swung open to the invader by our inchoate longing for the beyond, the Enemy Within.

IV

If relativism is the modern democratic disease, what is the cure? I can best approach this question through some personal history.

It was in the fall of 1963, during Bloom's unforgettable "Introduction to

Political Philosophy," that I first encountered Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*. From the powerful first pages on, I sensed immediately that I was in the presence of greatness. Strauss's Introduction challenged Americans not to surrender their ancestral faith in the rights of man to German relativism, and it traced the impasse of modern thought to the seventeenth-century overthrow of classical—that is, teleological—natural science. I read on eagerly, hoping to find an account of the grounds on which the Declaration of Independence could be rationally reaffirmed and the problem posed by modern science surmounted.

But as I finished *Natural Right and History*, I was perplexed. Far from reaffirming the rights of man, Strauss argued that the philosophic ground of those rights—Hobbes' and Locke's account of the state of nature—had been decisively criticized by Rousseau, who carried the antiteleological premise of his predecessors to its logical conclusion. (My perplexity only deepened when I read, at the end of "What Is Political Philosophy?," that Nietzschean nihilism is the culmination and highest self-consciousness of modern thought, the inevitable consequence of the break with classical rationalism.) As for the problem of natural science: Strauss had made it clear at the outset that he would confine his discussion to that aspect of natural right that could be clarified within the domain of the social sciences. But at each step in his narrative, Strauss showed that the political thinkers of modernity accepted the antiteleological implication of modern science and shaped their political teachings in its light. Evidently the problem posed by science could be deferred but not indefinitely evaded. Yet as I read more and more of Strauss's writings, I could find no definitive account of this matter. In the preface to the seventh impression of *Natural Right and History* (1971), nearly two decades after its initial publication and only shortly before his death, Strauss explicitly reaffirmed his "inclination to prefer" the natural right teaching of classical antiquity. But to the best of my knowledge, he never cleared away what he himself had identified as the most fundamental intellectual obstacle to that reaffirmation. To summarize: while relativism is poison, neither modern nor classical natural right teachings are straightforwardly available as antidotes.

I find precisely these same difficulties at the heart of Bloom's narrative. He suggests, for example, that there is an essential conflict between the humanities—including philosophy—and modern natural science (p. 372). At the same time, he notes that no influential modern thinker has tried to return to the pre-Enlightenment—teleological—understanding of nature (p. 181). More to the point, he never recommends, or suggests the possibility, of such a return. It would seem to follow that our account of man must now be situated within the context of modern science. Yet much of Bloom's book consists in a critique of every postclassical effort to execute such a strategy (see especially pp. 193, 301–302). There is no third path. If the problem of natural science cannot be sidestepped, it must be addressed, else the return to classical rationalism is *ex hypothesi* impossible. But Bloom refuses to accept, or make, this choice: he

neither consigns natural science to irrelevance nor confronts head-on the human difficulties engendered by its antiteleological stance.

Bloom's recapitulation of Strauss's other conundrum—the status of modern natural right—is even more fundamental to his entire enterprise. Bloom states unequivocally that the modern natural rights teaching establishes the "framework and the atmosphere for the modern university" (p. 288), which institution it is his purpose to defend against its enemies. Modern natural right, in turn, is rooted in the state of nature (p. 162). In particular, the American understanding of the rights of man, which undergirds the American university, rests on the state of nature as depicted by Locke (pp. 165–66). Therein lies the difficulty. Like Strauss before him, Bloom argues that Locke's account was decisively criticized by Rousseau, who pointed out that "Locke, in his eagerness to find a simple or automatic solution to the political problem, made nature do much more than he had a right to expect a mechanical, nonteleological nature to do" (p. 176). The modern university Bloom wishes to defend thus rests on a state of nature teaching that by his own account must be judged defective.

This chain of inference has profound implications for liberal democracy. If Rousseau is right, Locke is wrong. If Locke is wrong, then the university—indeed, America itself—is insecurely founded. Yet at this critical juncture, in a book hardly deficient in blunt speech, Bloom pulls back from the full rigor of his argument. Rousseau, he declares, "explodes the simplistic [Lockean] harmoniousness between nature and society that *seems to be* the American premise" (p. 177; emphasis mine). In this ambiguous "seems to be" lurks the deepest issue. Are the natural rights at the base of our regime, the rights to which most Americans still subscribe (p. 166), the rights that constitute "our only principle of justice," the rights that sustain the institutions Bloom cherishes—are the rights of man, so conceived, worthy of our rational devotion? That is the question. I cannot see that it receives an adequate answer in this otherwise compelling book.

V

It may be argued that the immediately preceding argument is deeply unfair. After all, Bloom distinguishes between modern and Socratic rationalism. The impasse of modern rationalism, which Nietzsche both observed and exemplified, is not the impasse of reason *simpliciter* (p. 310). Indeed, that impasse provides the strongest motivation for returning to the classical understanding. It is Socratic rationalism that is the essence of the university, and it is the defense of Socratic rationalism that constitutes the highest calling of the university (pp. 253, 307). Locke's defeat at the heart of Rousseau is therefore irrelevant to Bloom's enterprise.

This argument is however exposed to serious objections. To begin with, the return to classical rationalism cannot—on Bloom's own account—occur with-

out first surmounting the obstacle posed by modern natural science, a task which, as I have indicated, Bloom does not even begin to undertake. In addition, it is by no means clear whether—or how—Socratic rationalism leads to the vindication of the rights of man, on which (again, on Bloom's own account) rest both liberal democracy and the modern university. Finally, as Bloom argues at length (pp. 256–68), there is a crucial disagreement between classical and modern rationalism concerning the relation between reason and civil society. Classical rationalism maintains that there is an inherent tension between philosophy and politics and that the trial and execution of Socrates was a dramatic manifestation of that tension. Modern rationalism, by contrast, sees this event as the outcome of a mistaken but corrigible understanding of the relation between philosophy and politics, and it argues that civil society can be improved by, and rendered hospitable to, the public exercise of philosophic reason. Bloom espouses both a Socratic conception of reason and a post-Socratic conception of the relation between reason and politics. The question necessarily arises whether this combination is tenable.

This tension comes to a head in Bloom's depiction of the university. It is in providing a public home for Socratic reason that the modern university finds its highest justification. The purpose of the university is to enable students to reach toward the perfection of their nature by fostering true openness, which is freedom of the mind (pp. 20, 40, 248–49). The essence of the university is the cultivation of the "noninstrumental use of reason for its own sake" (p. 249). Those who spend their lives in the exercise of noninstrumental reason "become the models for the use of the noblest human faculties and hence are benefactors to all of us, more for what they are than for what they do. Without their presence (and, one should add, without their being respectable), no society—no matter how rich or comfortable, no matter how technically adept or full of tender sentiments—can be called civilized" (p. 21). In and through the university, the classical tension between reason and the regime is diluted to such an extent that Socrates can become a respected—even useful—member of civil society: "The successful university is the proof that a society can be devoted to the well-being of all, without stunting human potential or imprisoning the mind to the goals of the regime" (p. 252). As Bloom summarizes his credo: "Never did I think that the university was properly ministerial to the society around it. Rather, I thought and think that society is ministerial to the university, and I bless a society that tolerates and supports an eternal childhood for some, a childhood whose playfulness can in turn be a blessing to society" (p. 245). If, as Bloom maintains, the highest task of ancient political philosophy was to make the political world safe for philosophy (p. 276), this task would appear to have reached its culmination in modern liberal democracy's artful dissolution of a conflict once considered inescapable.

Yet matters are not so simple. Early on, Bloom tells us that every educa-

tional system has a specific moral goal, the production of a certain kind of human being—citizens who are in accord with the fundamental principles of their political community. In particular, democratic education, "whether it admits it or not, wants and needs to produce men and women who have the tastes, knowledge, and character supportive of a democratic regime" (p. 26). If so, the university is—or inevitably comes under pressure to become—ministerial to democracy after all. To the extent that it is not ministerial, we may confidently predict that it will sooner or later encounter political opposition.

But Bloom's university is far from wholeheartedly democratic, in at least three respects. First, modern democracies concentrate on the useful, while the university is directed toward the noninstrumental (p. 250). Second, modern democracies rest on settled principles—equality and the rights of man—which it is the purpose of philosophic reason, sheltered in universities, to call into question in the name of alternative principles of political right (pp. 248–49). Third, modern universities tend relentlessly toward the equalization and homogenization of human beings, which tendency the university resists in the name of high standards, superior gifts, and human inequality—in the name, in short, of natural aristocracy (pp. 251–54). The university, says Bloom, began in spirit from "Socrates' contemptuous and insolent distancing of himself from the Athenian people" (p. 311), and it must maintain that spirit today: "[The university] must be contemptuous of public opinion" (p. 254). Bloom is shocked and dismayed when this spirit of contempt evokes public anger in return. But on his own account, this anger, which endangers the free public exercise of reason, is entirely natural and predictable. It is the triumph of politics, Socratically understood, over the public exercise of Socratic reason. From this standpoint, Bloom's official account of the fall of the American university—the victory of a vulgarized Nietzsche over the vestiges of Socrates—must be revised. It would be at least as true to say that the fall of the university represents the revenge of the demos on the last embattled remnants of aristocracy in an increasingly democratic age (see pp. 319, 326, 353).

VI

I come, finally, to the question of students. Bloom maintains that, unlike the students of the 1960s, today's students are nurtured neither in the Bible nor in the tradition of the Declaration of Independence. The loss of these traditions has made today's students narrower and flatter, without the "felt need" for the kind of noble openness that only devotion to philosophic activities can gratify. There is thus less soil in which university teaching can take root, and that soil is too thin to "sustain the taller growths" (pp. 51, 61).

I have no competence to characterize today's students. But I can speak of

the students of twenty years ago that Bloom evokes with such nostalgic affection, for I was one of them. It was indeed a marvelous time. But my memory of it does not fully square with Bloom's account.

I do not recall that many of us were particularly well versed in the Bible or in the doctrine of the rights of man—I know I was not. Most of us had however grown up in stable families where television was not yet a dominant force, families in which reading was encouraged and learning was respected. We reached university age in the midst of the biggest, longest economic boom in the history of the world, and we were willing to take intellectual risks because we never worried—or had to worry—about the effects of risk-taking on our future ability to earn a living. At that time, the United States was the undisputed leader of the Free World, with a virtually unblemished record of postwar diplomatic accomplishment. We trusted our government. We were not really cynical about anything. We were patriots. (We were also relativists, by the way, but Bloom cured us of that quickly enough.) The United States had the brash, open hubris of Athens before the Sicilian expedition, and we all somehow participated in it. Our willingness to learn was unqualified; our "felt need" was in large measure for a kind of aristocratic distinction that might be possible within a democratic society.

As I look across the gulf that separates today's students from those of my generation, I am struck by the importance of socioeconomic forces and political events, most of which Bloom hardly mentions: the Vietnam War, Watergate, stagflation, television, divorce, gasoline lines, American hostages in Iran. I suspect economic uncertainties have helped make today's students career-oriented, closed to speculation, afraid of taking risks; that two decades of foreign policy fiascoes have undermined confidence; that repeated breaches of public trust have bred cynicism; and that television has perceptibly eroded both the capacity to concentrate and the taste for reading. I also agree with Bloom that family instability and rising divorce rates have wounded children in ways that reduce healthy openness when they reach the university.

None of this is to deny Bloom's basic thesis that if true learning is to be possible, nature needs the assistance of convention. But I believe that he unduly denigrates the independent force of political and economic circumstances in affecting the conditions for openness, in the name of a conception of modern history as produced almost entirely by the dissemination of philosophic thought. I doubt that economic stagnation and military bungling—or, for that matter, the epidemic of broken families—can be laid at the feet of Nietzsche and Heidegger.

One last thought. Bloom takes as his baseline of comparison an all-too-brief Golden Age of American higher education. It *was* a Golden Age, no doubt about it. But I am forced to wonder whether those few years were not exceptional by the standards of American history itself. For the most part, as Tocqueville stresses, the American mind is not particularly hospitable to the

cultivation and exercise of noninstrumental reason. Philosophy in America will always be vulnerable to the practical disciplines: the MBA degree denounced by Bloom is but the latest link in a venerable American chain.

The problem goes deeper than the violence of the 1960s and the vacuity of the 1980s. I would suggest that Bloom has a quarrel—or at least an ambivalent relation—with bourgeois society as a whole. (Is it by chance that the emotional peak of his introductory course was the lecture on *Madame Bovary*?) Bloom cherishes the freedom that is only to be found in liberal democracy, but he despises the absence of longing in the soul of the bourgeois. He wishes to defend the university through an appeal to the principles of liberal democracy, but the thinkers to whom he appeals with the greatest frequency and effect throughout his book—Socrates, Plato, Rousseau, and Nietzsche—are all critics of liberal democracy. Locke, he suggests, is more politically salutary than Rousseau, but less psychologically profound. And besides, he insists, Rousseau was ultimately the more consistent thinker. Until the grounds for supporting liberal democracy are more firmly established than this, the status of reason —and therewith of the university—in the modern world will of necessity remain unsettled and insecure.

Humanizing Certitudes and Impoverishing Doubts

A Critique of *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom

HARRY V. JAFFA

At the end of July 1987, Mark McGwire, of Claremont, California, and the Oakland As, had hit 37 home runs, and led both major leagues. He had equaled the home run record for rookies in the American League, and was only one short of the National League record. Records, however, are for full seasons, and young Mr. McGwire still had nearly half the year's games to play. He is without question what in sports is called a "Feenom."

At about the time McGwire was taking his first turn at bat that spring, a book entitled *The Closing of the American Mind*, by Allan Bloom, was published. Its rise to the top of the nonfiction best seller list has been as explosive as young McGwire's bat. Its staying power at the top of that list—extending over many months—is no less astonishing than its swift anabasis. The demand for it is widespread—radiating outwards from Chicago, New York, Boston, and Washington (not to mention Paris, where it is said to be going like "hot crêpes")—to top most regional lists, as well as the national. It is surely as much a "Feenom," as any event in recent sports history.

Whatever the ultimate judgment may be as to the book's merits, there can be no doubt that its tremendous sales are evidence that it has touched an exposed nerve of public concern. Something, no doubt, must be conceded to the fact that its "defense" of traditional morality is accompanied by a great deal of prurient denunciation of immorality—like the famous reformer who, at the turn of the century, made highly publicized invasions of the red light districts of New York City. His church was always jammed on the ensuing Sundays, when his congregation (as well as numerous reporters) assembled to hear of his virtuous forays into these dens of iniquity. With much greater sophistication, Bloom also preaches, and does it very well.

> Meanwhile [that is, in the wake of women's "liberation"] one of the strongest, oldest motives for marriage is no longer operative. Men can now easily enjoy the sex that previously could be had only in marriage. It is strange that the tiredest and stupidest bromide mothers and fathers preached to their daughters—"He won't respect you or marry you if you give him what he wants too easily"—turns out to be the truest and most probing analysis of the current situation (p. 132).

Reading the first part of *The Closing of the American Mind*, with its discussion—along the foregoing lines—of such topics as "Equality," "Race," "Sex," "Divorce," "Love," and "Eros," one is forcibly struck by its resemblance to the moral (as distinct from theological) aspects of the sermons of the Rev. Jerry

Falwell and of the homilies of the Rev. Pat Robertson. Bloom is certainly correct about relativism seducing young women—thereby saving their boyfriends that trouble. And he is also right in pointing to the other—and much greater—troubles that young men find themselves in, when in the company of their "liberated" women. If all moral choices are "values" and all are equally unsupported by reason—or by revelation, which becomes just another "opinion" or "value"—then all moral choices are equally significant, or insignificant. Thus Bloom quotes young women as saying that sex is "no big deal." Yet the truth is that sex is always a big deal, and those who think and act otherwise, leave an ever-widening trail of disaster, disease, and death in their wake.

There is, however, one surprising omission in Bloom's catalogue of the evils of relativism. He is vigorous in his portrayal of the human cost of sexual promiscuity, as the foregoing quotation indicates. Yet his observations of the aberrations of the counterculture seem frozen in "The Sixties," as the title of his most memorable chapter suggests. (Bloom left Cornell for Toronto at the end of that decade, and remained in self-imposed exile for most of the decade that followed.) His remarks about feminism, and the changing roles of men and women, for example, are dated not because they are mistaken, or irrelevant, but because in the intervening years the so-called "gay rights" movement, which Bloom hardly mentions, has emerged as the most radical and sinister challenge, not merely to sexual morality, but to all morality.

As I have argued in "Sodomy and the Academy: The Assault on the Family and Morality by 'Liberation' Ethics" (*American Conservatism and the American Founding*, Carolina Academic Press, 1984, pp. 263–78), the demand for the recognition of sodomy as both a moral and a legal right represents the most complete repudiation—theoretical as well as practical—of all objective standards of human conduct. The reason why we regard the killing of other human beings—but not the killing of cattle—as murder, is because we are members of the same species. That is to say, we share a common nature. The reason we regard the enslavement of human beings—but not of cattle—as wrong, is because we recognize an equality of rights among fellow members of the same species. This is also the reason for regarding racial or religious or even sex discrimination as wrong. Every moral distinction that can be called to mind can, I believe, be shown to have the same origin or ground, including the very idea of human rights—to which the sodomites and lesbians themselves appeal. But the word nature means generation. A species is defined by the presence in it of individuals of opposite sexes who can generate new individuals of the same species. Nature is the ground of all morality, but maleness and femaleness is the ground of nature. The Bible, in describing man as created in the image of God, adds "male and female created he them," implying that God's own existence is grounded in the same distinction as nature's. The so-called "gay rights" movement is then the ultimate repudiation of nature, and therewith the ground of all morality. Of course, sodomy has been around for a long

time—as we know from the Bible. What we are faced with here is not a demand that homosexuality be a private matter between consenting adults. We are faced with a public demand for the admission into law and morality of an equal right of homosexuality and heterosexuality. There has never in my experience been anything like the Gay and Lesbian Centers, now on virtually every campus—with a GLAD week (Gay and Lesbian Awareness Days) sanctioned and encouraged by the college administrations, and patronized by local (and even national) politicians. I have been teaching many more years than Bloom, and I have never seen students as morally confused as they are today. It is difficult enough for young people, as Bloom shows so well, to have to work out anew, with no authoritative conventions, the roles to be followed in boy/girl, man/woman relationships. But this difficulty is compounded a thousand times, when the boy/girl, man/woman relationship is itself called into question. This is as much as to say, that whether you want to belong to the human race is now a matter of personal preference. Tens of thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands—of students across the country, who never had the least homosexual tendencies, have been seduced (and their lives ruined) by the overpowering pressure of the official patronage of the gay rights propaganda. Many young men, who do not know how to deal with "liberated" women, and many "liberated" women, who do not know how to deal with men any more (except as enemies), take refuge in sodomy and lesbianism. This has constituted the great moral crisis of the eighties on American campuses, and Bloom is almost entirely silent about it.

The chronology of the AIDS epidemic corresponds precisely with this public movement to establish sodomy and lesbianism as a recommended lifestyle. In nothing has the power of relativism—and the disgrace of American higher education—manifested itself more than in its endorsement of homosexuality. But whatever the attitude of the educational authorities, God and nature have exacted terrible retribution. This lifestyle has proved to be a deathstyle. For the first time since modern relativism has mounted its assault upon man's humanity, chastity and the monogamous family may be seen to be recovering some of their standing. Unfortunately, the new argument for the old ways is entirely based upon the argument for self-preservation. This argument will not survive the discovery of new scientific cures. Last spring I told a class of freshmen (and women) that there was a race on, between God and science, for their moral allegiance. And, I added, somewhat sententiously, that it would be very unwise for them ever to bet against God. A few years ago, this remark would have provoked gales of laughter. This time I looked out upon the most solemn faces I had ever seen! Thanks to AIDS then, we have a little breathing time to reassert the true arguments—the "enriching certitudes" (as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*), not merely Bloom's "humanizing doubts." Morality must be seen, as Aristotle sees it, as a means to implement the desire for happiness, and not merely as a restraint upon the desire for pleasure. The arguments

must be made not only as to how one may avoid a bad death, but how one can pursue a good life. But one will not find those arguments in *The Closing of the American Mind.*

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Bloom speaks eloquently and even wisely of the evils of relativism. And, to the surprise and pleasure of many, it turns out that he is not just another Bible thumper. (I do not mean to suggest that these are to be despised, but only that they have no standing in our "elite" universities.) He is, rather, of all things, a professor of political philosophy, pointing to his fellow university teachers as the source of this poisonous and literally demoralizing doctrine. This surely must go a long way towards accounting for the book's apparently wide appeal to middle America. Yet those who turn to Bloom for solace and guidance are apt to find their optimism short-lived. Having eloquently portrayed the disastrous consequences of relativism he does not advocate a return to those standards of human conduct implied in its rejection and, most notably, in his own invocation and praise of the ancient "bromides" concerning chastity. Thus he writes

> It is not the immorality of relativism that I find appalling. What is astounding and degrading is the dogmatism with which we accept such relativism, and the easy going lack of concern about what that means for our lives (p. 239).

In one issue of *Insight* magazine, as well as in feature stories in *The Washington Times*, Bloom was hailed as "the general in the war against relativism." But those who thus hailed him seemed to assume that his critique of relativism implied a stand in favor of traditional morality. If so, they did not read him with sufficient care—or astuteness. Bloom does not, repeat not, find "the immorality of relativism appalling." What Bloom rejects is only "easy going" relativism.

When Bloom looks at the "low" in the light of the "high," the "high" turns out to be the "extraordinary thought and philosophical greatness" of German nihilism. One might say that American relativism is comic in its blandness and indifference to the genuine significance of human choice, whereas in its German version fundamental human choices take on the agonized dignity of high tragedy. But none of Bloom's philosophical heroes—for example, Nietzsche or Heidegger—wrote tragedies. Shakespeare did. And Bloom himself once wrote extraordinarily well on *Othello.* (See *Shakespeare's Politics*, by Allan Bloom, with Harry V Jaffa, Basic Books, 1964, Chapter 3. See especially, pp. 53ff.) Desdemona cannot imagine that a woman would betray her husband even "for the whole world." One can only surmise how students for whom sex is "no big deal" read the play. One guesses only that for them it is a black comedy about crazy people. The greatness of *Othello* is inextricably bound up with the fact—once so powerfully expounded by Bloom himself—that the covenantal act of choice of partners in marriage reproduces the covenantal act of choice of the Children of Israel by the God of Israel. Bloom wants

to turn his students from their "impoverishing certitudes" to "humanizing doubts." But it seems to me that his own argument requires rather that "impoverishing certitudes" be replaced by "enriching certitudes." After all, it was a necessary condition of the tragedy in *Othello* that there be no doubt whatever in the minds of Othello and Desdemona as to the absolute significance of fidelity in marriage. "Humanizing doubt," no less than any other kind, would dissolve the tragedy into a tale of silly mistakes. It seems to me that Nietzsche's and Heidegger's theoretical teaching is far more profoundly subversive of the universe of Shakespearean tragedy, than the sitcoms of Woody Allen, which draw so much of Bloom's attention. And we must ask the same Bloom who recommended the "bromide" about chastity, whether a young woman would be more or less apt to benefit from it, if her cheap generic drugstore relativism had been replaced by the high and tragic nihilism—the parent of all relativism—of Nietzsche and Heidegger? Do we really want her to look into the abyss of nothingness and agonize over whether to have sex with her boyfriend? As Bloom must know from the literature (to borrow a familiar phrase of Leo Strauss), the outcome, in at least nine times out of ten, will be the same, whether the girl agonizes first, or just hops into bed. Thus Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

> Nor does goodness or badness with regard to such things [viz., passions such as spite, shamelessness, envy, and actions such as adultery, theft, murder] depend upon committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way, but simply to do any of them is to go wrong (1107a15ff.).

Aristotle directs the argument of his *Ethics* only to those whose characters are already formed by basic moral education. He does not suppose that liberal education should form the basis of moral choice—on the contrary, he supposes that moral education should form the basis of liberal education. Bloom, it seems to me, has got it exactly backwards.

A moving passage in *The Closing of the American Mind*, and the one that to me conveys Bloom's critique of relativism most effectively, is the following:

> My grandparents were ignorant people by our standards, and my grandfather held only lowly jobs. But their home was spiritually rich because all the things in it, not only what was specifically ritual, found their origins in the Bible's commandments, and their explanation in the Bible's stories and the commentaries on them, and had their imaginative counterparts in the deeds of the myriad of exemplary heroes. My grandparents found reasons for the existence of their family and the fulfillment of their duties in serious writings, and they interpreted their special sufferings with respect to a great and ennobling past. Their simple faith and practices linked them to great scholars and thinkers who dealt with the same material, not from outside or from an alien perspective, but believing as they did, while simply going deeper and providing guidance. There was real respect for real learning, because it had a felt

> connection with their lives. This is what a community and a history mean, a common experience inviting high and low into a single body of belief (p. 60).

I do not remember a more eloquent evocation of the idea of authoritative tradition, and of how it dignifies human life. Of course, Bloom is referring to the Jewish tradition—the most conservative of all traditions, beginning as it does "in the beginning." I am confident that Bloom's grandparents—like my grandparents—found a home for that tradition within the American political tradition that for them was represented by Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. I am sure that they felt, as did Moses Seixas, sexton of Newport's Touro Synagogue in 1790, on the occasion of Washington's visit to Newport. He hailed Washington as another Joshua who had been led by the Lord, as he himself had led the American people into the Promised Land of this new Zion of political and religious freedom. For American Jews at the time of the Revolution—and even for those today who have not become victims of a university education—have always seen this nation as also a chosen nation. From the beginning, America as the new Israel, as a light to lighten all the nations, concerning the principles of political and religious liberty, has been a theme of public discourse. And for the very reason that America could become a Zion to all the nations, it could become a Zion to the Jews themselves. George Washington's letter to the Touro Synagogue represented the first time in more than 2,000 years that Jews had been recognized as citizens of any nation. It represented the first time in human history that Jews had been recognized, as equal and fellow citizens of a non-Jewish polity. And that recognition was authoritative because it came from the one man who, as President and Head of State, and as Father of his Country, surpassed all others in moral authority. Washington's greeting to the Jews recognized them as possessing not only a technical legal equality, but as equal human participants, under the One God, in the moral and providential order which was the source of all the nation's blessings. Let me just add here, that Lincoln's greatest speeches are characterized by the combination into a peculiarly American synthesis of the moral and providential order of the Bible, and of the no less moral and no less providential order of the Declaration of Independence. In Lincoln's second inaugural address we see in absolute perfection an authoritative tradition encompassing the teachings of the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—and the teachings of the Revolution. I am confident that Bloom's grandparents understood this, in their humble—but profound—way. Why then does Bloom look only abroad, to that acid solvent of all traditions, German nihilism, for that which is already his by right of inheritance?

Here is the denouement of Bloom's genuinely poetic—and nostalgic—tribute to his grandparents.

> I do not believe that my generation, my cousins who have been educated in the American way, all of whom are M.D.s or Ph.D.s, have any comparable learning.

> When they talk about heaven and earth, the relations between men and women, parents and children, the human condition, I hear nothing but clichés, superficialities, the material of satire. I am not saying anything so trite as that life is fuller when people have myths to live by. I mean rather that a life based upon the Book is closer to the truth, that it provides the material for deeper research in and access to the real nature of things. Without the great revelations, epics, and philosophies as part of our natural vision, there is nothing to see out there, and eventually little left inside. The Bible is not the only means to furnish a mind, but without a book of similar gravity, read with the gravity of the potential believer, it will remain unfurnished (p. 60).

Bloom says that his generation—his cousins—have no "comparable learning" to that of their grandparents. But why does Bloom assume without argument that there is any learning "comparable" to the Torah and the Talmud? Bloom makes no attempt to understand his grandparents as they understood themselves, and he tacitly rejects their way of life, even as he recognizes in it something rich and wonderful that is lacking in his own.

Bloom's evocation of his grandparents is touching, but it is barren. He denies that he is saying "anything so trite as that life is fuller when people have myths to live by." What then is he saying? That "a life based on the Book is closer to the truth [and] provides access to the real nature of things?" But what is the source or ground of knowledge that enables Bloom to judge the Bible's proximity to the truth? According to Leo Strauss, the concept of "nature" is a discovery of philosophy, and is alien to the Old Testament. By asserting that the world is created by God, the Torah denies that there is a self-subsisting reality independent of the will of God. Of course, rabbinic Judaism, like medieval Christianity, assimilated the idea of "the laws of nature and of nature's God" within the framework of Creation. The perfect expression of this assimilation is of course in our own Declaration of Independence. Bloom's easy going judgment of the truth of the Bible is however—from the viewpoint of the Bible itself—a judgment of the high in the light of the low.

"Without the great revelations," Bloom writes, " there is nothing to see out there . " The descent of the Bible is now explicit—to being only one of many "revelations." And such "revelations" are now lower case "books," along with "epics" and "philosophies." We need them says Bloom, "as part of our natural vision." But books are artifacts. If, however, artifacts determine the content of our vision, if without these artifacts there is nothing to see, then visual reality is in truth an artifact. "Natural vision" would then be an illusion, although not an optical illusion (since there is no optical reality)! Conversely, if there is such a thing as natural vision, then there must be natural objects of sense perception, and of knowledge. And the existence and perception of these must be independent of books. Books then would be accounts of reality, or interpretations of reality, but not themselves the ground of the reality of which they speak. To say that without books there is nothing to see, is nihilism. Yet

Bloom's nihilism, manifest in these words, is, as we have seen, contradicted by his reference to both "natural vision" and "the real nature of things." This contradiction runs throughout his book from beginning to end.

Although the title of the book speaks of an "American Mind," there is in truth little or nothing American about the mind or minds that are characterized, other than Bloom's reports about his students. Bloom writes in the tradition of the great expatriates: Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and (in a somewhat different sense) Henry Adams. He reminds one of the avant-garde Parisian-Bohemians of the 1920s that included Joyce and Hemingway. He can breathe freely only in the presence of the symbols (and ruins) of Europe's aristocratic past. American democracy, as Americans themselves have understood it, is a closed book to him.

Bloom writes often about French and German philosophy and literature. Names drop upon his pages like summer flies. There are the great modern thinkers—Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. There are the more literary types, Ibsen, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, Proust, Kafka, Céline, Molière, Flaubert, Schiller, and of course Goethe. There is not a single reference to Cooper or Hawthorne or Emerson or Whitman or Howells. Nor any to Dreiser or Sinclair Lewis or Edith Wharton or Willa Cather. Thoreau is mentioned, but only because he represented a "side of Rousseau's thought " (p. 171). Above all, there is nothing about Melville or Mark Twain! In "Tom Sawyer: Hero of Middle America," (*Interpretation*, Spring 1972, reprinted in *The Conditions of Freedom*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) I attempted to capture the art by which Mark Twain had transformed Plutarchian into Machiavellian (and Lockean) heroism, how in *Tom Sawyer* we see the regime refounded, how we witness the coming into being of a "new order, of which Tom is a new prince [and where] the boy is father of the man, and the old are ruled by the young." Tom may be a rogue, but he is a charming one. Bloom's Tom Sawyer is Céline's Robinson, the hero of *Journey to the End of the Night*, described as an "utterly selfish liar, cheat, and murderer for pay" (p. 239).

Bloom complains loud and long that Americans do not have national books that form and represent national character, as do Frenchmen or Germans or Italians or the English. There is some justification for this complaint. But that is because the genius of America as a civilization is above all to be found in its political institutions, and its greatest writers have been its greatest political men, Jefferson and Lincoln and Washington. The American book of books, is the story of America itself, as the story of the secular redemption of mankind.

> It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the motherland [said Lincoln on his way to Washington in February of 1861] but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this

> country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men and that all should have an equal chance.[1]

Lincoln's metaphor, of course, was that of Christian, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, with the great pack on his back—representing original sin. In the Gettysburg Address the messianic theme would be consummated in the transformation of the death on the battlefield into the rebirth of the nation. What national poetry has ever surpassed that of Lincoln? When did epic poetry and poetic tragedy ever so coincide in the actual life story of a people—a coincidence in itself no less improbable than that of philosophy and kingship—than in the movement of thought and of events from the Revolution to the Civil War?

Of course it is the themes of the Civil War that supplied the themes of America's greatest literary works. *Huckleberry Finn* confronts convention with nature, and slavery with freedom, in a uniquely American poetic transformation of the teachings of Rousseau. It is one that, I believe, equals, if it does not surpass anything that European literature of the last 200 years can show. The great white whale, like the weight that Lincoln wished to see lifted from the shoulders of men, is also a distinctively American confrontation of the problem of evil, within the framework of Biblical allegory ("Call me Ishmael"). *Moby Dick* too is a "people's book"—as much in the tradition of the *Iliad* and of the *Odyssey*—as any modern book could be. Of either of them, however, Bloom says nothing. There is irony too in the Foreword by Saul Bellow, who seems only to have this in common with Bloom: that "European observers sometimes classify me as a hybrid curiosity, neither fully American nor satisfactorily European, stuffed with references to the philosophers, the historians, and poets I had consumed higgledy-piggledy . ." (pp. 14, 15).

Bloom writes:

> Reading Thucydides shows us that the decline of Greece was purely political, that what we call intellectual history is of little importance for understanding it. Old regimes had traditional roots, but philosophy and science took over as rulers in modernity, and purely theoretical problems have decisive political effects. One cannot imagine modern political history without a discussion of Locke, Rousseau and Marx (p. 197).

Leaving aside the begged question of what is meant by "purely political" history, can one imagine a discussion of "modern political history" that is *only* "a discussion of Locke, Rousseau, and Marx"? Elsewhere Bloom asserts that

> What was acted out in the American and French Revolutions had been thought out beforehand in the writings of Locke and Rousseau, the scenarists for the drama of modern politics (p. 162).

1. Lincoln, Address in Independence Hall, Feb. 22, 1861. *Collected Works*, IV, p. 240.

He adds that Hobbes had "led the way" and, as he proceeds, it becomes clear that he regards Locke as essentially Hobbes with a fig leaf covering the hedonism, atheism, and materialism that is so prominent in the former, but no less essential although concealed in the latter. We will return to this point presently. But think of it, the American and French Revolutions "scenarios" written by Locke and Rousseau! The embattled farmers who "fired the shot heard round the world" and the great protagonists in the world historical events that followed—Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, are mere actors, following a script. Do we not have here an historical determinism equal to Hegel's? Only the "cunning of history" is replaced by the cunning of the modern philosophers. But this is the purest nonsense.

Leaving the French Revolution to others, I comment only on the American Revolution and the American Founding. The statesmen of the era, among them those just mentioned, were, if not "a graver bench than ever frowned in Greece" or Rome, certainly the equal of any (*Coriolanus*, III.i.106). And they possessed a core of conviction which—if we are to make any attempt to understand them as they understood themselves—formed the basis of everything they did. Bloom purports to write about "the American mind." But he is perfectly oblivious of the presence of this expression in one of the most famous documents of American history. In a letter to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825, Thomas Jefferson explained the sources, the purpose, and the manner of the writing of what Lincoln would call that "immortal emblem of humanity," and Calvin Coolidge (observing in 1926 the sesquicentennial of the event) called "the most important civil document in the world."

> But with respect to our rights and the acts of the British government contravening those rights, there was but one opinion on this side of the water. All American whigs thought alike on these subjects. When forced therefore to resort to arms for redress, an appeal to the tribunal of the world was deemed proper for our justification. This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments . but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject; in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent . neither aiming at originality of principle nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversations, in letters, printed essays or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, etc. [2]

We must ourselves lay the greatest emphasis upon Jefferson's emphasis upon the "one opinion" on this side of the water. There really was a "public philosophy" at the time of the Revolution and the Founding. The party conflict of the

2. Basic Writings of Thomas Jefferson, edited by Philip S. Foner, Halcyon House, p. 802.

1790s exceeded in intensity anything that has come after—even that of the decade before the Civil War. Yet Jefferson, in his inaugural address in 1801, could say "We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Federalists, we are all Republicans." To speak as Jefferson did, in the letter to Lee, of the "harmonizing sentiments of the day," is to imply a consensus transcending the normal differences of opinion among a free people. Of "the elementary books of public right" mentioned by Jefferson, two are ancient, two are modern. I think it safe to assume that according to Jefferson's understanding of the American mind, that mind found harmonizing sentiments among the books of public right no less than among the conversations, letters, and printed essays. Certainly that would suggest that Americans then read John Locke's *Second Treatise* in *its* "harmonizing" sense, in which Locke quotes Hooker for authority for his doctrine, and through Hooker reaches back to Christian scholasticism, and through it to Aristotle.

Bloom not only believes that the English and American Revolutions were scenarios by Locke—he says that "the new English and American regimes founded themselves according to his [Locke's] instructions" (p. 162). According to Bloom one can save oneself all the trouble of reading political and constitutional history—like Bloom—and just read Locke. But how does Bloom read Locke?

"Perhaps the most important discovery" upon which Locke's teaching was based, according to Bloom, was that "there was no Garden of Eden . . . Man was not provided for at the beginning God neither looks after him nor punishes him. Nature's indifference to justice is a terrible bereavement for man. He must [therefore] care for himself." (p. 163). The complete break with Biblical religion, as well as with classical philosophy, as represented by Aristotle and Cicero, is the necessary presupposition of Bloom's Locke.

> Once the world has been purged of ghosts or spirits, [meaning of any belief in God or immortality] it reveals to us that the critical problem is scarcity What is required is not brotherly love or faith, hope, and charity, but self-interested rational labor (p. 165).

"Americans" says Bloom,

> are Lockeans: recognizing that work is necessary (no longing for a nonexistent Eden), and will produce well-being; following their natural inclinations moderately, not because they possess the virtue of moderation but because their passions are balanced and they recognize the reasonableness of that; respecting the rights of others so that theirs will be respected . From the point of view of God or heroes, all this is not very inspiring. But for the poor, the weak, the oppressed—the overwhelming majority of mankind—it is the promise of salvation. As Leo Strauss put it, the moderns "built on low but solid ground" (p. 167).

We need not dispute Bloom's interpretation of Locke to deny that the American mind has ever been the mind represented by that interpretation. Let us

however turn here to Bloom's obiter dicta at the end of the foregoing passage. This is his only mention (or quotation) of Leo Strauss, although Strauss's words and Strauss's thoughts echo and re-echo (without attribution) throughout his book. However, as Kirk Emmert recently reminded me, the words attributed to Strauss are not Strauss's but Churchill's—albeit words Strauss himself frequently quoted. But can a regime to which a Churchill could give such unstinting devotion—a regime in whose finest hour so many would come to owe so much to so few; a regime whose glory would not be of a day, but of a thousand years—be a regime despised by God and heroes?

Bloom is the first person I have ever known to suggest that "the point of view of God" is adverse or indifferent to "the poor, the weak, the oppressed." How can a regime which Bloom himself calls the "promise of salvation" for "the overwhelming majority of mankind" be anything but a theme for the greatest heroism? Why did the Union armies march to battle singing, "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free " Why did Churchill himself leave orders for the singing of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, in Westminster Abbey, at his funeral? Abraham Lincoln is reported as saying that God must have loved the common people—he made so many of them. But who that has ever read either the Prophets of the Old Testament, or the Sermon on the Mount in the New, could have said what Bloom says here? And may not "rational labor" be in service of faith, hope, and charity? I am sure that Bloom's grandparents thought so. Bloom's own account of the success of American Lockeanism is testimony to the proposition that this is precisely the kind of regime that the God of the Bible, who cares for the poor, the weak, and the oppressed would favor. Bloom to the contrary notwithstanding this is the kind of God most Americans have always believed in. This is what they believe when they sing "God bless America."

Let us again consult Jefferson, at his inaugural, declaring of the American mind that it is one

> enlightened by a benign religion, professed, indeed, and practiced in various forms yet all of them inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man; acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter (p. 333).

As far as I can see, everything Bloom says on subject of the American Founding is derived from his readings of Hobbes, Locke, or Tocqueville. I have found not a word of serious interpretation—apart from his birdseed scatterings—coming from an American source: not Jefferson, Washington, Madison, Hamilton, or Lincoln. No one has maintained more persistently than I have, during the past thirty-five years, the importance in the American Founding of Locke's teachings—as they were understood and incorporated into their handiwork by the Founding Fathers. But to say that a radical atheism discovered in

Locke's esoteric teaching was part of what they understood, believed, and incorporated into their regime—when every single document bearing on the question contradicts it, and there is not a shred of evidence to support it—is just plain crazy.

Bloom writes:

> It should be noted that sex is a theme hardly mentioned in the thought underlying the American Founding. There it is all preservation, not procreation, because fear is more powerful than love, and men prefer their lives to their pleasures (p. 187).

Surely no sillier remark has ever been made in a work purporting to be serious. One can only wonder what Bloom could have in mind: a treatise on the joy of sex by the Father of his country? Something to vindicate the symbolism of the Washington monument? In point of fact, Benjamin Franklin penned some of the raciest lines of the 18th century. And Jefferson's "Dialogue Between the Head and the Heart," although in no way indecorous, is nonetheless highly charged with the passions that are its subject. That moreover was written in Paris, and during Jefferson's romance with Maria Conway. I'm sure Bloom would have approved, if only he had known about it.

But Bloom writes about the thought *underlying* the Founding. And what he says can refer only to the thought of Thomas Hobbes. For it was only that old bachelor for whom self-preservation meant individual self-preservation, and who divorced preservation from procreation, the family, and civil society. What is true of the political thought of Thomas Hobbes is not however true of the American Founding. It is not even true of Locke. The centrality of property in Locke's teaching gives place as well to the family, as the object of self-preservation. Nor is it true of nature generally—notwithstanding Bloom's Hobbesian remarks about fear and love. In nature generally self-preservation is directed to the species rather than to the individual. A cock robin will attack a cat that comes too near the nest where the hen is brooding. In the case of humans, the instinct of self-preservation may be transferred from the family to the political community, as the guarantor of the family. But whatever the behavior of particular individuals, the instinct of self-preservation is almost never understood to be directed by nature to the preservation of the individual as such. Consider the following from the 43rd *Federalist*—which happens to be the central number. Madison writes, with respect to the question of the right of the Convention to scrap the Articles, rather than revise them, that it is to be

> answered at once by recurring to the absolute necessity of the case; to the great principle of self-preservation; to the transcendent law of nature and of nature's God, which declares that the safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim, and to which all such institutions must be sacrificed.[3]

3. Modern Library Edition, p. 287.

There is no question that "the great principle of self-preservation" refers to "the safety and happiness of *society*," and not to individuals. Moreover, in using the very words of the Declaration of Independence, Madison gives us a gloss on that document as well, and on "the common sense of the subject." There is then no contradiction—as some have supposed—between the unalienable right to life, proclaimed in the second paragraph of the Declaration, and the mutual pledge of the Signers, to each other, of "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." It would have been inconceivable to them that the right to life, with which they had been endowed by their Creator, was a right to act basely, to save their skins at any cost. Moreover, the law of nature, as stated by Madison, is dedicated to the ends of safety and happiness, the alpha and omega of political life. This is in entire agreement with Aristotle's *Politics*. The teaching of the Founding, expressed in the Declaration and the Federalist, takes nature as the ground of political life in the teleological sense, not in the non-moral purposeless sense of modern science. Bloom has completely misread not only the American Founding, but all political life, since he does not read political speeches to discover the form of the consciousness of political men. He assumes that political men are mere epigones of philosophers—whether they know it or not. The political nature of man is however understood by the Founders—if one reads what they say, and not only what Hobbes or Locke or Kant say—in the light of the inequality of man and beast, as well as in the light of the inequality of man and God. This understanding corresponds very closely with the first book of the *Politics*, and as it does with the first chapter of *Genesis*. But such inequalities imply that morality and the principles of political right are grounded in a purposeful reality accessible to reason, one that corresponds as well to the teachings of biblical faith. When Madison speaks of the sacrifice of all institutions to the safety and happiness of society, he implies a fortiori that the safety and happiness of individuals may or must be sacrificed too. For the Founders, the safety or happiness of society—that is to say, of a society constructed according to the principles of legitimacy and right set forth in the Declaration of Independence—always takes precedence over the mere interests or subjective judgments of individuals. That is why Lincoln in 1861, while conceding that the citizens of the seceding States possessed the same right of revolution as their Revolutionary ancestors, denied that they ought to exercise that right for any purpose inconsistent with the purposes for which their ancestors had exercised that right. To extend slavery was inconsistent with the purposes of the Revolution. The Founding Fathers, no more than Aristotle, could conceive of a life worth living without friendship. The baseness of self-preservation at any cost—the principle of Hobbesianism—as a *moral* principle, was beyond their imagination. Hence for them there could be no interest in self-preservation separate from or independent of the survival and well-being of everything they loved. In truth, fear is not more powerful than love.

The Founding Fathers, as one of the most exceptional generations of politi-

cal men who ever lived, are not to be understood as primarily Hobbesians, Lockeans, or Aristotelians. They were rather *phronimoi*, morally and politically wise men, the kind of characters from whom Aristotle himself drew his portraits of the moral and political virtues. And Aristotle understood what these virtues were, not from speculative thought as such, but from contemplating such actual examples of the virtues as came under his observation. The source of his ability to recognize these virtues, was not philosophy, but nature, the reality which was the ground of philosophy. Bloom looks to philosophy only as the source of "humanizing doubts" For him, political philosophy is nothing more nor less than the cleverly disguised question, What have you done for me lately? But men who lead revolutions, who found and preserve states, cannot be guided only by their doubts. They require convictions. And they do not look upon themselves as responsible only to those who raise doubts about those convictions. Looking only to books, politics for Bloom is a closed book. And no one can comment instructively on the relationship between political life and the philosophic life who does not know what political life is.

The vitality of classical political philosophy—why it is so close to the spirit of the statesmanship of the American Founding—is that it is grounded in the reality of political life itself. In the light of that reality one does not speak of rights divorced from right. There can be no such thing as a right to do wrong —as Lincoln said when he denied that the consent of the governed could justify the extension of slavery. And we must never forget, as Lincoln never forgot, that the rights Americans valued so highly were the rights with which they had been endowed by their Creator. Their duty to respect the rights of others did not ensue—as Bloom, following Hobbes, thinks—solely because it was to their advantage, however enlightened the self-interest which dictated that advantage. Their duty to respect the rights of others was part of their duty to God—a duty which was entirely unconditional. Hence Jefferson, in the *Notes on Virginia*,

> And can the liberties of a people be thought secure, when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath?

Concerning the central event in American history—in which Abraham Lincoln found entirely plausible Jefferson's prophetic judgment concerning the wrath of God for the sin of slavery—Bloom has this to say:

> The only quarrel in our history that really involved fundamental differences was over slavery. But even the proponents of slavery hardly dared assert that some human beings are made by nature to serve other human beings, as did Aristotle; they had to deny the humanity of the blacks. Besides, that question was really already settled with the Declaration of Independence. Black slavery was an aberration that had to be extinguished, not a permanent feature of our national life. Not only slavery, but

> aristocracy, monarchy and theocracy were laid to rest by the Declaration and the Constitution (p. 248).

Except for Russell Kirk's allocution excommunicating the Declaration of Independence (" not conspicuously American not even characteristically Jeffersonian . not a work of political philosophy or an instrument of government") I cannot recall another place in which so few words encompassed such great errors.[4]

We note first of all Bloom's thesis: that our "differences of principles are very small compared to those over which men used to fight" (p. 248). This opinion was certified by Tocqueville (who visited here in the early 1830s and who died before the Civil War). It is therefore canonical or Bloom. It is nonetheless mistaken. I remember in 1940 trying to tutor in English a refugee Polish university professor. I finally abandoned the effort. My pupil had a German English textbook that he had brought with him from Europe, and he simply would not accept anything I told him about the English language that did not agree with his German authority!

Bloom cannot form or accept an opinion about the United States that has not come to him from a European source. Tocqueville was a great and wise writer but, as Aristotle says of the discourses of Socrates, however brilliant, original, and searching they may have been, "it is difficult to be right about everything" (*Politics*, 1265a14). It hardly seems to detract from Tocqueville's greatness to say that he is not the greatest interpreter of a war he did not live to see. Bloom writes about the "fundamental differences" in the Civil War, yet there is no attempt to characterize those differences. He ignores the pronouncements of Lincoln, which represent the peak of what is American, pronouncements that belong in the company of Demosthenes, Cicero, and Burke. Leo Strauss believed the Gettysburg Address to be a greater funeral oration than that of Pericles, just as Lincoln was clearly a greater war leader. In the Preface to the University of Chicago Press reprint of *Crisis of the House Divided* I noted that I had first encountered the Lincoln–Douglas debates in 1946 when I was reading Plato's *Republic* with Leo Strauss. I was astonished to discover that the issue between Lincoln and Douglas was identical in principle with that between Socrates and Thrasymachus. For Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty was simply the democratic form of the proposition that justice was the interest of the stronger.

> We in Illinois . . tried slavery [said Douglas], kept it up for twelve years, and finding that it was not profitable, we abolished it for that reason (Joint Debate, Alton, Illinois, October 15, 1858. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. III, p. 297.)

4. On Kirk's atrocities, see "What were the 'Original Intentions' of the Framers of the Constitution of the United States?" in *The University of Puget Sound Law Review*, Spring 1987, esp. at 380–83.

Whatever the people think is in their interest, said Douglas, they may vote in, and whatever they think is not in their interest, they may vote out. This is exactly what Thrasymachus thought democratic justice to be. This implies, of course, that when the tyrant does what is in his interest, he is being neither more nor less just than the people. Tyrannical justice is no less justice than democratic justice. In Douglas's version of popular sovereignty—as in the Southern version—the distinction between tyrannical and democratic justice disappears. But Lincoln thought differently. Like Socrates (and Plato and Aristotle) he thought that the principles of natural justice limited—as they ought to guide—human choice. There is a distant echo of *Crisis of the House Divided* when Bloom writes (p. 29) that "for Lincoln there could be no compromise with the *principle* of equality, that it did not depend on the people's choice or election but is the condition of their having elections in the first place " But Bloom sees Lincoln's argument as a demand for consistency, a demand that the people defer to the logic of the principle of their regime. But he does not inquire into the status of that principle or of the regime embodying it: is it theirs because it is right, or is it merely right for them because it is theirs? Bloom never asks. He never entertains the possibility that the foundation of this allegedly "low" regime is, as Lincoln believed it to be, "an abstract truth applicable to all men and all times" (*Ibid.*, III, p. 376).

To the best of my knowledge, the election of 1800 in the United States was the first time in human history that a national government was replaced by its bitter political enemies on the basis of a free election. Those who lost their offices gave them up without any physical struggle. Those who gained the offices did nothing to proscribe—to execute, imprison, expropriate, or exile—those who lost. And those who lost looked forward confidently to a future in which they or others like themselves might again hold those offices. We are so accustomed to such blessings in what we are pleased to call the free world, that we fail to appreciate the uniqueness of this event, and to realize how much everything we hold dear depended upon the successful test of the principles of the Declaration of Independence in the election of 1800.

It is well to bear in mind that in the Glorious Revolution in England in 1689 the King was driven into exile just because there was no constitutional way of changing the chief executive on the basis of the elections to Parliament. Although that Revolution established the principle of Parliamentary supremacy, the King (or Queen) remained the executive head of the government until after the Reform Act of 1832. The ministers of the crown remained responsible to the unelected Crown, and not to the elected House of Commons. The Crown could not, of course, govern effectively without majorities in the Parliament, but these majorities were assembled as much by manipulation of the patronage (that is to say, by buying the votes it needed in the Commons) as by deference to the electorate. And the electors of the unreformed Parliament—with its "rotten" boroughs as well as equally "rotten" rural seats—were very far from

the American standard of democratic representation in 1800. All this is, I believe, what Alexander Hamilton had in mind when he said that the British Constitution, purged of corruption, would become unworkable. The idea of a King or Queen who reigned but did not rule, and of a Prime Minister—and cabinet—that was responsible to a democratically elected legislature, had not yet been born. And so the idea of changing the executive whenever the vote of the people changed the majorities in the House of Commons, was yet unknown. The idea of a government resting upon the continuing and changing consent of the governed, registered in free elections, was a discovery of the American Founding, and was its precious gift to the world.

But the trail blazed in 1800 proved to be inconclusive. In 1860, the losing party in a national election refused to accept the results of the voting, and "seceded" to form another government. Here indeed was a supreme test of whether

> societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force (Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* No. 1, Modern Library edition, p. 3).

In his inaugural address, Lincoln declared that

> A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments is the only true sovereign of a free people (*Collected Works*, IV, p. 268).

And so it remained for the American people to demonstrate to the world

> that ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly and constitutionally decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets (*Ibid.*, p. 439).

Bloom to the contrary notwithstanding, this question of bullets versus ballots represented as fundamental a difference as any over which men have ever fought.

We noted Bloom's pronouncement above that the antebellum "proponents of slavery hardly dared assert that some human beings are made by nature to serve other human beings, as did Aristotle " He has got the matter exactly backwards. The American defenders of Negro slavery did assert that that slavery was by nature just. They did so by asserting—long before Nazi theory—the biological inequality of the races. Aristotle says that someone of human birth would be servile by nature, if he differed from the generality of mankind "as widely as the soul does from the body and the human being from the lower animal" (*Politics*, 1254a16). The usefulness of such persons, by reason of the imperfection of their rational faculties, "diverges little from that of animals;

bodily service for the necessities of life is forthcoming from both . . ." (*Ibid.*, 1254b25). Aristotle only calls those slaves natural who are so defective mentally as to be functionally akin to the lower animals. In the modern world, such persons are called retarded, and are usually confined to what are somewhat euphemistically called "mental" institutions. (This is supposed to distinguish them from universities.) One might however ask, how could Aristotle expect such persons to form such a social class as slaves actually formed in the ancient world? The answer is that he did not. In Book VII of the *Politics* he says that "it is advantageous that all slaves should have their freedom set before them as a reward " (1330a32). But a natural slave, properly so called, *cannot* be rewarded by freedom, any more than a horse or a dog or an ox. Aristotle's discussion of natural slavery leads to the conclusion that the actual institution of slavery rested, not on nature, but on convention or law. Its sanction was force, or justice understood as the interest of the stronger (cf. 1255a19 with 1255b15). Aristotle's proposal in Book VII of the *Politics*, applied to antebellum America, would have led to the policy that Lincoln commended: that of gradual, compensated emancipation. The fact that no such policy was politically conceivable—that is to say, that no legislation to this end could be adopted by constitutional means—made the Civil War inevitable. Slavery was in fact destroyed by the only means that could have destroyed it: military necessity.

The antebellum Southern defense of Negro slavery was much harsher than Bloom recognizes. Aristotle's argument has nothing to do with "race" (as in "racism," a term of modern politics). Nothing in Aristotle's argument would justify the enslavement of an intelligent Negro by a stupid white. Bloom thinks that American slavery was an "aberration" whose place was "settled" by the Declaration of Independence. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is shown by the following excerpts from the famous "cornerstone" speech of April 1861 (before the fall of Fort Sumter) by Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy.

> The prevailing ideas entertained by [Jefferson] and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old Constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature: that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically.

Now, however, we know that

> those ideas were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of the races. Our new government [the Confederate States of America] is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not the equal of the white man. That slavery—the subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition.[5]

5. *The Political History of the Great Rebellion*, Edward McPherson ed., Washington, D.C., 1865, p. 103.

Stephens further asserted that the natural inferiority of the Negro—his allegedly natural aptitude for slavery—was a discovery of modern science, and he compared it to Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood. He identifies the idea of the social, moral, and political progress of mankind with the progress of science. The Confederacy—based upon just such an advance of science—is therefore superior to the "old" Constitution of 1787. The notorious claims made later in behalf both of National Socialism and Marxism-Leninism—that they represented political regimes grounded in the progress of scientific truth—were anticipated in principle by this most articulate spokesman for the Confederate South. Bloom's assertion that slavery "was an aberration that had to be extinguished" is itself merely the counterpart of Stephens' conviction in 1861 that opposition to Negro slavery was an aberration to be extinguished. Like all new truths, he said, it would take time for its diffusion and general recognition. With this recognition, however, would come acceptance of the justice and propriety of Negro slavery. Bloom simply dismisses—if he has not altogether forgotten—Lincoln's House Divided speech, which warned that the nation was at a crossroads, and that a decision had to be reached and taken, whether the nation was to become all free or all slave. Bloom writes as if "all slave" was never a possibility, and Lincoln an irresponsible inflammatory politician. He writes precisely as most "revisionist" American historians wrote before the publication of *Crisis of the House Divided* in 1959. In truth, however, the idea of progress can be used to vindicate either freedom or slavery. In 1861, however, no one could tell which would prevail.

The question of slavery extension went to the root of the meaning of free government, but it was the obverse of the question of whether free elections would continue to decide who would govern in a republic. By 1860 the doctrines of John C. Calhoun—which had taken the deepest root throughout the South—had completely divorced the idea of natural rights and human equality from the idea of political sovereignty, and hence from the idea of State sovereignty. It was this divorce which gave legitimacy to the idea of a constitutional right of secession. Popular sovereignty, seen in the light of the Declaration of Independence, is the collective expression of the equal right of each human person to be governed with his own consent under the rule of law. And the rule of law was itself understood to be the implementation, in accordance with the dictates of prudence, of "the laws of nature and of nature's God." These laws of nature were understood to be both moral and rational. They were understood to secure the equal rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness of each human person. In severing the connection between natural rights and constitutional rights, Calhoun severed the connection between law and morality altogether. This fact was disguised to some extent because of Calhoun's typical mid-century commitment to the idea of progress—to the belief that those who were scientifically and technologically advanced were morally superior.

> The discovery of gunpowder and the use of steam as an impelling force, and their application to military purposes have *forever* settled the question of the ascendancy between civilized and barbarous communities, in favor of the former. (*A Disquisition on Government*, Cralle ed., p. 62. Emphasis added.)

Calhoun assumed—as did his contemporary Karl Marx, whose *Manifesto* was written about the same time as the *Disquisition*—that the outcome of physical conflict, whether that of proletariat and bourgeoisie, or that of white and colored races—would indicate moral no less than material superiority.

State sovereignty, in Calhoun's thought, refers then ultimately to nothing more than the force (*assumed* to be moral) at the command of the government. In his *Disquisition* there is no abstract or rational way to distinguish—as in the Declaration of Independence—between the just and the unjust powers of government. Those who are slaves are assumed to be rightfully slaves, and those who are masters, to be rightfully masters. And if the slaves suddenly arise and enslave the masters, then each will still be rightfully what he is! This latter was not something Calhoun contemplated, but it follows the logic of his argument. It is not for nothing that Calhoun has been rightly called (by Richard Hofstadter, in *The American Political Tradition*) "the Marx of the Master Class." This is to imply—correctly, I believe—that Calhoun anticipated, in certain fundamentals, the thought underlying the two great tyrannies of the twentieth century. If it was true, as Bloom says, that "slavery, aristocracy, monarchy, and theocracy" had been "laid to rest by the Declaration and the Constitution," then why had the thought of John C. Calhoun become so powerful? Why indeed was there ever a Civil War? (See "Defenders of the Constitution: Calhoun versus Madison," by the present writer. A Bicentennial Essay published by the Bicentennial Project of the University of Dallas.)

Next, I come to Bloom's account of the "The Sixties." Bloom was forced to live through a revolutionary political event which he never really understood. It was an event in American history, the serious study of which Bloom has always regarded as superfluous. He looked upon the student radicals as Americanized versions of the Nazi youth of the 1930s, and there is some validity in this analogy. The deeper resemblance, however, is to the historicism and nihilism already present in the intellectual defense of the Confederacy—notably in the thought of both John C. Calhoun and Alexander Stephens. And there are important parallels to Calhoun in Thoreau, contemporaries who, ostensibly on opposite sides of the slavery question, were yet nearly perfect mirror images of each other. For the fact is that abolitionism and slavery, although theoretical antagonists, nonetheless collaborated in a way that, had it succeeded, would have crushed the Constitution. Their radical hostility and practical cooperation closely resembles the way in which in our century Nazis and Communists worked together to destroy the Weimar regime, which both hated worse than they hated each other. But Weimar lacked the strength of the American Founding, and Germany had no Lincoln.

The Black Power movement which brought Cornell University to its knees in 1969 (and drove Bloom into exile) was a transformation of the Civil Rights movement, in the aftermath of the victory of that movement by the enactment of the great civil rights laws of 1964 and 1965. In this transformation there was the same severance of the connection between civil and constitutional rights, on the one hand, and natural rights on the other, as had been earlier accomplished in the thought of Calhoun. Black Power became its own justification for whatever demands it could exact, just as the ownership of slaves once justified whatever the owners of slaves could exact. That the ideas animating the Black Power movement were at bottom the same as those of the leading defenders of slavery, however ironical, is nonetheless true. Bloom, however, is unconscious of this, because he is unconscious of the power and magnitude of the ideas in conflict that made the American Civil War perhaps the least avoidable great war ever.

Bloom's alienation from the American political tradition is illuminated by his pride in the fact that some of his students went among the rioters distributing a pamphlet which reprinted the passage from Plato's *Republic* (491e–492b) in which Socrates characterizes the *demos* itself as the greatest of sophists, the greatest of the corrupters of the young. Most radical students—and many who were not radical—would think that what it revealed most of all was Plato's antidemocratic prejudices. But the passage also lends itself easily to a Marxist interpretation—however spurious—because, according to the *Republic*, among the causes of the corruption is private property, and the leading cure for it is communism. It is difficult to imagine what effect—other than inflammatory—Bloom thought this Platonic passage might have had on the rioters.

One might reflect, however, as Bloom does not, that Socrates' characterization of democracy in the *Republic* is peculiarly inapplicable to the popular government envisaged by the American Founding Fathers. Theirs was a regime of law—in principle and aspiration, one of reason unaffected by desire. To the extent that human ingenuity could make it so, it was intended as a regime in which equal recognition was given to the requirements of wisdom and of consent. Consent was necessary however because, as Plato himself insisted, the designs of tyrants are always masked as the claims of wisdom.

Leo Strauss, in "On Classical Political Philosophy," remarks that

> "aristocracy" (rule of the best) presented itself as the natural answer of all good men to the natural question of the best political order. As Thomas Jefferson put it, "That form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of [the] natural *aristoi* into the offices of government."[6]

Professor Colleen Sheehan of Villanova University has been kind enough to point out to me that in this celebrated essay, Strauss illustrates the central thesis

6. In *What Is Political Philosophy?* Free Press, 1959, pp. 85, 86.

of *classical* political philosophy—the nature of the best regime—with a quotation from a renowned letter of Jefferson to Adams. She has also pointed out that it appears to be the central passage in Strauss's essay. However one finally judges the wisdom of the Founding, there is little doubt that Strauss, like Jefferson, regarded this assimilation of aristocracy into democracy as its guiding thought. Elsewhere Strauss has written that

> Liberal education is the ladder by which we try to ascend from mass democracy to democracy as originally meant.[7]

The American Founding, insofar as it is "democracy as originally meant" is thus inadequately characterized—to say the least—as something "low." After all, why would anyone need a ladder to ascend to it?

Yet Bloom is not altogether oblivious of the higher ground. He writes,

> The students were unaware that the teachings of equality, the promise of the Declaration of Independence, the study of the Constitution, the knowledge of our history and many more things were the painstakingly earned and stored-up capital that supported them (p. 334).

Someone who can write of the American and French Revolutions as scenarios thought out beforehand by Locke and Rousseau, and who can say that "the English and American regimes [had been] founded according to [Locke's] instructions," is hardly in a position to reproach others for the lack of "the study of . . . history." But were the students simply unaware of this history—as Bloom says here—or were they not in agreement with Bloom's own view of the Founding as "not very inspiring," and as spiritually impoverishing? Was the revolt of the sixties not at bottom a middle class revolt against the successful materialism of American life? Did not the students themselves—however misguided—believe that they were rejecting the low in favor of the high? Had not Bloom himself nurtured this revolt, even if it took forms that he did not expect or wish?

On February 21, 1861, President-elect Abraham Lincoln addressed the Senate of the State of New Jersey. He spoke of his recollection, from the earliest days of his childhood, of a small book, Weems's *Life of Washington*.

> I remember all the accounts there given of the battle fields and struggles for the liberties of the country, and none fixed themselves upon my imagination so deeply as the struggle here at Trenton . . . the crossing of the river; the contest with the Hessians; the great hardships endured at that time, all fixed themselves on my memory more than any single Revolutionary event; and you know, for you have all been boys, how these early impressions last longer than any others. I recollect thinking, then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that those men struggled for. I am exceedingly anxious that that thing which they struggled for; that something even more than National Independence; that

7. *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, Basic Books, 1968, p. 5.

> something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come; I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that struggle (*Collected Works*, IV, pp. 235, 236).

Leo Strauss's—and Jefferson's—"democracy as originally meant," and Lincoln's "original idea" of what the Almighty had promised "to all the people of all the world" by this "his almost chosen people," is the noble legacy—the moral no less than the intellectual foundation—that was lacking in the education of the disaffected students. Lincoln's speech at Trenton, not Socrates' denunciation of democracy, is what was needed to illuminate the folly of the rioters who, in rejecting their inheritance,

> Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away,
> Richer than all his tribe (*Othello*, v.ii).

Lincoln, who had opposed Douglas's idea of popular sovereignty on the same ground that Socrates had opposed Thrasymachus' cynical definition of justice as nothing but the interest of the stronger, could have provided a better introduction to the *Republic* than Bloom's. He could have shown the students the inner connection between the principles of classical political philosophy and those of the Declaration of Independence. Bloom could not do this because everything in his account of the American mind proves that he does not believe it to be true.

The argument of Bloom's book founders on the fact that he cannot decide between the classical rationalism that may be traced to Socrates and Socratic skepticism, and the rejection of all rationalism—and all skepticism—by Nietzsche and Heidegger. He is only certain that his "humanized" doubt is superior to any alternative, or to any decision—for example, in favor of the principles of the Declaration of Independence. Yet he concedes that the issue may yet be resolved.

> Are Nietzsche and Heidegger right about Plato and Aristotle? They rightly saw that *the* question is here, and both returned obsessively to Socrates. Our rationalism is his rationalism. Perhaps they did not take seriously enough the changes wrought by modern rationalists and hence the possibility that the Socratic way might have avoided the modern impasse. But certainly all the philosophers, the proponents of reason, have something in common, and more or less directly reach back to Aristotle, Socrates' spiritual grandchild. A serious argument about what is most profoundly modern leads inevitably to the conclusion that study of the problem of Socrates is the one thing needful. It was Socrates who made Nietzsche and Heidegger look to the pre-Socratics. For the first time in four hundred years, it seems possible to begin all over again, to try to figure out what Plato was talking about, because it might be the best thing available (p. 310).

The study of the problem of Socrates was a life-long preoccupation of Leo Strauss, who was Bloom's teacher—and mine. Indeed, much of the foregoing passage might have been transcribed from Strauss's familiar conversation. In addition to his many writings on virtually all aspects of classical and modern political philosophy, Strauss wrote three books on Xenophon's Socratic writings, all of them with forewords by Bloom. In addition, he wrote *Socrates and Aristophanes*. Together, these constituted an exhaustive articulation of "the problem of Socrates," as it might be uncovered in non-Platonic (and pre-Socratic) sources. These writings of Strauss were in addition to his lengthy commentaries on the Platonic Socrates as he is presented in the *Republic*, the *Laws*, the *Statesman*, the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and yet other dialogues. Of all this Bloom makes no mention. In his overview of the history of political philosophy, "From Socrates' *Apology* to Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede*" (pp. 243–312), there is no mention of Strauss.

In our time, Bloom writes, "it was Heidegger, practically alone, for whom the study of Greek philosophy became truly central . . . " (p. 309, 310). How anyone who had studied with Strauss—or had read "What Is Political Philosophy?" or "On Classical Political Philosophy"—could have written this is almost beyond comprehension. To speak thus of Heidegger, without mentioning Strauss, is like speaking of Hitler, without mentioning Churchill. For, if the truth were known, Strauss was as surely Heidegger's nemesis as Churchill was Hitler's. One can only conclude that if Bloom says that the one thing needful is the study of the problem of Socrates, and yet makes no mention of Strauss's study of the problem of Socrates (or of Greek philosophy), then he cannot think that Strauss's study is the needful one.

Strauss moreover never reached such a lame conclusion as Bloom's, that we might now—after four hundred years—"try to figure out what Plato was talking about, because it might be the best thing available." This makes the quest for the right way of life sound like the quest for prewar whiskey during the era of prohibition! In fact, Bloom's "to figure out" is an echo of a passage from Strauss's *Preface to Spinoza's Critique of Religion*:

> For Spinoza there are no natural ends He is therefore compelled to give a novel account of man's end (the life devoted to contemplation): man's end is not natural but rational, *the result of figuring it out* He thus decisively prepares the modern notion of the "ideal" as a work of the human mind . as distinguished from an end imposed on man by nature. (*Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, p. 241. Emphasis added.)

What Bloom is looking for is a "figuring out" of Plato which is in fact not Plato at all, but a modern "ideal," ostensibly grounded in Plato, but designed like all modern ideals, to gratify a passion, rather than to subordinate passion to reason. Bloom has no intention of facing squarely the issue of philosophical realism (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) versus nihilism (Nietzsche and Heidegger). He has no such intention because he knows that Strauss has presented

the case for the former in terms he cannot refute but will not accept. Consider the following from the end of Strauss's chapter on "The Crisis of Modern Natural Right" in *Natural Right and History*. Rousseau, according to Strauss, had a reservation against society in the name of the state of nature.

> To have a reservation against society in the name of the state of nature means to have a reservation against society without being either compelled or able to indicate the way of life or the cause or pursuit for the sake of which the reservation is made. The notion of a return to the state of nature on the level of humanity was the ideal basis for claiming a freedom from society which is not freedom for something (p. 294).

Rousseau, as interpreted here by Strauss, is the core of Bloom's soul. It is Rousseau who informs Bloom's reading of Plato's *Republic*, and who has tipped the balance within him irrevocably towards Nietzsche and Heidegger. Bloom's ideal of the university is just such a place where one can "return to the state of nature on the level of humanity." The attractiveness of this supposed return, says Strauss, is that

> It was an ideal basis for an appeal from society to something indefinite and undefinable, to an ultimate sanctity of the individual as individual, unredeemed and unjustified. This was precisely what freedom came to mean for a considerable number of men.

In the "ultimate sanctity of the individual as individual"—meaning thereby a sanctity unfettered either by God or nature—Strauss has defined the core of modern liberalism. And Bloom, a quintessential liberal, is one of that "considerable number of men." Concluding, Strauss writes that

> Every freedom which is freedom for something, every freedom which is justified by reference to something higher than the individual or than man as mere man, necessarily restricts freedom or, which is the same thing, establishes a tenable distinction between freedom and license. It makes freedom conditional on the purpose for which it is claimed.

Of course Bloom does not claim unconditional freedom for man in society —any more than did Rousseau. Nor does he attack those necessary conventions of academic life that make it comfortable and agreeable to persons like himself. But he does not admit within his own soul—nor does he teach—any idea of freedom that is conditional upon anything higher than man as man. That excludes both Athens and Jerusalem—and Leo Strauss.

Bloom to the contrary notwithstanding, we have known all along what Plato was talking about. He was talking about Justice (for example, in the *Republic*), and in the other dialogues about moderation, courage, law, and, in general, what was good and bad for man. The question about Plato is not what he was talking about, or even whether what he said appears wise or just, but whether the good and bad for man was grounded in any ultimate reality, whether it

existed by nature, by convention (or law), or by some unknowable divine dispensation. For Bloom the question is not, What is Justice? It is, Which book about justice do you like best? At the end of *Thoughts on Machiavelli* Strauss, rejecting Machiavelli's teaching, says "that the notion of the beneficence of nature or of the primacy of the Good must be restored by being rethought through a return to the fundamental experiences from which it is derived" (p. 299). In Strauss's rejection of progress in favor of return, the books of the classical philosophers would be indispensable to us as modern men, needing emancipation from our peculiarly modern cave. But Strauss, unlike Bloom, never failed to distinguish books from the "fundamental experiences" the books were meant to articulate. The "primacy of the Good"—the upper case emphasis is Strauss's—is a primacy with respect to all books and all art, even that of Plato.

Plato's dialogues always reveal to us far more of our ignorance of each subject discussed, than knowledge of that subject. In revealing our ignorance, however, they always reveal something of our knowledge of that ignorance. And that knowledge of ignorance always reveals something—never enough to satisfy us, but something—of what it is that we wish to know. It is enough to whet our appetites, to make us wish to go on, and know more of what it is that we do not know. The life lived in accordance with the knowledge of ignorance—the truly skeptical life, the examined and examining life—is, by the light of unassisted human reason, the best life. The regime that is best adapted to the living of this life is the best regime. All other lives and regimes are to be judged in relationship to this life and this regime. The goodness of the best life and the best regime is not arbitrary. It is not to be characterized—as Bloom suggests—as merely the "best thing available." On the contrary, that goodness is "according to nature." And hence the moral and intellectual virtues which are in harmony with this goodness are not arbitrary, but also are good "according to nature."

We return to Bloom's assertion that Nietzsche and Heidegger "returned obsessively to Socrates." They did so, he says because "Our rationalism is [Socrates'] rationalism." He adds, however, "perhaps they did not take seriously enough the changes wrought by the modern rationalists and hence the possibility that the Socratic way might have avoided the modern impasse." One might encapsulate the life work of Leo Strauss in Bloom's "perhaps." For Strauss proved, I believe, that "the changes wrought by modern rationalists" had mistakenly discredited the possibility that reason might discover the right way of life and the best regime. According to Strauss, it was not true that "Our [viz., modern man's] rationalism is his [viz., Socrates'] rationalism." Modern rationalism is "scientific" rationalism, which means that it explains the world and everything in it—including whatever is regarded as good or bad for man—in terms of what Aristotle called efficient and material causes, while denying

the reality of what he called formal and final causes. All formal and final causes are understood in modern science and modern philosophy as epiphenomena or by-products of efficient and material causes. They are attempts to explain the high by the low.

This is as if one would try to understand Michelangelo's David as the result of the physical force applied by the artist to the chisel on the marble, omitting from one's explanation any reference to the sculptor's brain, purpose, and skill. Socratic rationalism assumes that Michelangelo's brain had a purpose, even before his hand attempted to give it effect, or even before Michelangelo himself had discovered what it was. Indeed, it assumes that Michelangelo could not have discovered his purpose if it had not pre-existed—through all eternity—as a potentiality of his human nature. For modern philosophy, Michelangelo's art is simply an accidental outcome of the causes that generated Michelangelo, causes utterly indifferent to his art, as they were blind to anything intelligent or intelligible. The premises of modern philosophy are the result of a doubt so radical as to eliminate all further need to doubt: hence its dogmatism. The ambition of modern rationalism was to eliminate the skepticism that had accompanied Socratic rationalism, as its shadow. By replacing skepticism with dogmatism in philosophy, it would at the same time obviate any need for faith in God. Strauss, by showing that the self-destruction of reason in modern philosophy was the self-destruction of modern rationalism alone, prepared a return to premodern rationalism. By restoring Socratic skepticism, he restored not only Socratic rationalism, but the place that that skepticism left for biblical faith.

Nietzsche and Heidegger represented the final disillusionment with—and rejection of—modern rationalism, although they seem at the same time to have rejected all rationalism. Not seeing—as did Strauss—any alternative to modern rationalism, however, they discovered: nothing. Since there is no purpose, good or evil, in any reality outside of man, all purpose in life must be willed by man. But the will has no source of guidance outside itself. What one wills as good is good. What one wills as evil, is evil. The will is its own justification, because there can be no other. Hitler's famous propaganda film "Triumph of the Will," whatever its defects as art, is an authentic manifestation of Heidegger's teaching. Here then is the core cause of modern nihilism, and of the belief that there is no ground for the existence of God, or of the noble and good things, except as useful fictions or pleasing illusions. These must be willed by man, although they are believable by *hoi polloi* only if their origin is concealed. For the true Thinker—who replaces the Philosopher—there is neither myth nor reality. The Thinker—having triumphed over the terror of the abyss—alone lives without illusions, without either hope or fear, but in an unprecedented freedom. Bloom lives with considerable discomfort in this freedom, but he has not yet figured out anything for which he would give it up.

Philosophy, Science, and the Opening of the American Mind

ROGER D. MASTERS

It is exceptionally rare for a philosophic book to find its way to the *New York Times'* Best Seller list. It is also unusual for a work condemning America's culture and university system to generate widespread praise from the targets of its criticism. But it is above all extraordinary to see such a response to a book focused on the *souls* of our students.

My own assessment of *The Closing of the American Mind* can be summarized under three headings, corresponding to the book's organization. *First*, the account of our current situation in Part I is brilliant and accurate—and only limited in that Bloom's reader is spared a description of the *consequences* flowing from the cultural emptiness of America's educated class. One might, after all, remember that the character of the "best and brightest" has the effect of shaping the cultural horizon of everyone else, with results including the cult of ugliness in the arts and crafts (often in the name of originality, but sometimes blatantly for its own sake), the loss of morals in business and public life ("inside trading" or "guns for hostages"), and the decline of industrial "competitiveness" (as American technology is sold to foreigners and American businessmen only find profits from buying and selling each other's jobs and corporate names).

Second, Bloom's analysis of the impact of philosophic themes—and especially of the German tradition—on American opinion is simply awesome. Part II of *The Closing of the American Mind* makes connections of which most of us have never dreamed and makes them convincingly. The only thing to be added is that Bloom doesn't elaborate clearly the historical reasons (that is, what Aristotle might call the "material and efficient causes") for the spread of nihilism. Isn't the lack of spiritual goals linked to the democratic character of the university? And isn't that phenomenon itself explicable on philosophic grounds?

Democratization of higher education is, after all, in part related to the spread of high technology. On the one hand, the need for productive workers goes down with mechanization (Rousseau had reason to express his opposition to labor-saving devices in his constitutional proposals for Corsica); on the other, the remaining jobs do require different patterns of work. Putting most of the youth through college at least keeps them off the streets and the unemployment rolls, and a few learn how to run computers or read complicated sets of instructions (even if poorly).

The effects of technology on our universities are, in turn, related to its massive impact on the character of our youth. Not just (or primarily) televi-

sion—though its effect on the ability to read and think should not be underestimated now that the average high school graduate is said to have spent more time in front of a television set than in a classroom. Rather, I mean telephones, refrigerators, cars, ski lifts, and running hot water. A generation of spoiled brats has been spoiled by modern "conveniences"—the consumer durables that fuel our economy.

This is not a materialist alternative to Bloom's critique: the machines that have corrupted our youth are the essence of the Baconian project fulfilled in a Lockean mode. Rather, it is a suggestion that the philosophic argument in Part II of *The Closing of the American Mind* could easily be reinforced by a precise account (anthropological in the old sense) of what Aristotle would have called our "way of life."

Finally, the third part of Bloom's book says much that greatly needs saying about the way scholars and universities have abandoned serious matters. Some might object that it's not that much different in some European universities—I know some young French people who think their system much worse than ours because much more preprofessional. But to see the disarray of the entire academic world portrayed at one time is indeed disconcerting.

For this reviewer, there are only two key points worth adding to the dialogue. First, Bloom understates the negative role that can be played by administrative decisions. In general, university administrators think they can fill the void of our curriculum with something trendy (for example, interdisciplinary causes called "Theme" courses, with the "Theme" being something like "Ideas that formed the Twentieth Century"). Not all of the baneful effects of contemporary higher education can be laid to the door of the professors.

A second question gets to my only major disagreement with *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom's image of "Science" is no longer entirely accurate. Among other things, his treatment of the natural sciences seems to miss the profound possibilities of something new, especially in contemporary biology. This is especially worth noting since it contradicts some minor points in his argument.

I can start with a small but significant detail. One of the very few factual errors that occurs in *The Closing of the American Mind* concerns the relation between humans and other animals. On p. 133, Bloom says, "In all species other than man, when an animal reaches puberty, it is all that it will ever be. This stage is the clear end toward which all of its growth and learning is directed. The animal's activity is reproduction. It lives on this plateau until it starts downhill. Only in man is puberty just the beginning." It's perhaps justifiable to ignore the insects (despite Aristotle's interest in them), though Bloom does say "*all* species" and the social insects clearly contradict his statement in some interesting ways. But let us focus on the kind of "animals" Bloom clearly had in mind: mammals (dogs, horses, birds, wolves, etc.). Even here, the assertion is contradicted by the importance of activities other than

reproduction associated with play, with sociability, and with learning about the environment.

The actions not narrowly related to reproduction are clearly very important in most of the other primates. Aside from verbal speech, moreover, there is virtually no activity or capacity that formerly was attributed uniquely to "man" that has not now also been observed in chimpanzees if not in other monkeys and apes: identification of the self and of others as individuals, deceit, laughter, "culture," altruistic self-sacrifice to save others, murder, even war. The Nietzschean assertion that the "brute" (a term Bloom uses often) has no "meaning" is a continuation of the Hobbesian devaluation of nature.

One cannot watch two eagles *playing*—yes, playing—for hours, and still think of all nonhuman animals as "brutes" solely concerned with reproduction. A chimpanzee or gorilla is emphatically *not* all he or she will be on reaching puberty. This is important insofar as Bloom *appears* to have accepted Nietzsche's view that "Man is pure becoming" (p. 203). It is simply incorrect to say that "the actuality of plants and other animals is contained in their potentialities, but this is not true of man as is indicated by the many cultural flowers *essentially* unlike "

On the one hand, all living forms have a range of potentialities, so that actuality depends on the environments and life histories of organisms; on the other, to say that all cultures are "*essentially* unlike" flies in the face of philosophy, experience, common sense, and Nietzsche's own project. If all cultures serve the same function—say to give mythic meanings of good and bad—then all cultures are essentially alike and only differ on superficial matters. Bowerbirds attract mates by making gaudy nests, it is said, and each bird builds of different materials—but all the nests serve the same function.

Bloom's view of human nature can thus be questioned as outdated and contradicted by contemporary biology, and especially by ethology (based as it is on the observation of other animals). This point is linked to a deeper issue. Bloom refers to modern science as "materialistic, hence reductionist, and deterministic" (p. 195). That might have been so in the nineteenth century—but no longer. Contemporary natural science seems to be *none* of these. *Scientists* themselves may not recognize the change (the last person to ask about the philosophic implications of scientific discovery may, alas, often be the scientist who made it). Nonetheless, the change is real and overwhelmingly evident.

It was Nietzsche himself who first noted that physics wasn't what the eighteenth-century Newtonians thought it was (see Kenneth Deutsch & Walter Soffer, eds., *The Crisis of Liberal Democracy*,[1] pp. 48–66). Now, things have gone much further. Physics is—and has been since Bohr and Heisenberg—radically probabilistic rather than deterministic; emergent properties (novelties) are everywhere *more* important than "reductionism"; the formal or "ideal"

1. Albany: SUNY Press, 1987.

properties are clearly prior to and more elemental than the perceived material itself. Heisenberg may not be representative when he sees modern physics forcing us to return to ancient Greek philosophy—and notably to Heraclitus and Plato (see his *Physics and Philosophy*); Capra may exaggerate in the *The Tao of Physics* in seeing Eastern religion imminent in contemporary theories. Even so, with such radical departures from the high school physics of Newton and Galileo, it is really important to question the adequacy of the old catch phrases.

Philosophers *must* do this, for physicists won't do it for us. Much the same could be added with regard to biology. One distinguished biologist, George Gaylord Simpson, put it flatly: reductionism in biology is "absurd" Nor does it follow that science cannot address conscious phenomena. That is another of the comfortable myths that would have shocked Aristotle—and won't withstand scrutiny. To cite but two recent examples: (1) mental phenomena like manic-depressive and schizophrenic illness are in the process of being traced to biological causes (in the case of manic-depression, to a specific gene whose expression depends to some extent on experience); (2) dyslexias involve deficits in reading and writing (and now we are discovering exactly how the brain handles linguistic information by learning the ways that these processes can be disturbed).

In general, the progress in these areas is so great as to be truly dangerous; far from being impossible, we are only too capable of learning about the neurological and behavioral concomitants of thought. To say nothing is achieved in studying the soul with contemporary scientific methods is to say that the *Characters* of Theophrastus was not a philosophic work. Such assertions can only be maintained if the word "soul" is defined in a theological rather than a philosophic sense—and, even then, only in some religious traditions would it follow that belief in a nonmaterial soul endowed with a free will is requisite for serious discussion of human ends or purposes.

It may be true that modern science has simply devastating effects for the concept of "soul" in some Christian texts. It is not true that modern science has the same implications for a *philosophic* or rational understanding of the soul as Plato or Aristotle used that term. Quite to the contrary, for it is now possible to conclude that the tabula rasa psychology of Hobbes, Locke, and the behaviorist tradition is simply wrong on scientific grounds.

This presents us, paradoxically, with a theological danger of the highest order. The war of reason and revelation—put to sleep by our Founding Fathers among others—seems to be waking up in time for the Bicentennial of the American Constitution. Whether internally (a judge ruling that "secular humanism" is a religion in the sense of the first Amendment) or externally (the Ayatollah Khomeini describing the American regime as "Satan"), the comfortable assertions of modernity are disappearing. Nietzsche seems to have been wrong: God is not dead—He (like Rip Van Winkle) was just asleep.

Continued scholarly research, particularly linking the scientific understanding of nature with the philosophic issues dear to Bloom, remains as necessary today as it was for Aristotle, Rousseau, or Kant. Although the *Closing* says relatively little about research, perhaps because its author is at the University of Chicago, it is worth remembering the dangers of limiting one's dialogue to undergraduates and perhaps a few friends. Anyone with experience in an institution of higher learning will recall individuals who demonstrate how the end of scholarly inquiry can produce bitter, closed minds.

These reflections only reinforce the argument of Bloom's book. At least some of our youth need desperately to learn of these issues. If philosophy were to die now, it might really disappear forever. But perhaps it too has just been sleeping. Certainly what Bloom himself writes in *The Closing of the American Mind* has a striking way of contradicting his title.

How Bloom Did It: Rhetoric and Principle in *The Closing of The American Mind*

WILL MORRISEY

At least two questions arose in the early reviews of Allan Bloom's book. Given its extraordinary popularity (outstripping even the confessions of Patty Duke during the long, hot summer of 1987), how much has the "American mind" really closed? A citizenry that buys hundreds of thousands of copies of a twenty-dollar volume whose longest chapter is titled "From Socrates' *Apology* to Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede*" deserves some credit for open-mindedness at the very least. The American bourgeoisie could have bought more copies of the new picture album about Elvis, but no: it preferred to read "The Nietzscheanization of the Left or Vice-Versa," "Rousseau's Radicalization and the German University," and "Swift's Doubts." Does the Enlightenment really work, after all? Are Americans quite so decadent as Bloom appears to contend?

And then there is the matter of Allan Bloom's mind. Cultivated, powerful, incisive, witty—no one denies its virtues. But what does it really think? Most reviewers assumed that what they saw on the surface was what they were getting: a defense of the classics grounded firmly upon ancient Greek philosophy. But a more interesting and challenging view was urged by those who noticed the literally central place of Nietzsche's argument in the book, and decided that this, and other details, betray a nihilist's hand within a puppet Plato. Does Bloom secretly revel in the very decadence he decries?

These questions about both minds in question, America's and Bloom's, were raised tellingly in the one truly intelligent early review, "The Closing of Allan Bloom's Mind: An Instant Classic Reconsidered" by Charles R. Kesler.[1] Professor Harry V. Jaffa in a public talk given in Washington, D.C., in July, 1987, developed many of the same points, more amply, and added some, as did Professor Thomas G. West in remarks delivered at the 1987 American Political Science Convention. These critics agree that Bloom fails sufficiently to appreciate politics: he has little to say about civic, as distinguished from liberal, education; he speaks eloquently of eros but not enough of thymos; he preaches without having recourse to any discernible religion; a true son of the University of Chicago, he ignores gymnastic, and therefore exaggerates the effects of music; he fails to appreciate the statesmanship of the American founders, instead regarding them as mere practical Lockeans. Some suspect Bloom of harboring a politic nihilism, or wonder if Bloom can choose between Socrates and Nietzsche.

1. In *The American Spectator*, Vol. 20, No. 8, August 1987, pp. 14–17. For the most stupid review by an intelligent man, see Paul Gottfried: "A Half-Open Mind," in *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, Vol. 11, No. 9, September 1987, pp. 30–33.

These substantial objections deserve careful study because there seems to be so much truth in them. Bloom does indeed avoid any thorough discussion of civic education. Far from apolitical (he introduces political considerations on almost every page), Bloom nonetheless gives few indications of how America might educate citizens, as distinguished from cultivating decent intellectuals. Bloom seems to want the rose without its protective thorn. He does not seem to appreciate the virtues of the thorn.

As Leo Strauss taught, when competent men make glaring errors, readers should search for some underlying intention before sighing, 'Homer nods.' Has the translator and interpreter of Plato's *Republic* and Rousseau's *Letter to D'Alembert* suddenly forgotten what makes a political man? Has he forgotten the need for, even the nobility of, some political men, and the consequent need for civic education? Some twenty years ago, Bloom wrote:

> Today religion, philosophy, and politics play little role in the formative years. There is openness, but that very openness prepares the way for a later indifference, for the young have little experience of profound attachments to profound things; the soil is unprepared. Previously a professor had to free his students from prejudices; now he must instill prejudices in them if he wishes to give them the experience of liberation.[2]

Has Bloom now simply given up on religion and politics, leaving philosophy to live by its wits alone?

Both civility and prudence ought to give us pause, here. A book titled *The Closing of the American Mind*, with a subtitle about failing democracy and impoverishing souls, most likely has more than a pinch of rhetoric in it. But although critics charge Bloom with confusing politics with rhetoric, neither Bloom's critics nor his defenders have shown adequately how Bloom's rhetoric works—how a semiobscure professor managed to galvanize the American mind with energy from his own not-simply-American mind. Only after seeing how Bloom writes can one guess why he writes that way, and what he really thinks. Only then does criticism make sense.

Judge this book by its cover, for a moment. The title appeals primarily to contemporary 'liberals,' secondarily to 'conservatives.' To assert that "the American mind" has done anything so drastic as to close, will surely distress persons who pride themselves on keeping their minds open and broad. This matter of failing democracy must also trouble and intrigue them. Could there be a new *social problem* to address? These locutions are just enough to overcome the contemporary liberal's repugnance to any mention of souls. "Souls" appeals rather to conservatives, who also worry about education failing democracy. "Foreword by Saul Bellow" ropes in just about everyone, too: liberals,

2. Allan Bloom, "The Crisis of Liberal Education," in Robert A. Goldwin, ed., *Higher Education and American Democracy*, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966, pp. 121–40.

because prominent artists must have our respect; conservatives, because Bellow is one of us, sort of. The back cover endorsements cover a similarly wide range: liberals will trust Conor Cruise O'Brien and a woman professor from Harvard (they won't suspect she's no liberal); conservatives, or at least 'neo-conservatives,' can gaze happily at words of praise by Walter Berns and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.

Bloom dedicates the book to his students. But a dedication need not reveal a book's real audience; the preface here gives a better look at that. There Bloom speaks as a teacher, to teachers. He lets them know he is one of them ("no real teacher can doubt that his task is to assist his pupil to fulfill human nature against all the deforming forces of convention and prejudice"). He also tactfully lets them know he knows a bit more about teaching than they do (look at what makes your students angry, he advises, and—this, subtly—don't concern yourself too much with charges of 'elitism'). Centrally, he suggests that the "small number" of students who "will spend their lives in an effort to be autonomous," undertaking the "solitary quest" of philosophy, are "models for the use of the noblest human faculties and hence are benefactors to all of us, more for what they are than for what they do." (When reviewers call Bloom a philosophic and not a religious man, they are simply telling us what he says of himself in his first four pages.) Though solitary, philosophers are not apolitical, paradoxically enough; Bloom concludes the argument of his preface by observing that in modern regimes, politics and "reason in its various *uses*" (emphasis added) cohere more tightly than in traditional regimes. This raises the question of the relations among the reason that discovers theories, the reason that finds uses (abetting economic production, among other things), and politics —including *the* political passion, anger, to which Bloom has directed the attention of his 'fellow' teachers, soon to become his students.

For years, Allan Bloom has been an untimely man. But the success of *The Closing of the American Mind* depends upon a rhetorician's good timing. The Introduction, "Our Virtue," resembles certain writings by Professor Jaffa, or perhaps the early Paul Eidelberg; its far greater popular success owes something to the second thoughts old 'liberationists' now are having about liberation.

Bloom identifies moral relativism as a symptom of moral egalitarianism, and says that such relativism has replaced "the inalienable natural rights that used to be the traditional American grounds for a free society." Observing that "every educational system has a moral goal that it tries to attain," the formation of "a certain kind of human being," Bloom calls the new goal "the democratic personality," characterized by "openness." Although liberalism as such has a "tendency" toward "indiscriminate freedom," the American founders, and the modern political philosophers they read, finally insisted on the natural basis of certain discriminations: e.g., the distinction between freedom and slavery,

determined not by public opinion or popular sentiment but by the self-evident truth that all men are created equal by God. The Creator-God of the Declaration of Independence gets left out of Bloom's account, perhaps for philosophic reasons but surely also for rhetorical ones. Bloom is not addressing an audience for whom traditional piety counts. Whereas Jefferson and Franklin, who privately denied the divinity of Jesus, nonetheless appealed to God in the Declaration, knowing how their countrymen would conceive of God, Bloom's rhetorical problem is different. He must address secularized individuals suspicious of any mention of God, especially in political discourse.

Bloom is nonetheless firm on the moral point. Moral relativism denies the existence of the common good and (here the language turns necessarily moral) "extinguish[es] the real motive of education, the search for the good life." "Openness" closes the mind: contemporary or relativist liberalism defeats itself. Only reason enables men to transcend the cave, which relativism merely digs deeper and wider. Reason-as-modern-science does not transcend the cave, because it cannot drive us or lure us 'up.' It is anerotic. The American regime in its original form does not say, simply, "Liberty!" It says, "Liberty to reason," in politics, religion, and education. "What makes its political structure possible is the use of the rational principles of natural right to found a people, thus uniting the good with one's own," the general with a particular people and place.

Bloom claims no gift of prophecy. He knows he cannot plausibly assert some ennobling, entirely new prejudice that will help to point his readers toward the truth. Instead he more prudently argues—shrewdly appealing to the remnants of generosity and to the strong will-to-gullibility in contemporary liberalism—for "respectful treatment" of "error," the myths that inculcate real virtues (and sometimes real vices) in people. Moral relativism often does rest on more than moral egalitarianism; there is a certain civility involved, however dim; Bloom will avail himself of it. By "respectful" treatment, however, he means not merely living-and-letting-live, but examining these myths as if they might be true, or contain some truth, as determined by reason—"to seek the good by using reason." Showing that moral relativism refutes itself in theory (relativism unjustifiably exempts itself from its own strictures) and in practice (fostering extremism, not toleration, 'left' and 'right'), Bloom aims to reassociate reason and morality in the minds of men accustomed to segregating 'facts' from 'values.' To moralize about the Creator-God or the natural law would not work with such individuals. In order to liberate them from their unexamined assumptions or prejudices, Bloom begins with those prejudices, appealing to some features of them while dissolving others.

Bloom divides the body of his book into three parts: "Students," "Nihilism, American Style," and "The University": the taught, the teaching, the teaching institution. He does not have a section called "Teachers," preferring to mea-

sure his criticisms of his readers in small, sometimes concentrated doses. In "Students," he begins not with criticism but nostalgia. He invokes the period 1955–1965, when students were really students—and, more usefully for his purposes, when so many of today's senior faculty were students. "The old was new for these American students, and in that they were right, for every important old insight is perennially fresh." But there were also *victims*, victims of the university, which failed to give them a truly liberal education. Bloom thus begins skillfully to alternate complaints about today's wayward youth with subtle flattery and apparent sympathy for their elders.

During the course of these assessments, Bloom does indeed commit the error seen by his best critics: he talks books, not the Book; he almost ignores gymnastic. That is to say, he dampens spiritedness. But this is not nihilism; it is rhetoric, concededly for a philosophic not a religious purpose. Bloom is deliberately bookish because his audience is accidentally bookish. To put it another way—as Bloom does in his commentary on Plato—he "abstracts from the body," not because he has forgotten it, but because (as Socrates does) he wants his auditors to forget it. He wants to get them beyond their materialist historicism—that supreme combination of the bodily and the bookish, tending toward too much or too little thymos. Bloom uses the bookishness of historicist ideology against materialism, and thus finally against historicism itself, which tends to regard books as mere epiphenomena. Far from believing books merely artificial, as some contend, Bloom clearly regards them as written speeches, partly artificial but also originating in nature and pointing at nature. "Without books there is nothing to see" is a rhetorical exaggeration; surely no one imagines that, without Bloom's book, there would be no crisis of the university to see. Least of all does Bloom succumb to the illusion that the American mind would not be closing if he had not said it was.

Physical eros characterizes the student generation. Bloom exploits the tendency of the middle aged and the elderly, inclined to other vices, to deplore this state of affairs, now aggravated by 'liberation' ideology. He also manages to attack the eroticism of the young without making his audience feel too old-fashioned; after all, some of them grew up on Elvis.[3] This too has much to do with timing; at this stage of the game it might even become fashionable to be unhip. Mesmerized by Bloom's discussion of eroticism, some reviewers overlook his introduction of philosophic and political themes into this account of music. He shows how music can prepare the soul for reasoning, or very nearly spoil it. He remarks that the Enlightenment believed it could do without such preparation, only to find it had removed a good defense against irrational-

3. Professor Kesler does object to Bloom's "old-fogeyish" characterization of rock music as having "the beat of sexual intercourse." "Could this really be said . . . of the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Four Tops?" No, but—*pace*, Professor—folksinging and 'soul' aren't rock, and, as for Paul McCartney's cutesy little melodic hooks—if that's rock, it's pumice. And even it induced erotic paroxysms in the girls of its day.

ism by forgetting how to tame rougher passions with subtler ones—yielding bad consequences for education and politics. He even gets in a few rhetorical jabs by associating rock music with that horror, capitalism. That will make excounterculturites stop and think—no small achievement.

Rock music makes a solipsistic world, but one with social consequences; they are called by an oddly prim latinism, 'relationships.' Here Bloom observes what happens when a nation makes equality a social fact instead of a moral and political principle considered self-evidently true in a carefully defined sense. Young people are "spiritually unclad, unconnected, isolate, with no inherited or unconditional connection with anything or anyone." Again, Bloom deliberately exaggerates in a bookish way, claiming that "America is actually nothing but a great stage on which theories have been played as tragedy and comedy." Speaking to a generation of teachers for whom 'concrete' and 'abstract' represent respectively the apogee of praise and the nadir of blame, he shows how ideas matter even with respect to the stubborn and ever-fascinating nature of sexuality. Teacher, in your liberalism had you supposed social equality and sexual passion to be twin goods? Professor Bloom has a sobering thought for you: egalitarianism and liberation yield "passionlessness," the re-conceiving of sexual activity as "no big deal." Even com-passion, the very fuel of social liberalism, gets diluted by the colorless fuel of egalitarianism. For if all are the same, why pity? And why desire? Self-protectiveness (anger and fear) replaces eros. Lacking firm natural attachments, young people attach themselves to themselves, fearful of anything much beyond that. Hectored by moralists who do not know how to educate either the reasonable or the passionate parts of the soul, students blink uncomprehendingly—not even "last men" but last persons. Because all but the youngest teachers have at least some dim memories of old eros, Bloom's rhetoric effectively appeals to their sense of superiority to their students, while carefully teaching teachers of their own longstanding errors.

The book's central part, "Nihilism, American Style," uncovers the moral and intellectual foundations of those errors: Nietzschean egalitarianism, a concept no one anticipated. Bloom clearly states that the American founders do not teach relativism or historicism. But he also says, "The great mystery is the kinship of [relativism and historicism] to American souls that were not prepared by education or experience for it." This point receives no adequate response among Bloom's critics. Critics rightly complain that such American authors as Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Whitman, and Howells never find their way into the book. But to take the central name on the list, Emerson was the man who popularized German historicism in the United States; the first American 'intellectual' adumbrates nothing less (or more) than Hegelianism with the rationalism cut out. And Emerson was one of Nietzsche's intellectual heroes. This means that Americans have been somewhat vulnerable to such corruption almost from the beginning.

Bloom does offer an explanation, albeit a problematic one. He describes

John Locke as an Enlightenment man who intends "to extend to all men what had been the preserve of only a few: the life according to reason." This is not theoretical reason but primarily the subspecies of useful reason that serves production, the conquest of nature. Eros and thymos do not disappear, but they are tamed, subordinated to modern natural rights—that is, to the *self*-centered. Nor is this 'self' a soul in either the classical or the Christian sense; when Lockean man finds his quest for joy too joyless, he looks not to 'Greek' happiness or Christian salvation, but eventually to "creativity," as anticipated by Rousseau and perfected by Nietzsche. In his central chapter (the eighth of fifteen), titled "Creativity," Bloom attacks the nihilists' exaltation of making at the expense of thinking. Democratic America shrinks from the pride of these philosophers. Rather, "there is in America a mad rush to distinguish oneself, and, as soon as something has been accepted as distinguished, to package it in such a way that everyone can feel included." Bloom deplores this vain egalitarianism, in part because it affords so little solid ground for statesmanlike prudence, and for politics generally. After the founding generation, genuine statesmen are rare in America, and these few do not much engage Bloom's attention here.

Hence modern political philosophy, even in its soberest forms, leaves itself vulnerable to the thrust of Nietzsche's terrible swift sword. 'History' cannot replace divine providence because scientific progressivism is a lie with respect to the soul, if not with respect to the body. Insofar as the Founders partake of that philosophy—and, rhetoric aside, let's face it: Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin all did, deeply if not exclusively—their work is also vulnerable, although perhaps not in the same ways; founding a political regime is not philosophizing. In the book's central passage, Bloom summarizes Nietzsche's refutation of rationalist egalitarianism and describes Nietzsche's irrationalist elitism, his warlike will to power. Peaceful commercial republicanism stands perennially threatened by those who reject its philosophic premises. Then, in a passage publicly unnoticed by his critics, Bloom writes,

> a cultural relativist must care for culture more than truth, and fight for culture while knowing it is not true. This is somehow impossible, and Nietzsche struggled with the problem throughout his career, perhaps without a satisfactory resolution.

Bloom parts company with Nietzsche precisely on the issue of the rational pursuit of truth. While conceding the force of Nietzsche's objections to Enlightenment rationalism, he concedes nothing to Nietzsche's attack on Socrates and Plato. He also insists that the Enlightenment, "whatever its failings," at least kept reason "at the center" of the soul—praising what Nietzsche condemns.[4]

4. It is true that Nietzsche wants spiritedly to defend not culture for its own sake, but culture for the sake of life. The real antagonism of truth, for Nietzsche, is not culture but life. Bloom never agrees with Nietzsche that truth, or the rational quest for it, are somehow incompatible with life. (If one denies that the quest of *unaided* reason serves truth, or life, one gets on the road not to Germany or Athens, but to Jerusalem.)

Nihilism in the American style takes the egalitarianism of commerce and democracy while breaking the natural and conventional limits on that egalitarianism. The problem, of course, when Nietzsche goes to Fort Lauderdale, is that neither may survive the experience. One of Bloom's best rhetorical arguments has attracted criticism: "It is not the immorality or relativism I find appalling. What is astounding and degrading is the *dogmatism* with which we accept such relativism, and our easygoing *lack of concern* about what it means for our *lives*" (emphases added). Does no one see the wit, here? Having already addressed the moral defects of relativism in "Our Virtue" and "Students," in this chapter, "Our Ignorance," he does not speak to his audience simply as a moralist. This would make his book just another 'conservative' tract with limited circulation. In this passage he initially downplays the moral defects of relativism to deplore "dogmatism"—surely no good teacher will demur?—and (remoralizing, now) invites us to shake our heads over the lamentable unconcern about our young, our very lives, that relativism evinces. Can there be a heart in the National Educational Association so far gone in bourgeois bolshevism as to remain untouched by this? Then Bloom goes for the knockout: "As an image of our current intellectual condition, I keep being reminded of the newsreel pictures of Frenchmen splashing happily in the water at the seashore, enjoying the paid annual vacations legislated by Léon Blum's Popular Front government. It was 1936, the same year Hitler was permitted to occupy the Rhineland." These are not the words of a man who doesn't understand political rhetoric, or who fails to see that politics consists of more than mere rhetoric.

"Western rationalism has culminated in a rejection of reason. Is this result necessary?" The book's third part, "The University," contains the longest chapter in the book, "From Socrates' *Apology* to Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede*," suggesting a sort of history of reason as embodied in educational institutions.

But he begins with America. Citing Tocqueville on the danger of "enslavement to public opinion," Bloom echoes the sentence in the preface, on knowing oneself only by one's students. Democracy increases this danger, and modern democracy increases it still more, by making popular consent legitimate and insisting that it can be rational. "Reason transformed into prejudice is the worst sort of prejudice, because reason is the only instrument for liberation from prejudice." Then there is a sentence Bloom's critics overlook, a sentence that challenges their criticisms in two ways: "For modern men who live in a world formed by abstractions and who have themselves been transformed by abstractions, the only way to experience man again is by thinking these abstractions through with the help of thinkers who did not share them and who can lead us to experiences that are difficult or impossible to have without their help." The bookish or 'abstract' character of Bloom's argument throughout his book is, in his judgment, dictated by the character of contemporary Americans, particu-

larly those of the 'intellectual' classes. Bloom's critics apparently do not perceive Bloom's understanding of modernity, and this prevents them from effectively challenging it, except on the issue of whether or not the American *founding* was nearly so 'abstract' as Bloom contends. The question of the effectiveness of civic as distinguished from liberal education in today's climate, necessarily depends not only on whether Bloom's rhetorical argument portrays the founders accurately, but on the extent to which he portrays today's Americans accurately.

Bloom calls "the best of the modern regimes," liberal democracy, "entirely [the] product" of Enlightenment rationalism, which he describes as "perhaps not even primarily, a scientific project but a political one." Again he does not acknowledge the Declaration's language about the Creator-God. "The authors of *The Federalist* hoped their scheme of government would result in the preponderance of reason and rational men in the United States." But this kind of reason, Bloom continues, is rudderless. Here the Kesler–Jaffa–West critique makes sense. Put somewhat differently, if you ignore the fact that the Declaration admits no inconsistency between reason and the Creator-God, and if you therefore 'bury' that God in the name of reason, it is no surprise that you find reason rudderless. In my opinion, although not professedly in the opinion of Bloom's critics, the founders were well aware of the distinction between reason and revelation. Their Declaration is a politic and political synthesis of the two, a synthesis that in time made America quite safe for individuals of varying religious and even irreligious hues.

However, given the nature of Bloom's audience, which ranges from religious-latitudinarian to atheistic, perhaps he must remain silent on the Creator-God of the Declaration, knowing that the Creator-God will not be resurrected in such minds by Allan Bloom's rhetorical powers, formidable though these are. If intellectuals will not be brought to believe, however, perhaps they may be brought to think, to reason in a new (in fact very old) way, a way that enables them to discover the ends of human life instead of reducing those ends to the subhuman. Bloom begins by arguing that Enlightenment philosophers are not ideologues but true philosophers, men who attempt to give "the rational account of the whole." "Philosophy is not a doctrine but a way of life"—notice, here, Bloom's ultimate defense of genuine "openness"—"so the philosophers, for all the differences in their teachings, have more in common with one another than with anyone else, even their followers." Modern philosophers differ from Socrates not in their nature but in their political program. But they too know that philosophy can never be truly popular, for it inspires no awe, benefits no populace, consoles no person. Reason will never truly enlighten nonphilosophers, and Enlightenment philosophers know that, even as they pretend otherwise. The modern university reflects the Enlightenment political program, whereby "the powerful are persuaded that letting the professors do what they want is good"; instead of educating aristocrats, as Socrates does, the

Enlightenment educates the populace. *This pretended enlightenment is the modern version of civic education.* "The fact that popularized rationalism is, indeed superficial is not argument against the philosophers. They knew it would be that way." Bloom takes the half-understood Enlightenment prejudices of his audience of demieducated educators, and teaches them what those premises are, and what they logically entail. He thus imitates Enlightenment rhetoric even while showing its limitations. Speaking of ancient philosophy, Bloom observes: " philosophy's response to the hostility of civil society is an educational endeavor, rather more poetic or rhetorical than philosophic, the purpose of which is to temper the passions of gentlemen's souls, softening the hard passions such as anger, and hardening the soft ones such as pity." Substitute "contemporary teachers" for "gentlemen" and you will not find a better summary of what Bloom is doing in *The Closing of the American Mind.* Like the gentleman of antiquity, the modern professor has tenure and therefore need not work too hard; he is often prey to thymotic passions, crystallized in modern rationalist fashion as ideology; a post-Christian, he makes much of compassion and *noblesse oblige.* He needs a civic education but now in true modern fashion, he is allergic to civility. His patriotism has atrophied. He is not a true aristocrat. Hence his civic education must appear to be (and may be if his abilities and temper allow it) liberal, that is, liberating. A man whose political ambitions have gone underground, or so far aboveground as to lose sight of the ground, must be brought back to *political* thought while remaining under the illusion that he has transcended it by the force of his intellect and the greatness of his heart. It helps if recently he has bruised his foolish head on some reality, and is ready to listen to a more sober voice. This voice asks him a question: "Does a society based on reason necessarily make unreasonable demands on reason, or does it approach more closely to reason and submit to the ministrations of the reasonable?" To prepare modern intellectuals to think about that question is a small step in the right direction. And to suggest that "perhaps" Nietzsche and Heidegger "did not take seriously enough the changes wrought by the modern rationalists and hence the possibility that the Socratic way might have avoided the modern impasse," conveys the thought of Leo Strauss in a way Strauss rediscovered—namely, without bringing Strauss's name to public attention. Finally, to warn that one way to force reason and egalitarian dogma to cohabit may be seen in Soviet tyranny, and to do this so that contemporary 'liberals' may find it plausible, is a public service.

In his final chapter, "The Student and the University," Bloom shows how he would reintroduce the prudent study of politics. "The apolitical character of the humanities, the habitual deformation or suppression of the political content in the classic literature, which should be part of a political education, left a void in the soul that could be filled with any politics, particularly the most vulgar, extreme and current." Here Bloom uses the snobbery of cultivated souls against their current political egalitarianism. At the same time he manages to suggest

that a 'coverup' has occurred, that Enlightenment has not fully enlightened certain political matters. And there is more: "Political science is more comprehensive than economics because it studies both peace and war and their relations"; it is "the only social science which looks war in the face." "Most unusual of all, political science is the only discipline in the university (with the possible exception of the philosophy department) that has a philosophic branch." Not only moderation, justice, and courage, then, but even the love of wisdom may be found among members of the American Political Science Association, although they do not constitute the majority of the Association. Bloom would reintroduce politics and the prudent study of stern justice and anger, by the means of flattery and curiosity—seduction, the art of eros. In Bloom's judgment, for his chosen audience, that is the only effective way to do it.

Neither Nietzsche nor any nihilist says, as Bloom does, "Philosophy is still possible." A nihilist would say, as Bloom does, "It is the hardest task of all to face the lack of cosmic support for what we care about." But this does not in itself reveal nihilism; much depends upon who "we" are. Are we beings animated first and last by love of our own—our lives, children, cities? Is death the king of terrors for us, at best to be courageously overthrown? Or are "we" convinced that philosophy means "learning how to die"? Do we regard "the intense pleasure of insight" to be sufficient compensation for the knowledge that we must die? Those are the principal alternatives for the Socratic philosophers. Among their successors, the Epicureans come closest to nihilism, but are not nihilists. Nihilists find insight painful, and fight the pain with self-assertion. Epicureanism might be a plausible charge against Bloom, were he to leave sufficient evidence to decide the issue. He does not. Part of the antidote to mental closure is more the raising of questions than the delivering of answers.

It is right to regard civic education as prior to liberal education. Unfortunately, too many modern intellectuals imagine themselves liberated from civic matters, even from the obligations of civility. 'Conservatives' who see the folly of this simply are not part of the problem. They can be addressed in a different way. Students can be addressed in yet another way; even the most sophomoric among them are only junior ideologues. It isn't hard to disillusion them. Many have some of the right passions: patriotism, a desire for some sort of love beyond the universe bounded by Sesame Street and MTV. A more directly civic education may reach them. But someone has to give them that education, and there are not enough teachers who can do so. Bloom speaks to the unable majority of his profession. *Mirabile dictu*, some are listening.

The Closing of the Philosophic Mind

A Review of Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*

HARRY NEUMANN

Error is not blindness,
error is cowardice.—Nietzsche

Professor Bloom shares the error informing this book with most liberals. That error is their unwillingness to realize the nihilism or atheism responsible for their subordination of politics to individual freedom or self-interest. By liberal I mean anyone who believes that the individual is more important than the state; individual liberation takes precedence over political obligation—however that liberation is interpreted. Bloom's brand of liberalism gives rise to his unqualified preference for philosophers over nonphilosophers, for philosophy over politics, for Socrates over Achilles, for peace over war.

The anger or moral indignation of Achilles, the chief political passion, is, for Bloom, "of all the experiences of the soul the most inimical to reason and hence to the university" (pp. 327, 71). He sees it as the passion most hostile to philosophy. To be sure, moral indignation lacks the aesthetic charms and daintiness of Mozart to whom Bloom's good students are eagerly introduced (p. 69).

Moral indignation is more akin to "McCarthy and those like him" whom Bloom castigates as "clearly nonacademic and antiacademic, the barbarians at the gates" (p. 324). This liberal taste does not place Bloom in the academic minority: "Most professors were against McCarthy." He is outraged that many liberals (for example, the AAUP) opposed to McCarthy were not opposed to student threats to academic freedom in the late sixties. Against these threats, Bloom, the opponent of moral indignation (politics) in academics, is most indignant. For those faculty-student disrupters were hostile to Bloom's philosophers: "The tiny band of men who participate fully in (philosophy) are the soul of the university. However bad universities may have been there was always a divination that an Aristotle or a Newton was what they were all about" (pp. 271–72). If moral indignation is antiphilosophical and philosophy is the soul of the university, Bloom's indignation (at threats to "philosophy" and its university) reveals his hostility to the university's very soul.

I believe that Bloom, however unwillingly, is opposed both to philosophy

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and the university. I do not fault him for this opposition, only for the lack of courage to acknowledge it. In reality, Bloom shares my atheism or nihilism, however much our agreement is obfuscated by his need for academically acceptable (liberal) fig leaves to hide his nihilist nakedness—for example, his championing of "great books," anti-McCarthyism, and Mozart.

I found the chapter informed by Bloom's indignation, his very political condemnation of his colleagues of the late sixties, to be the most lively and alive part of the book (pp. 313–35, 347–56). It indicated that, unlike the "last men," he still has some chaos (politics) in him, perhaps enough to give birth to a dancing star (pp. 194–207)? It showed how deeply political, as opposed to "philosophic" (in his sense), Bloom is!

I agree with Bloom's prejudice that politics and its indignation obfuscates the truth about oneself and one's world: "It is essential not to make the pursuit of truth dependent on what is politically relevant" (p. 283). I also agree with his Thrasymachean contention that "ultimately the only authority in America" is "the enormous majority" (pp. 246–56, 319). Opposing nihilists such as Thrasymachus, Bloom and myself, Lincoln (p. 29) insisted that the "principle of equality" and not "the enormous majority" was "ultimately the only authority in America." Lincoln and his best contemporary student, Harry Jaffa, have far more in common with Socrates than Thrasymachus, Bloom, or I do. We neither are nor—if we dare to know ourselves accurately—want to be philosophic. Bloom lacks this self-knowledge. Instead he deplores philosophy's dethroning "by political and theoretical democracy democracy took away philosophy's privileges In America anyhow, everybody has a philosophy" (pp. 377–78).

Bloom wants to turn this around, making politics subservient to philosophy and its university. "Never did I think that the university was properly ministerial to the society around it. Rather I thought and think that society is ministerial to the university" (p. 245). This ambition is inherently political and springs from a misunderstanding of what philosophy is, and what a school—an institution informed by philosophy—is.

Nietzsche knew better. His opposition to Socrates was directed against both philosophy and schools shaped by it. Bloom sees that, for Nietzsche, the problem of Socrates is *the* problem. He wrongly interprets Nietzsche's opposition to Socrates as "a classic philosophic disputation" (p. 308), part of an eternal dialogue among a few cosmopolitan intellectuals of all ages who, for Bloom, constitute "the real community of man, in the midst of all the self-contradictory simulacra of community " (p. 381). These cosmopolitans are united by "their common concern for the good the only real common good this is the meaning of the riddle of the improbable philosopher-kings. They have a true community that is exemplary for all other communities" (pp. 275–76, 381–82). This community is the heart of Bloom's university and its education. Not Nietzsche's!

Nietzsche's nihilism precluded Socratic dialogues. In that nihilism, there is nothing common—and nothing individual! To be something rather than nothing required Nietzsche's rejection of reason and science (knowledge of reality) in favor of his desperate faith in the redemptive virtue of a Dionysian unconscious and its willing. The real horror of Nietzsche's Dionysius, its essential destructiveness and Wagnerian love of death, is clearer in Mann's *Death in Venice* and its "cries of the damned plunging into nothingness" (p. 234).

Far from sharing Bloom's reverence for his true community of philosopher-kings and their ageless dialogues, Nietzsche wanted to purge his state of anyone with a university education: "I would drive out of my ideal state the so-called 'educated' just as Plato drove out the poets; this is my terrorism."[1]

Nietzsche's terrorism against Bloom's revered university springs from rejection of the heart of Socrates and of philosophy, the faith in a nonarbitrary, eternal good somehow knowable, or at least divinable, by a pure mind. From a philosophic or Socratic point of view, rejection of this faith—which philosophers experience as more than mere faith or opinion—is nihilism's core.

Nietzsche criticizes the philosophers, "the famous wise men" responsible for Bloom's university, for their enslavement to politics. However much they pretend to transpolitical vistas unsullied by indignation or anger (a powerful political pretence!), they really are victims of the "tarantula," the spirit of revenge, that is, of politics. They are enslaved by common sense, the herd instinct, and its essentially moral-political bias.

Common sense, the herd instinct, is never egalitarian. It always inculcates one chief care in all herd members, that care is to get what is good for oneself, to live a good life. This care is informed by the moral-political orthodoxies of one's "cave" or herd. Unlike unphilosophic herd members, philosophic herd members turn this care into a question whose adequate answer forever eludes them. Philosophers, that is, philosophic herd members, spend their lives striving to answer their herd's chief question. Consequently philosophers always are radically political. There are no apolitical philosophers, only philosophic herd members.

The philosophic primacy of *the* moral-political question is not revealed by rational inquiry since it sets the goal of all rational inquiry. Faith in its primacy is forced upon both philosophic and unphilosophic herd members by what Nietzsche in his *Joyful Science* (I, 354) calls the strongest instinct of any herd. In his *Zarathustra* (II:8) he rightly discerns enslavement to the herd instinct as the hallmark of "the famous wise men" comprising Bloom's "true community that is exemplary for all other communities" (p. 382).

What Bloom (p. 285) calls "the uncompromising difference that separates the philosophers" from nonphilosophers is not about death and dying, as he believes, but about whether the true common good—without which both

1. (Nietzsche) *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Colli and Montinari, Berlin, 1967ff., III 3, p. 172.

philosophy and politics is meaningless—exists. Like all good herd members, the philosophers claim to know—know, not merely believe!—that it exists, although they, unlike unphilosophic herd members, believe that they lack an adequate grasp of it (cf. *Republic*, 505a–511d). Like good citizens, they see acquisition of this knowledge both as their most pressing practical need and the main object of their theoretical inquiry. Unlike Aristotle, Rousseau or Bloom, philosophers do not distinguish between theory and practice, between theoretical (philosophic) and practical (moral-political) virtue. Their main practical concern is also their main theoretical concern. Their thought never transcends the original moral-political orientation of the cave in which their birth (nature) roots them.

Scientists or sophists, not philosophers (p. 256), consider themselves liberal, liberated from their "cave," beyond good and evil. Like all unphilosophic herd members, they believe they know what truly is good for themselves; philosophers are permeated by the sting of the awareness that they do not. Thus the main question for philosophers is whether the good life is philosophy (questioning the notion of goodness dominant in one's cave) or unquestioning loyalty: philosophy or politics? This is the never settled question for philosophers. Philosophers are in an untenable psychological tension between their need for unquestioning loyalty (which their ignorance does not permit them to really discredit) and their need to seriously question that loyalty. However misguided, Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede* reflects the only serious attempt in our century to recover awareness of philosophy's necessarily political rootedness. If Bloom really were interested in being philosophic, he would have taken the *Rektoratsrede* much more seriously (p. 311).

Like Socrates, Lincoln, or Jaffa, philosophers must experience that depth of loyalty to their people. They cannot, like Bloom, Machiavelli, or Aristotle consider "it essential not to make the pursuit of truth dependent on what is politically relevant" (p. 283). For what is most relevant politically is precisely what is most relevant philosophically—the need to know "the only real common good" (p. 381). It is therefore not sufficient philosophically to declare "I hold there is no sin but ignorance" (p. 292), unless the man asserting it also has, like Lincoln or Jaffa, an unquestioning (and therefore "ignorant") rootedness in what his herd holds to be good and right. Bloom is not alive to this, the necessary, if not sufficient, condition for philosophy. Consequently his philosophy really is Laputan science, floating on empty air (pp. 293–97). Philosophic ignorance of the true common good precludes Laputan confidence in the superiority of Bloom's philosopher-kings to ordinary herd members. (Indeed it precludes my characterization of political men as mere herd members!)

Weber's distinction between facts and values is philosophic insofar as it implies that *the* decisive alternative is philosophy or politics, reason or revelation; not insofar as it legitimates a meaningless science of "facts" (pp. 194–98). But Weber, like Bloom or myself, was basically a scientist, not a philosopher. Still he realized that the choice between ultimate values (philosophy or

politics) is far more crucial morally than science, a trivial nihilist business. He did not, like Bloom, hurl philosophy into this emptiness (by elevating it above politics).

Genuine philosophy is a risky business, a two-edged sword directed against politics in the name of philosophy ("I hold there is no sin but ignorance.") but also against philosophy in the name of politics ("McCarthyism—my country, right or wrong!"). Philosophers remain true to their political roots while seriously questioning their worth, a difficult, necessarily esoteric enterprise.

Bloom wrongly believes that Thrasymachus "sees the truth about Socrates" (p. 283) when he "sees that Socrates does not respect the city." Insofar as he is philosophic, Socrates both respects and does not respect the city—but the respect, the faith in the primacy of the main moral-political concern, is primary for philosophy. Only scientists such as Bloom or Thrasymachus can simply not respect the city. The consistent elaboration of this subordination of politics to "philosophy" is clearest not in Bloom's book or Aristotle's *Metaphysics* but in Nietzsche's *Joyful Science* or *Beyond Good and Evil*. Without daring to realize it, Bloom is closer to Nietzsche or Aschenbach than to Socrates.

There is in Bloom's pedagogy much of that scientific tyranny satirized by Aristophanes and Swift which liberates men from the actual politics of their herd and, therefore, from philosophy, in favor of the apolitical "community" of philosopher-kings, the only real community for Bloom (cf. Hippias in Plato's *Protagoras* 337c–d).

I doubt that there is anything like an "American Mind" except in college catalogues and other propaganda. The notion that it is closing or closed springs from Bloom's unphilosophic prejudice that "society is ministerial to the university." Thus America's refusal to enslave itself to Bloom's university is said to close its mind. Bloom's book should be called *The Closing of the Philosophic Mind* or *Beyond Good and Evil* or more accurately, *Heart of Darkness* or, paraphrasing Bloom on Swift: *How Scientists Exploit The Nonscientists So As To Live Their Version Of The Contemplative Life* (pp. 295–96).

Following Nietzsche, Weber realized that science, knowledge of reality, means nihilism. Unlike Nietzsche, but true to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's teacher, Weber despaired of overpowering reality's nihilism: the heart of existence, including all willing, is nothing. Nietzsche saw that the herd instinct inspiring the faith that moral-political cares, the concern with the good, are primary also inspires the illusion of living in a coherent, intelligible world in which those cares are at home (*Joyful Science*, 1, 354). Deprived of this comforting myth, men (and beasts) would realize that life is a chaos of empty experiences, impressions as Hume called them. As "Europe's first perfect nihilist" Nietzsche knew that science was nihilist, revealing a world consisting of nothing but interpretations, hypotheses, points of view, methods of experimenting, or to speak bluntly as recommended by Bloom (p. 238), nothing but prejudices, bigotries, superstitions (p. 253).

No man can avoid nihilism or be less nihilist than another. Everything,

particularly all moral-political passions ("values"), is nothing but empty impressions. Thus Céline is not, as Bloom (p. 239) supposes, more authentically nihilist than Mann or Camus. Céline's futile effort to be something, to transcend nihilism, is no more realistic than Aschenbach's—or, for that matter, than Socrates' or Lincoln's or anyone else's. Dostoyevski's underground man rightly observes that nobody knowledgeable about himself and his world can be or become anything—not even an insect: even to be lazy would require an impossible creation *ex nihilo*! To be sure, Bloom (or the victory of Russia over America) might disrupt the dreams of liberal democratic students whose bigotries tend to be soft and permissive with the murderous (nazi-communist) nightmares of a Céline or of Nietzsche's pale criminal (p. 151).

When attacked for despising those who experience nihilism as joyous liberation, I said that I rejected this prejudice, but I despised only men who believe their views of anything are more than bigotry or superstition. This seems to me the scientific attitude, the experience that all knowledge is bigotry or prejudice including of course, the assertion that all knowledge is bigotry.

This scientific and therefore essentially bigoted awareness made Nietzsche and Weber see that "the single fundamental issue is the relation between reason or science and the human good" (p. 195). It is why in Nietzsche "the joy of liberation" that one finds in "big babies" like Marx (p. 218) "has turned into terror " Nietzsche replaces easygoing or self-satisfied atheism with agonized atheism, suffering its human consequences." Rather than suffer those consequences he would have preferred to be a university professor but, as he wrote Burckhardt (January 6, 1889), he could not push his private egoism that far. His courage compelled him to realize that he, like all life, was a god whose creation was in reality nothing created out of nothing! He would have been far happier as a university professor cowardly clinging to the illusion of membership in the "true community that is exemplary for all other communities."

Instead his courage doomed him to confront life's only serious struggle: the war between reason or science and passion. Reason (insight into reality's nihilism) is repellent to passion unless passion is destroyed or emasculated by science (no more chaos to give birth to dancing stars). All passions not so emasculated (depoliticized) remain teleological, striving to obtain some good or avoid some evil. Consequently all passions are irrational, subsisting on faith in common sense's teleological world of goods to pursue and selves to pursue them.

When genuine science, liberal education, forces abandonment of this faith, the wrath and frustration of the passions is directed against reality itself. Like liberalism (their external political reflection) the rabid, because enlightened, passions now demand their "rights." This demand becomes more strident, more communist or nazi, the more its inanity is realized. No powerful desire can tolerate science or genuinely liberal, liberating education, unless it is domesticated, that is, degraded into uplifting propaganda. Aschenbach's refusal to

domesticate science leaves him powerless against the insane, destructive fury of "Dionysius." The same courage is responsible for Nietzsche's resolve to embrace an insane apotheosis rather than become a university professor "whose career has been an unusually happy one" and who therefore experiences "no need to prove the importance of education" (p. 22).

Bloom's celebration of the university and science (of science, and not, as he supposes, of philosophy!) is accurately evaluated in his quotation from Weber's *Science as a Vocation*: "Finally, although a naive optimism may have celebrated science . . as the path to happiness, I believe I can leave this entire question aside in light of the annihilating critique which Nietzsche has made of 'the last men' who 'have discovered happiness'. Who, then, still believes in this with the exception of a few big babies in university chairs or in editorial offices?" (p. 194)

As I remarked earlier, Bloom seems most alive and lively at his most political, indignantly censuring democratic-egalitarian threats to the university inspired by his philosopher-kings. This indignation shows that he took Plato's *Republic* too seriously because he did not take its ignorance of the good seriously enough. Thus he transformed its philosophy, its wavering between political repression and philosophic freedom, into the unmitigated terror responsible for Aschenbach's "cries of the damned plunging into nothingness."

In agreement with Bloom, the present editors of the Strauss–Cropsey *History of Political Philosophy* rejected Jaffa's request that Heidegger and Burke be balanced by Churchill and Lincoln. Prevented by their scientific orientation from being as philosophic as Jaffa, they did not want to sully a history of "philosophy" with mere statesmen. Had they had the courage of their real convictions, their editorial policy would be that demanded at the end of Hume's *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: eliminate (actually Hume advocates burning) all nonscientific (that is philosophic-political) books. Begin with Hobbes and Nietzsche with perhaps a bow to Aristotle for his opposition to Socrates' universal good. Strauss too would be purged (as he is from Bloom's book with one minor exception) since he obviously sided with philosophy and the ancients insofar as they were philosophic (p. 289).

The result of these purges would be scientific progress over philosophic superstition or, more accurately "progress" to the realization that scientific enlightenment means substituting one bigotry for another; there is no nonarbitrary reason for anything. Bloom disagrees, but his disagreement is vitiated by his confusion of scientists with philosophers as in the following statement: "We have to have reasons for what we do. It is a sign of our humanity and our possibility of community . . . There may be some people who don't feel they have to make a case for themselves, but they must be either tramps or philosophers" (p. 238). The philosopher's essentially moral-political rootedness compels him to seek knowledge of the true good which alone could justify his enterprise.

A similar error makes Bloom overemphasize Plato's opposition to Homer,

the creator of Achilles, that personification of the spirit of vengeance, moral indignation, which Nietzsche rightly finds at the heart of all politics and, therefore, of all philosophy (*Will to Power*, 765; *Zarathustra*, II:7–8). Anger or indignation, the spirit of revenge, like philosophy, arise from the herd-instinct faith that one has or needs goods without which life becomes unlivable (consider Psalm 137). Hatred (Bloom's reaction to those apostate intellectuals of the late sixties) is the natural reaction to whoever threatens those goods. Nietzsche's superman is characterized by redemption from this spirit of revenge or hatred. Nietzsche and Rousseau, not Socrates and Plato, want this redemption from the heart of politics. Without the courage to see it, Bloom has written a more Nietzschean than Platonic Book. *The* book on education for Bloom is not the *Republic*, as he insists (p. 381), but *Beyond Good and Evil* or *Death in Venice*!

Reflecting on these problems, I was reminded of Conrad's reply (December 14, 1897) to Cunninghame-Graham's suggestion that Singleton, the simple, upright seaman of the *Nigger of the Narcissus*, be better educated: "You say 'Singleton with an education' Everything is possible. However I think Singleton with an education is impossible. Would you seriously, of malice prepense, cultivate in that unconscious man the power to think? Then he would become conscious—and much smaller—and very unhappy. Now he is simple and great . . . Would you seriously wish to tell such a man 'Know thyself! Understand that you are nothing, less than a shadow, more insignificant than a drop of water in the ocean, more fleeting than the illusion of a dream?' Would you?"

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