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3 *Timothy Burns* Marcellinus' *Life of Thucydides*, translated, with an introductory essay

27 *Richard F. Hassing* *Thumos* and Psychophysics in Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*

73 *Colin D. Pearce* Libertarianism Ancient and Modern: Reflections on the Strauss-Rothbard Debate

95 *Jonathan Culp* **Book Review:** *Rousseau's Critique of Science: A Commentary on the* Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts by Jeff J.S. Black

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On Marcellinus' *Life of Thucydides*

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The *Life of Thucydides*, attributed to Marcellinus, is here published in an English translation for the first time. The Greek original appears in the Oxford Classical Texts edition of Thucydides, edited by Henry Stuart Jones and John Enoch Powell (Thucydides [1942] 1974). According to Powell's critical apparatus, Marcellinus' work appears only in "E" of the oldest codices of Thucydides ("Vaticanus Palatinus Graecus 252," an eleventh-century parchment in the library at Heidelberg). Powell used the E and the Gu ("Guelferbytanus Gudianus Graecus") as the capital MSS, but he also made use of lesser manuscripts (which he refers to collectively as "recc."). The critical edition of Thucydides edited by Alberti (1972) has a list of all manuscripts that contain Marcellinus' *Life* (clxxxix; see Addendum 1).

The *Life* appears to have been intended as an introduction to the reading of Thucydides for those studying rhetoric in Hellenic schools (see especially lines 1 and 51), and hence falls within the Roman tradition of commentary on rhetorical texts. The references made in the text to other writers tell us that it was composed certainly no earlier than the second century A.D., but studies of the terminology employed by the author seem to indicate that the work was compiled in its present form as late as the sixth century. (Maitland [1996] makes a useful attempt to identify the sources of the material and its place in the biographical tradition.) While it is attributed to a "Marcellinus"—a fairly common name in the late Roman empire—its authorship is uncertain. Owing in part to the classification and storage of texts in ancient libraries, in which scrolls of works by unknown authors were placed in slots under "symbolic" authors, many texts in the rhetorical tradition that were in circulation in late antiquity are without reliable indication of authorship. And as this very text twice demonstrates, doubts about the

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authenticity of ascribed authorship of texts and even about the authenticity of individual passages within texts were already being raised within the schools in which these texts were used (see lines 4 and 54).

According to Henry Stuart Jones, "Marcellinus" is probably to be identified with the "Marcellinus" to whom is attributed the compilation of scholia on the works of rhetoric of Hermogenes of Tarsus (see Addendum 2). A "philosophically minded" rhetorician of the late fourth or early fifth century, this Marcellinus is credited with authorship of the long, three-part *Prolegomenon* to the writings of the Roman prodigy Hermogenes, whose works on rhetoric (*On Ideas*, *On Staseis*, *On Invention* [attrib.]) written under Marcus Aurelius, became authoritative for the schools during the late Roman empire and, in the East, remained so for a thousand years (Kennedy 1980, esp. 186ff.). That the *Life* begins by turning from Demosthenes to Thucydides also points to this Marcellinus; as Kennedy notes, Demosthenes was the model of the clever mixture of styles that Marcellinus, in the *Prolegomenon* to Hermogenes' work, calls *deinotēs*. (Consider also the reference to Demosthenes' *deinotēta* at *Life*, 56.)

That the *Life* is a compilation is manifest in the first place from its full title. The E manuscript's title states that the material is gathered from the scholia: "By Marcellinus, from the scholia on Thucydides, on the life of Thucydides and the forms of the speeches." (In the other capital manuscript, Gu, the title reads "By one Marce[ll]inus, on the life of Thucydides and his forms.") That it is a compilation is also manifest from the seams in the work; there are breaks in the narrative, repetitions, revisions, and apparent contradictions. A second beginning, for example, takes place at section 45, with the statement that Thucydides died in Thrace, a claim that had been rejected in section 33 (despite the fact that it was made by a contemporary of Thucydides). Such difficulties, and the fact that some of the biographical sections appear fanciful, have led to the work being described as a "reckless compiling of materials," put together from "a body of speculation and hearsay" with "no attempt…to distinguish opinion from fact," and hence more interesting for what was "apparently thought to constitute biography" than for anything else (Maitland 1996, 538, 554).

The compiler has, however, given indications that he himself found parts of his compilation unbelievable. And it is an exaggeration to say that he made no attempt to distinguish opinion from fact; he sometimes directly, sometimes implicitly ("some say"), makes such distinctions. Finally, the judgment that the compilation is "reckless" is made with no

reflection on—or even mention of—the most striking aspect of the content of the biography itself, viz., its claim that Thucydides was, through Miltiades, a descendent of Zeus, and properly buried in the sacred burial ground of the Miltiades family. That the work is a compilation does not preclude us from entertaining the hypothesis that it consciously provides those who heard or read it with sufficient, side-by-side evidence *against* this pious thesis. In so doing, the work may at least offer indications of the constraints under which schools of rhetoric, in their performance of a civic function, found themselves in the ancient world; how Thucydides' text proved especially problematic within those constraints; and the remarkable way in which he was understood by at least one compiler and advocate, viz., as a philosopher who provided reasons for not accepting the most fundamental ground of those very constraints, i.e., the existence of providential gods.

That there were such constraints, and what their nature was, is perhaps most visible in Marcellinus' defense of Thucydides against the (long and relentless) attack made by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Hobbes, whose first-ever translation of Thucydides' text into English [1629] is preceded by his own new "Life of Thucydides," one that draws heavily—if judiciously—from Marcellinus' *Life*, points to this dispute with Dionysius as the central issue for Marcellinus and for himself (see Addendum 3). Dionysius of Halicarnassus had done much to advocate for the pure Attic style of Greek in the schools of rhetoric, and for this reason, Thucydides—whose work was being read by students of rhetoric—became a major target of his criticism (see *On Thucydides*, as well as "The Funeral Oration of Gorgias," fr. DK 82 B6). What especially animated Dionysius, and hence formed the heart of the dispute over what, if anything, in Thucydides' speeches should be read and emulated by young men studying rhetoric, was less the rhetorical stylistic "errors" of Thucydides—though these are certainly part of his argument—as the content of the speeches themselves. Are the words of Thucydides' speeches public-spirited and such as to induce an emulative public-spiritedness in the reader, or not? More particularly, are the words such as to cultivate a love of the noble and the just in the reader, and a love of one's country, or such as to incline one to pursue one's own good? The end of judicial rhetoric is the just, and of epideictic, the noble or honorable; should deliberative rhetoric have as its end only the expedient? Dionysius argued that it should not.

As Maitland (1996, 550–53) demonstrates, a number of Marcellinus' points concerning style are made with an implicit engagement of Dionysius. Explicitly, Marcellinus points to Dionysius' case against the

Melian dialogue as the core of their dispute (53). In *On Thucydides*, Dionysius had contrasted the "dialogue" between the Plataeans and Archidamus, on one hand, with the Melian dialogue, on the other (i.e., Thucydides 2.71–74 with 5.84–113). He had praised the former (or at least Archidamus' part in it) as noble and extraordinary, pure, clear, concise, and enjoyably harmonious. He had condemned the Melian dialogue, on the other hand, as presenting Athenians who employ shameful, depravedly shrewd arguments against justice and the gods, arguments that are unworthy of the city of Athens or its leaders, and appropriate rather to oriental monarchs addressing Greeks, or to pirates. Dionysius admired above all the speeches of the pious and just Nicias and the long, very pious speech of the Plataeans (3.53–59), and he directed readers to emulate these (*On Thucydides*, chs. 36–43). In his determination of what ought to have been said versus what is unspeakably bad, Dionysius, we may say, sided with the *Melians* and hence, as their Athenian interlocutors would have it (at 5.103), with "the many."

Marcellinus' response to Dionysius' criticism of the Melian dialogue states forcefully and pithily something that he implies periodically throughout the *Life*: in the Melian dialogue, he declares (53), Thucydides "philosophizes"—something which, it seems, entails the kind of investigation into justice and the divine that is portrayed in that dialogue. Thucydides included the dialogue as it stands not, as Dionysius had argued, because he lacked the ability to write civic-minded deliberations, but as a philosophizing activity. As for the "dialogue" at Plataea, Marcellinus singles it out as the only piece of judicial rhetoric in the work (42); he stresses that the two parties were motivated by an angry sense of justice, which classifies them with the angry Cleon, who stands for something so far removed from Thucydides' activity that Marcellinus later pretends not even to know what to call it (51; compare 26 and 46). And as for Dionysius' objections to the obscurity of Thucydides' style, Marcellinus addresses them early in his account of that style, in a manner that is consistent with what we have seen of the division of readers. Thucydides, he states, was obscure on purpose, lest he should be understood by everyone rather than by the wise alone (35).

When we bear in mind the grave issue of Thucydides' teaching concerning divine justice, and the manner in which it had to be addressed if Thucydides were to have a place in the schools of rhetoric, Marcellinus' work becomes intelligible on the basis of four major themes, united by their relation to the claim that Thucydides was a philosopher: the lineage of Thucy-

dides, the dispute over where he died and where his body was buried, his exile, and the description and defense of Thucydides' manner of writing.

The opening immediately evokes religious rites, inviting the listener or reader who has been initiated into the mysteries of Demosthenes to be initiated now into the mysteries of Thucydides. Then, through the presentation of a long lineage, Thucydides is linked to "Ajax, son of Zeus," and so *Thucydides* boasts, says Marcellinus, of a birth from "these high ancestors" (2). Readers of Thucydides who recall his archeology's case for the weakness of the past, or for progress toward the present, will find the argument amusing; Marcellinus provides reason to think it was risible to him as well. The lineage he presents is flawed: he makes sufficiently clear, through a distinction between the Miltiades who is descended from Zeus and the Miltiades who is alleged to be Thucydides' uncle or grandfather, that the latter Miltiades was the former's nephew from a half-brother on his *mother's* side (9–10). That is, despite Marcellinus' pretense, Thucydides turns out to have no lineal connection whatever to the Miltiades who is alleged to have been a descendant of Zeus. In fact, Marcellinus eventually discloses, the only real evidence that Thucydides was descended even from Miltiades the general (the Miltiades with no claim to descent from Zeus) was Thucydides' wealth and possessions in Thrace, which caused speculation about his relation to the ruling Miltiades family in Thrace. And there was ample room for such speculation, Marcellinus wryly discloses, because Thucydides himself, far from boasting of his descent from Zeus, as Marcellinus had first claimed, "makes no mention of his stock" (15).

But in the absence of such mention, who in the world would speculate that Thucydides was a descendant of *Zeus*? Marcellinus has already begun to let us know by drawing a distinction between those who have need of or interest in a noble account of Thucydides' divine descent, on one hand, and Thucydides' own lack of interest in such pretense, on the other. He offers to go through "the lineage and life of the man" as necessary for "those who judge things nobly," and then provides the lineage that aims to show Thucydides as a descendant from Zeus (see Addendum 4). As the *Life* subsequently makes clear, the audience that would accept this lineage and for whom it is appropriate is not identical to readers who seek the truth, or "those who perceive and understand" (55). The subsequent account of Thucydides' work even calls our attention to the distinction that Thucydides himself draws between those who, on one hand, seek the pleasant more than the truth, i.e.,

those who are pleased by the mythical, and, on the other, those who delight in the truth or who wish "to learn" (48). The genealogical account is given, we conclude, to satisfy certain readers or listeners—to garner their respect for Thucydides on (mythical) grounds on which Marcellinus himself does not stand.

Yet the genealogical account serves an additional, related, but deeper purpose. By means of a digression that appears within it, it calls to our attention the issue that is at stake in Thucydides' work: should we, in our perplexity, take our bearings by allegedly divinely revealed courses of action—oracles—or rely on what our reason tells us is best? The question is posed through the account of the perplexity of the Thracians and the path they took to finding Miltiades at Athens:

> The Thracians and the Dolonci waged war with the neighboring people of Apsinthius. (5) But having been afflicted by this war, and having suffered all sorts of evils, since they were always inferior to their enemy, they fled to the oracle of the god, since they knew that only a god could discover the way out of the most difficult things, as also according to Aeschylus, "the strength of the gods is greatest: for oft it has freed from grievous woe a city lacking means, and has turned an immanent cloud from the eyes into the right [*orthos*]." (6) Nor did their hope fail them. For the oracle they held to, that they would have as leader him who would invite these very wanderers to a house for strangers. At that time Croesus held Lydia; the Pisistratids held a tyranny at Athens. While they were returning from the oracle, they chanced upon Miltiades seated before the border of Attica, distressed on account of the tyranny, and seeking a just departure from Attica. For these things the prophecy had managed for them. (7) Now when he saw them assembled in the equipment of wanderers, since he knew what wandering is capable of, he invited the men to the house for strangers, becoming the unknowing servant of the prophecy. They were delighted, for [according to the oracle] they were to receive the leader from the house for strangers, and when they had recounted everything to him, they elected him their general.
>
> Now some say that, asking the god, he left, others that he made the departure not without the tyrant's knowledge, but that after [Miltiades'] recounting to the ruler the calling forth by the Thracians, he [the Pisistratid tyrant] sent him away conceding power, delighted that a very powerful man should leave Athens. (8) This one, then, having been made the leader [of the Thracians] fulfilled the prophecy, and after bringing forth the victory, he became also the colonizer of the Chersonese.

While poets like Aeschylus counsel divine guidance, Thucydides, Marcellinus will state, was held to be an atheist, having studied philosophy with Anaxagoras and rhetoric with Antiphon (22). But on what grounds did he rule out the possibility of divine care for human beings?

Marcellinus ties this question of the gods to a second theme, the question of Thucydides' burial place, by raising this question: Does the body of Thucydides, banished on the charge of dereliction of his duties, rest with his Miltiadid ancestors in a sacred Athenian burial ground, after his city allowed him to return, or does it lie elsewhere (18, 31–33, 55–56)? The importance to the pious of a proper burial is clear even from Thucydides, and Marcellinus ties this concern to the question of Thucydides' devotion to his city. He indicates that he himself, however, has an altogether different assessment of the importance of Thucydides' burial place than do the pious. He twice speaks of the inscription on the alleged grave or monument, and then later uses the verb normally reserved for inscriptions (compare 32 with 16, 35, and also 55) to describe Thucydides' attempt to win an enduring reputation among "the wise" (35), who have a different reason than others for marveling at Thucydides as "divine" (33; see Addendum 5). In this matter, it seems, "the many" are the ones who mistake the importance of an inscribed tomb or monument in Athens. What happened to his body after his death was for Thucydides, Marcellinus suggests, a matter of utter insignificance.

The third related theme concerns Thucydides' exile. The charge against him, arising from his failure to stop Brasidas' taking of Amphipolis, was insufficient devotion to the good of his city. While Marcellinus denies that Thucydides' military deeds warranted his banishment on the charge of treason—pointing out that those deeds actually saved Eion and thereby Athens' hold on the islands (23)—he also indicates that Thucydides' primary activity was, in truth, at odds with devotion to his city. His first suggestion of this comes by way of answering an obviously public-spirited objector to Thucydides' use of his wealth to pay informants on both sides: Why, asks the indignant questioner, should he have given cash to the Lacedaemonians as well as Athenians? To which Marcellinus responds, quite simply, that Thucydides' interest was in the truth, and the reporting of events by Athenians alone would necessarily be distorted by partisanship for their city (20–21). Being a devoted servant of one's city and being, as was Thucydides, a "lover of the truth" (26) or a "measured and fair servant of the truth" (27) can move in opposite ways. Marcellinus goes still farther with this argument when he claims that Thucydides did not take part in political life;

he dismisses his generalship—which would seem to speak against this—as nothing but the source of Thucydides' troubles with the Athenians, leading to his exile (23). Finally, the exile itself is presented as having afforded Thucydides the leisure to compose his work, which suffers from no truth-distorting anger at the Athenians who exiled him (26, with 46–47), and which, while beautified during the exile, maintains a strict aversion to the mythical.

The aversion to the mythical brings us to the fourth theme: Thucydides' manner of writing. As we have seen, Marcellinus defends it against the attack of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He addresses the related point of the absence of the mythical from Thucydides' narrative by contrasting it favorably on this score with Herodotus' work, which Dionysius had favored. While recent scholarship has brought out the extent to which the latter is itself a philosophical inquiry (see e.g., Benardete 1970), there is no doubt that on its surface, Herodotus' work is much more "traditional," more well disposed to the view that providential gods attend human events, intervening with wonders on behalf of justice, than is Thucydides' work. Herodotus records (and appears to bear out the veracity of) over a quarter of the Delphic prophecies that are known to us (Fairbanks 1906, 37–48), and he famously declares (at 9.100) in his own name that gods take part in human affairs. He also recounts in his narrative a number of mythical wonders—far too many for someone of Marcellinus' taste (48–49). The love of the noble and of the just is, as Herodotus no less than Dionysius makes clear, connected to an attachment to the mythical and devotion to the gods. Here again, Marcellinus ascribes this attachment to "the many" (48). Thucydides' "delight in the truth," he argues, is what caused him to be averse to the mythical (48). Marcellinus had noted before Thucydides' reported study under Anaxagoras—his having taken the "fill of his *theoria*" (22). He now presents one of Thucydides' few digressions on a myth about an oracle—the oracle that led to the matricide Alcmeon's recognition of the flux of land and sea, or the changeability and passing of the visible world—as showing how Alcmeon learned "moderation" over and against the fear of the gods that had until then held him in its grip (49). The relation between such moderation and the dialogue about justice and the divine that takes place at Melos, through which Thucydides "philosophizes," is something that Marcellinus' introduction to Thucydides' masterpiece leaves its readers to sort out for ourselves.

Addenda

1. Helpful works on the text of Marcellinus include Forbes (1895) and Prentice (1927). I wish to thank Devin Stauffer for his comments on an earlier version of this essay and on the English translation that follows it.

2. That the *Life* might have come to be attributed to the *historian* Ammianus Marcellinus (who wrote his histories in Latin but was educated in Greek) would in one way not be surprising, given the work's "pagan" appearance. All religions except Christianity had been prohibited in 391 A.D. by an edict of Emperor Theodosius, and in 529 the Emperor Justinian closed the pagan schools at Athens, their last refuge, so it would have been odd for a sixth-century compiler to pretend, as this compiler does, to give any credence to the claim that Thucydides was descended from Zeus. Ammianus Marcellinus (b. 325), who lived to the end of the fourth century A.D., wrote, under the emperor Julian ("The Apostate"), a continuation of Tacitus' history of Rome (picking up in 96 A.D. and going to 378). That history is marked by, among other things, its admiration for the pagan Julian. (It is also thought by many—e.g., Gibbon—to be the last Roman history of any worth.) But Marcellinus' history also provides little evidence that he knew Thucydides' work well; in fact, he seems to have known it through secondary sources (see Fornara 1992).

3. Hobbes 1629. Seven of Hobbes' eleven pages (19t–26t) are devoted to a refutation of Dionysius' critique of Thucydides. In his "Life" as a whole, Hobbes relies heavily on Marcellinus' *Life*, incorporating salient sections of it into an account that draws also on the work of Plutarch, Cicero, Lucian, and, at the conclusion, the praise of Justus Lipsius. Hobbes puts the material taken from Marcellinus into the more ordered, systematic, noncontradictory form that readers of Marcellinus' *Life* may well find themselves desiring: first the life, then the history, which is further divided into the truth, on one hand, and elocution, on the other. Hobbes' defense of Thucydides against Dionysius is no longer for the sake of having Thucydides' work used in schools of rhetoric; the quotations from Cicero's writings on rhetoric that he employs in the final section of his "Life" (26–27) make clear that Cicero recommended Thucydides not for the study of rhetoric, but for the study of history. And the purpose of such study is for Hobbes to some extent the very opposite of public rhetoric: it is for the *private*, even "secret," instruction of the individual reader (see esp. 18 top, 20 middle, and 25 middle, with 13 top). That is, reading Thucydides allows the reader to admit to himself what shame or vanity would preclude him admitting to others concerning the true

motives of his own actions. It is to "enlighten" the reader by allowing him to by-pass the distortion of the truth that public speech necessarily entails. What remains central to Hobbes' effort to present Thucydides to his readers, however, is the same question that had been central to the dispute between Marcellinus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, viz., whether one ought to read the truth-loving Thucydides or one (like Herodotus) whose love of his city moves him to present an ennobled, pious account.

4. Compare Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a16–26, where he initially promises to present the parts of the city, but then takes the "nobler" course of presenting the city's allegedly natural growth or development.

5. Compare, on this point, Aristophanes' distinction, in the parabasis of *The Clouds* (518–562), between the wise and the rest of his audience.

By Marcellinus, from the scholia on Thucydides, on the life of Thucydides and the forms of the speeches[1]

(1) For those who have come to be initiates in the divine speeches and disputations of Demosthenes, and introduced to his understandings of the deliberative and judicial kind of speaking, it now remains also to be initiated into the mysteries of Thucydides. For this man was furnished at once with art, and the beauty of speeches, and an exact knowledge of deeds, and the knowledge of leading an army, and he excelled at the deliberative and panegyric kind of speaking. But it is necessary first to disclose the lineage and life of the man: for those who judge of things nobly, these ought to be scrutinized first, before they approach the speeches.

(2) Thucydides, then, that composer,[2] was born from the father Olorus, who was named after Olorus the king of Thrace, and the mother Hegesipyle. He was descended, I say, from those most well reputed generals, Miltiades and Cimon.[3] For in the remote past he had been joined by kinship with Miltiades the general;[4] and through Miltiades, with Ajax, the son of Zeus. Thus this composer boasts his birth from these high ancestors. (3) And Didymus[5] attests to these things; he asserts that in the first book of the *Histories* Pherecydes[6] speaks thus: "In Athens Philaeas the kin of Ajax dwelt; from him was born Daiclus, from him Epicycus, from him Acestor, from him Agenor, from him Olius, from him Lyces, from him Typhon, from him Laius, from him Agamestor, from him Tisander,[7] from him Miltiades,

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[1] The words in angle brackets are emendations suggested by the editors of the Oxford Classical Texts edition (Thucydides [1942] 1974). The words in square brackets I have added for the sake of clarifying in English what is clear in Greek. Line numbers appear in parentheses.

[2] Here and throughout, I translate *suggrapheus* as "composer," and *suggraphe* as "composition." While these terms are a bit clumsy, there is no satisfactory English equivalent for the Greek. *Suggrapheus* is usually translated as "historian," but this English word also translates *historikos*, and Marcellinus distinguishes *historikos* and *suggrepheus* at lines 38 and 48. In this he appears, moreover, to follow Thucydides, who refers to his writing not as *istoria* but as *suggraphe* (1.1.1, 4.104.4, 5.26.1).

[3] Miltiades the Younger (550–489 B.C.) was the general who led the Athenians to victory at Marathon. Cimon (510–450 B.C.), his son, was a general who distinguished himself in the battle of Salamis (479 B.C.) and in the destruction of the Persian fleet and army at the Eurymedon River (466 B.C.).

[4] Miltiades the Elder, son of Cypselus (d. 524 B.C.), and uncle of the Younger.

[5] Didymus Chalcenterus (63 B.C.–10 A.D.), a prolific Hellenistic scholar and grammarian.

[6] Pherecydes of Leros (c. 450 B.C.), author of a ten-volume work of genealogies.

[7] After "Tisander," the manuscripts have "who when he was archon of Athens." The phrase appears

from him Hippoclides (by whom, when he was archon of Athens, the Panathenea was instituted), from him Miltiades, who settled the Chersonese." (4) Even Hellanicus[8] attests the same in that writing ascribed to Aesop.

Nor indeed may someone say, but what has he [Miltiades] to do with Thucydides? For he is kinsman to him as follows. The Thracians and the Dolonci waged war with the neighboring people of Apsinthius. (5) But having been afflicted by this war, and having suffered all sorts of evils, since they were always inferior to their enemy, they fled to the oracle of the god, since they knew that only a god could discover the way out of the most difficult things, as also according to Aeschylus, "the strength of the gods is greatest: for oft it has freed from grievous woe a city lacking means, and has turned an immanent cloud from the eyes into the right [*orthos*]." (6) Nor did their hope fail them. For the oracle they held to, that they would have as leader him who would invite these very wanderers to a house for strangers. At that time Croesus held Lydia; the Pisistratids held a tyranny at Athens. While they were returning from the oracle, they chanced upon Miltiades seated before the border of Attica, distressed on account of the tyranny, and seeking a just departure from Attica. For these things the prophecy had managed for them. (7) Now when he saw them assembled in the equipment of wanderers, since he knew what wandering is capable of, he invited the men to the house for strangers, becoming the unknowing servant of the prophecy. They were delighted, for [according to the oracle] they were to receive the leader from the house for strangers, and when they had recounted everything to him, they elected him their general.

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also in the next clause, makes no sense here, and so is deleted, following the suggestion of Rutgers, as a scribe's error.

[8] Hellanicus of Mytilene (490–405 B.C.), a logographer. He and his Attic Writings are mentioned by Thucydides at 1.97.

[9] I here follow Casaubon's suggested emendation, *apaidos*. The manuscripts read *tou paidos*. See Herodotus 6.38, which appears to be Marcellinus' source.

the rule of the Chersonese. (10) But when this one also died, Miltiades received the rule, having the same name as the first colonizer, and being the brother of Stesagoras by the same mother and father.

(11) This one, then, although he had children by an Attic wife, nevertheless, desiring lordship, took Hegesipyle, daughter of Olorus king of the Thracians, as wife, from whom a son was born to him. (12) But the Persian coming into Greece, he dispatched his packed-up things and most of his clan to Athens. But the ship was captured, in which also were his own children, yet not those from the Thracian wife; these were let loose by the King, at least if Herodotus should not lie.[10] Miltiades, fleeing from Thrace, made his way safely into Attica. (13) But he did not sneak away from the calumny of his enemies: for they attacked his own crimes, relating in full his tyranny. But he both escaped from this charge and in the war against the barbarians became a general. (14) From this [Miltiades], then, he [i.e., Didymus] says that the stock of Thucydides derives. And the greatest evidence of this they believe to be the extraordinary wealth and the possessions he had in Thrace, and those goldmines in Scapte Hyle. He seems to certain people, then, to have been the grandson of Miltiades or a grandson from a daughter of Miltiades. (15) Besides, he himself furnishes the occasion of inquiry, since he himself makes no mention of his stock.

(16) In truth, lest we be senseless, the name of the father was Olorus, [not Orolus].[11] The first syllable of this name, but not Olorus, has a *rho*, the second a *lambda*—which writing, as it also seems to Didymus, is corrupt. For that it is *Olorus* is openly attested by the monument-column, where these words are inscribed: Thucydides Olori Halimusius.[12] (17) For at the Melitisi gates, in Coile,[13] there are monuments called Cimonia, where the tomb of Herodotus and Thucydides is exhibited. Hence one clearly discov-

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[10] See Herodotus 6.38–41. Herodotus' account mentions the capture of Miltiades' oldest son Metiochus, not born of the daughter of Olorus, and chronicles Darius' generous treatment of Metiochus, but it says nothing of any other children of Miltiades. It does confirm that Olorus was the name of the father-in-law of Miltiades.

[11] With Powell, I follow the addition of Grauert. Marcellinus appears here to be referring to Thucydides' text at 4.104.4, where Thucydides states his patronymic; it must have appeared in some mss. as Orolus, though none of the critical apparatuses that I have consulted gives any indication of this. William Smith ([1753] 1855, xvi) in his "On the Life of Thucydides," states that "Orolus" appears in Thucydides' text.

[12] With Powell, I follow the correction of Grauert. The manuscript has the lambda and rho transposed: *Thukydides Oroli Halimusios*. In the second reference to the monument-column, at line 55, below, the manuscript reads "*Thukydides Halimusios*." Casaubon adds "Olorou."

[13] "*Koile,*" or "The Hollow" was one of the demes of Attica, belonging to the tribe Hippothoontis.

ers that he came from the stock of Miltiades. For no stranger [to that stock] is buried there. Polemon attests to the same thing in "On the Acropolis," where he narrates besides that Timotheus came into being from him.[14] (18) And Hermippus pulls him from the stock of the Pisistratid tyrants; this also, he says, is the reason why, in his writings on Harmodius and Aristogeiton [Thucydides] speaks invidiously and denies that they became tyrant-slayers.[15] For they killed not the tyrant but the tyrant's brother, Hipparchus.

(19) But Thucydides took a most wealthy wife from the city of Scapte Hyle, Thrace, and possessed goldmines in Thrace.[16] (20) Having obtained this wealth, however, he did not spend it in luxurious delights, but when before the Peloponnesian war he perceived the motion to come, and because he intended to write about it, he paid many Athenian and Lacedaemonian soldiers and many others, so that they might report to him, he wishing to compose what came to be in that time and things spoken in that war. (21) But it must be inquired: why did he give some to both the Lacedaemonians and the others, when he could have given it to Athenians alone and have learned from them? We answer, that not aimlessly was money given to the others: for the aim he proposed to himself was to compose the truth of the deeds. And it was likely that the Athenians, serving their own utility in their reports, would lie, and would say "we have been victorious over an enemy," when they had not been victorious. For this reason he gave [money] to everyone, so that from the agreement of many he could hunt down and seize the truth: for by the harmony and agreement of many what is obscure becomes openly demonstrated.

(22) The teachers he had were, in philosophy, Anaxagoras—whence, as Antyllus attests, he was held in his day to be atheist, from the fact that he took his fill of his *theoria*;[17] and the rhetorician Antiphon, a man terribly clever in the art of rhetoric, of whom he makes mention in the eighth book, and says that he was the cause that the democracy was abrogated and the rule of the Five Thousand constituted.[18] The fact, however, that after his

[14] Polemon of Athens (second century B.C.), nicknamed Polemon Stelokopas (Polemon the Columnist), was a Stoic who collected inscriptions on votive offerings and columns around Greece. The work to which Marcellinus refers, "On the Acropolis," is not extant.

[15] See Thucydides 1.20 and 6.53–60.

[16] Cf. Plutarch, *Life of Cimon,* 4. Thucydides (4.105) says only that he had the concession to work the gold mines.

[17] With Powell, I here follow the transposition of clauses suggested by Casaubon.

[18] See Thucydides 8.68.1–3 and 8.90.1.

death the Athenians hurled Antiphon's body outside the city as vengeance, this Thucydides, in gratitude to his teacher, passed over in silence. (For some say that his body was thrown out by the Athenians because he was the cause of the change from democracy.) (23) He did not take part in political life—the one who became the composer—when he came into the prime of life, nor did he approach the podium. But he received the generalship as the original source of his troubles, for on account of this very thing he was exiled. For when he was sent to Amphipolis, and Brasidas arrived beforehand and took that city, he took the blame; and yet his efforts were not altogether useless to the Athenians, since, while he failed [to capture Amphipolis], he seized Eion, which is situated by the river Strymon. Nonetheless, in spite of this the Athenians, attributing the first misfortune to his fault, sentenced him into exile.[19]

(24) But having been exiled, when he came into the Aegean after his flight, being wealthy, he invested the majority of his money in usury. (25) Yet from there too he departed, and passing time in Scapte Hyle, he wrote under a plane tree. By no means let us be persuaded by Timaeus, who says that Thucydides, having been sentenced to exile, passed his life in Italy.[20] (26) Nevertheless he did not write as one remembering the evils done to him by the Athenians, but was a lover of truth and measured in morals—at least neither Cleon nor Brasidas, who had been the cause of his calamity, suffers any abuse, as they would from an angry composer. (27) The many accustom histories to their private passions, the truth being to them not at all a concern. For Herodotus, despised by the Corinthians, said that they escaped by stealth the naval battle at Salamis;[21] Timaeus praised the Tauromenitan Timoleontas beyond measure, because his father Andromachus was not despoiled by him of the monarchy; Philistus attacked the younger Dionysius like an enemy in his speeches; Xenophon reviled Meno, the friend of Plato, because he himself was in zealous emulation[22] of Plato. But [Thucydides was] a measured and fair servant of the truth.

[19] See Thucydides 4.104–8 and 5.26.

[20] Timaeus (ca. 345–ca. 250 B.C.), nicknamed "Timaios Epitimaios" (Timaeus the Fault-Finder), was born in Sicily, forced during the rule of Agathocles to migrate to Athens, studied under Isocrates, and returned to Sicily under the rule of Hiero II. He wrote a 40-volume history of Greece, Italy, and Sicily, of which only fragments survive.

[21] See Herodotus 8.72–94.

[22] Or "zealous rivalry" (*zelos*). The term is often distinguished from low-minded *phthonos* (envy), but it can mean jealousy. It is used below (lines 35–37) with respect to Thucydides' imitation of Homer, Pindar, Prodicus, and Gorgias of Leontini.

(28) Also, lest we be ignorant of this, there were many Thucydideses. For there was this one, a son of Olorus, and secondly the demagogue, the son of Milesius, who opposed Pericles concerning the political regime; a third, in truth, descended from Pharsalius, of whom Polemon makes mention in the book about the Acropolis, saying that Meno was his father. There was in fact another Thucydides, a fourth, a poet from the *deme* of Archerdousius, of whom Androtion, making mention in his history of Attic things, says that his son was Ariston. (29) He lived, however, as is attested to by Phraxiphanes in a book about history,[23] at the same time as Plato the comic poet, Agathon the tragedian, Niceratus the epic poet, and Koirilus, and Melanippides. (30) Besides, having lived as long as Archelaus, for the most part [Thucydides] was still obscure, as Praxiphanes himself indicates. Afterwards indeed he was marveled at as divine [*daimonic*].

(31) Some say he died there, where he was spending time in exile, and they present as evidence that his body was not buried in Attica. For a tablet was placed on his tomb, but this, from established Attic custom and law, is the mark of an empty tomb, [a custom employed] when someone used by this kind of fortune dies, and indicates that he was not buried at Athens. (32) But Didymus <says that> Thucydides, having returned from exile, <died> a violent death at Athens. And this he says is inquired into[24] by Zopyrus. For the Athenians offered return to all exiles except the Pisistratids after the defeat in Sicily. Having returned, however, [Thucydides] underwent a violent death and was buried among the Cimonian monuments. But [Didymus] charges with simplicity those who believe him to have met his end abroad and yet to be buried in the Attic earth.[25] For then [they would hold Thucydides' body] either not to have been put in the family monument, or to have been secretly put into it, and would chance to have neither a column nor an inscription. Yet the monument on the tomb indicates the name of the composer [Thucydides]. But it is clear that return was granted to the exiles, as Philochorus attests, as does Demetrius in the book about the Archons. (33) I myself believe Zopyrus is being silly when he says that he met his end in

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[23] Praxiphanes, a native of Mytilene, studied at the Lyceum under Aristotle's successor Theophrastus in 322 B.C., then opened his own school, where Epicurus is said to have been his pupil.

[24] Or "recorded." The verb is *historein*. The opinion does not seem to have been held by Zopyrus himself (see below, 33), unless Marcellinus means to refer here only to the opinion that Thucydides died a violent death.

[25] That he died abroad (in Thrace, in Scapte Hyle), and that his remains were then brought to Attica, is asserted by Plutarch, *Life of Cimon*, 4.

Thrace, even if Cratippus holds him to have spoken truly.[26] But what Timaeus and others say—that he was buried in Italy—is exceedingly ridiculous. (34) It is said that he had this form: the face thoughtful, the head with hair grown short, and the rest a manner naturally suited to the composer. [He is said] to have died with his life brought toward its fiftieth year, with the planned composition not brought to its completion.

(35) Thucydides was the zealous emulator of Homer in artistic arrangement,[27] of Pindar in the grand [lit. 'great-natured'] and lofty character, but a man designedly obscure in speech, lest it be accessible to all, and lest it should appear cheap, if easily understood by everyone. He wished rather to meet the test of the exceedingly wise, and to be marveled at by them. For whoever is commended by the best and obtains a reputation by their decision, is inscribed thereafter and the honor he acquires runs no risk of being wiped out by another judgment. (36) He zealously imitated a few, as Antyllus[28] says: the even balancing and antithesis of words of Gorgias of Leontini, which was well regarded at that time by the Greeks, and Prodicus of Ceos indeed he imitated, in the precise selection of words.[29] (37) Most of all, as I said before, he zealously imitated Homer, both in choice of words and in precise combination of them, and in strength of explanation, and in beauty and swiftness. (38) But while the composers and historians who came before him brought forward the composition as if soulless and furnished only a bare narrative in everything, nor inserted direct speeches, nor made demagoric speeches—though Herodotus made the attempt, but was not quite able (for he made speeches expressed in few words, more as personification than demagoric speech)—this composer [i.e., Thucydides] alone both discovered demagoric speeches and made them perfect and according to chief points and divisions, and arranged as a demagoric speech, which is the form of a perfect speech.

(39) Since there are however three characters of speaking—high, simple, and middle—omitting the others, he zealously emulated the

[26] Cratippus was, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Thucydidis charactere*, ch. xvi), a contemporary of Thucydides. Plutarch also mentions him (*De gloria Atheniensium,* ch. 1) between Thucydides and Xenophon, in a list of Athenian historians that is apparently chronological.

[27] *Oikonomia*. A distinction developed among teachers of rhetoric between *taxis*, or natural order, and *oikonomia*, which we might also translate as "household management" or—with a view to its usage by the rhetors—as "interior design."

[28] Antyllus is otherwise unknown. A discussion of him can be found in Piccirilli 1985, 96–97.

[29] See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides* 25. An extract of a work known as "The Funeral Oration of Gorgias" (fr. DK 82 B6) is given in a late scholium from a work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in which one sees the antithetical style to which Marcellinus here refers.

high, since it was suitable to his own nature and befitting the magnitude of so great a war.[30] For of those things of which the deeds are great, it is befitting that the speech about such things match the deeds. (40) But so that you[31] may not be ignorant also of the other characters of speeches, know that Herodotus furnishes the middle kind, which is neither high nor simple, while Xenophon furnishes the simple. (41) Thucydides therefore, so that he might achieve the high type, often furnished both poetical diction and certain metaphors. Concerning this whole kind of composition, some have dared to proclaim that that form of composition does not pertain to the rhetorician but to the poet. But that it is not poetical is clear, since it is subject to no meter. But if someone should answer that not all speech without meter belongs to a rhetorician, such as the writings of Plato or of surgeons, we answer that the composition certainly belongs to the rhetoricians that is divided into chief points and taken up in the rhetorical form. (42) In fact, all composition is commonly ascribed to the deliberative. (Some nevertheless also ascribe it to the panegyric, since, they say, it praises those who are the best in battles.) In a special way Thucydides' [writing] falls into each one of these three forms. For certainly all the demagoric speeches fall into the deliberative, except for that of the Plataeans and the Thebans in the third book.[32] The funeral oration falls into the panegyric. Into the judicial falls the deliberation of the Plataeans and the Thebans, which we separated out above. For the Lacedaemonian judges were present, and the Plataeans are interrogated in a court of justice, and they respond to the interrogation with a longer speech, and against this speech the Thebans speak, so that they may inflame the anger of the Lacedaemonians. In sum, the arrangement of the speech, the method, and the *schema*, make manifest that the form is the judicial.

(43) Some say that the eighth book of history is adulterated or is not by Thucydides. And some say that it is by his daughter, others by Xenophon. To these we reply, first: that it is not his daughter's is clear. For it is not of the womanly nature nor art to imitate such virtue. Furthermore, if such a one should exist, she would be anxious not to be unknown, nor would she have written only that eighth book, but would have left behind many others, bringing to light her nature. Next, that it could no more be

[30] The classification into three types or styles of speaking to which Marcellinus refers was probably developed by Theophrastus. The first extant mention of them occurs in *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* (c. 90 B.C.), 4, 8. Helpful elaborations upon the three styles and their relation to the ends of rhetoric can be found in Cicero's *Orator* and *De Oratore*.

[31] Here the second person singular pronoun is used.

[32] See Thucydides 2.52–68.

Xenophon's, its character alone cries out: by much indeed differs the simple character from the high. But neither is it Theopompus' work, by exactly the same assessment. (44) To some—and these the more refined—it seems to be of Thucydides indeed, but not yet beautified—models jotted down, with much to be filled in in the chief parts and the deeds to be beautified and capable of being extended. Whence we almost say that it indicates he was infirm—it appears to be put together in the manner of the weakened. For when the body is infirm, the reasoning [*logismos*] is wont to slacken somewhat. For there is a slight sympathy to one another of the reasoning and the body.

(45) He died after the Peloponnesian war, in Thrace, writing the deeds of this to the twenty-first year; seven and twenty years in fact this war lasted. The deeds of the remaining six years Theopompus and Xenophon supplement, who attached to these a history of the Greeks.

(46) One must see that Thucydides was sent as a general to Amphipolis, expecting Brasidas to arrive there, but with the seizure of it beforehand by Brasidas, he was exiled by the Athenians, through the calumnies of Cleon. (Because Cleon was filled with hatred, he is introduced everywhere raging and empty.) Having been exiled, he went, as they say, to Thrace, where he put together that beautiful composition. (47) For he had indeed noted down already from the start of the war all the speeches and the deeds: he was not, however, concerned about beauty from the beginning, but only that he should preserve by his notation the things done. Afterwards indeed living the life of an exile,[33] in Scapte Hyle, a place in Thrace, he composed with beauty those things that from the beginning he had only in notation for the sake of memory.

(48) To the mythical, however, he was opposed, on account of his delight in the truth. For he did not pursue what other composers and the historians—who themselves mix myths into histories—did, seeking after the pleasant more than the truth. But while they proceeded in this way, this composer did not care to write for the delight of those who listen, but for the precise understanding of those who learn. For he calls this composition of his a contest [*agonisma*].[34] For he avoided much that was toward pleasure,

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[33] Some (lesser) manuscripts read "of an historian" (*historian*).

[34] There appears to be a lacuna here in the text. The whole section is a gloss on Thucydides' text at 1.22. At 1.22.4, immediately after discussing the absence of the mythical from his work, Thucydides says that his work is *not* written as an *agonisma*, but as a possession for all time. Hence editors of Marcellinus' text have suggested additions that would have this sentence read as follows: "For he calls this composition of his *not* a contest, *but a possession for all time*."

and he turned aside from digressions that the many are accustomed to make. (49) At some places, at any rate, they are made even by Herodotus—with the dolphin who is a lover of hearing and Arion steering [the dolphin to shore] to the music.[35] Indeed [Herodotus'] whole second book of histories falsifies the purpose. Conversely, if this composer [i.e., Thucydides] recounts something wondrous, it is because it is necessary to speak, and only that they may learn what has come to be known by hearsay. For even his account of Tereus indicates only the suffering of the women;[36] and [he tells] the history of the Cyclops to recall the charm of the places;[37] and of Alcmeon whom he mentions to be moderate, where that which has to do with his moderation [i.e., the flux over time of land and water] makes the islands.[38] The rest he does not investigate closely. (50) But certainly about such myths, the rest are described, in a terribly clever manner, and certainly are clear in their parts. But in the arrangement sometimes, on account of the stretching out of the interpretation, he seems not to be clear.

His speech has an exceedingly grave and grand character. The ordering is harsh, full, and heavy in *hyperbaton* [transposition of words], sometimes indeed obscure, wondrous in brevity, and his diction very thoughtful. (51) In the pronouncing of judgments, he excelled. In the narratives, he is indeed exceedingly powerful, when he sets out in full for us the sea battles, the sieges of the cities, the plagues, and the seditions. Of many kinds in his figures, the most imitating Gorgias of Leontini—swift in his signs, short in his severity, and of character representation the best writer. You will see at any rate, beside the elevated thought in Pericles, in Cleon—I know not what

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[35] See Herodotus 2.24.

[36] See Thucydides 2.29.3. For a late version of the myth, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.422–674. Thucydides speaks of the *deed* of the women against Itys (cooking him and serving him up for dinner to Tereus) rather than of the women's *suffering* (which had preceded that deed). He does mention, however, that many poets call the nightingale the bird of Daulia, i.e., of the land where the "Thracian" Tereus had dwelt. He thereby draws some attention to the poets' account of Tereus' cutting out of Philomela's tongue (lest men or gods hear Philomela's tale of his rape of her) and of Philomela's transformation by the gods, in the end, into a nightingale.

[37] See Thucydides 6.2.1.

[38] See Thucydides 2.102.5–6. With Powell, I here follow the manuscript rather than the emendations suggested by some editors, which would eliminate the clause "where that which has to do with his moderation makes the islands" and substitute "where he makes him mindful." Thucydides makes no mention of moderation (*sophrosune*) in his account. He does, however, mention an oracle's intimation that the matricide Alcmeon would have no "release from terrors" until he found a land that had not been seen by the sun when he killed his mother. And as he indicates, Alcmeon managed to achieve this very release by the recognition of what we might call the flux of nature in the formation of land where there had been sea. This release from terrors appears to be what Marcellinus has in mind by Alcmeon's achieving "moderation."

to say of him; in Alcibiades, youthfulness; in Themistocles, all; in Nicias, kindness, fear of the gods, and good fortune—until Sicily. And countless others which severally in their turns we will make an attempt to behold.

(52) In his [work] there is much use of the ancient Attic [language], in which *zeta* substitutes for *sigma*, as whenever he says *zunegraphes* and *zummaxian*. And the diphthong *ai* he wrote instead of *a*, and said *aiei*. And he was the inventor of wholly new words; for some are older than his own time, such as *autoboei*, and *polemeseiontes*, and *magchalepon*, and *hamartada*, and *hules phakelous*. Others are cared for by the poets, such as *epilugsai* and *ephlutai* and *anakos* and others. And some are peculiar to him, such as *aposimosis*, and *kolume*, and *apoteichisis*, and any number of others, which are not read in works by others but that he puts in his work. (53) An object of his care also was the weight of words, and terrible cleverness of enthymemes—outstripping[39] as we say—in composition, brief. For often many deeds are brought to light by a single statement. Often indeed also he substitutes passion and deeds for the man, as in that *antipalon deos*.[40] He has indeed something of the panegyric, as in the funeral oration. And he introduced variously irony and questioning and making a philosophic form of the demagoric speech: for in those which answer one to the other, he philosophizes. To be sure, the many blame the form of composition of these same speeches. Such a one is Dionysius of Halicarnassus: for he reproaches him as unrestrained and not having the power to use civic oratory,[41] not knowing that in all these [Thucydides] was of extraordinary power and of advantageous habit.

(54) He seems to have come to be in the time of Herodotus, if indeed Herodotus makes mention of the attack of the Thebans into Plataea, concerning which history Thucydides narrates in the second book.[42] And so it is said, that once when Herodotus was making a display of his own history, Thucydides was present at the recital and, hearing it, wept. Thereupon, they

[39] That is, with the thoughts outstripping the words.

[40] The Mytilenaeans are made to use this formulation in their speech to the Spartans at 3.11.1. It means fear or awe that is as equally balanced as the strength of two wrestlers.

[41] See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Thucydides*, chs. 36–43.

[42] Marcellinus is referring to Herodotus 7.233, where we are told that Eurymachus, the son of the Medizing Theban general Leontiades, would "in later times" be killed as the general leading the attack of Thebans against Plataea. Thucydides presents that Theban attack on Plataea as the start of the Peloponnesian War (2.2–7); in fact, Eurymachus son of Leontiades is the only person whom he mentions by name in his account, both as the Thebans' leader in the negotiations with the Theban fifth column in Plataea and as having been among the slain Thebans (2.2.3 and 2.5.7).

say, Herodotus noticing, said to Olorus the father of Thucydides, "O Olorus, truly the nature of your son is violently bent toward learning."

(55) He died in Thrace, and they say that there he was buried. But others claim that his bones were secretly carried to Athens, and in like manner buried; nor indeed was it allowed openly to bury at Athens one who had been exiled on the charge of treason. His tomb, however, is near the gates, in the place of Attica called Coela, just as Antyllus affirms, a most trustworthy man to bear witness, and a discerning historian, and for instruction terribly clever. And the column, he says, stood in Coela bearing the inscription "Thucydides <Olorou> Halimousios." They have in truth added the [inscription] "Here He Lies." We say that, to those who perceive and understand, it is thus [i.e., added], and that this was not put in the [original] inscription.

(56) The form and character [of his writing] is magnificent, and indeed one should certainly stay away, in this magnificent form, from appeals to pity. The elocution is grave, the thought obscure, because he delights in *hyperbaton*, and he indicates many things with few words. And he certainly has variety in his figures of speech, but on the other hand, the thought is without figures. For neither ironies, nor reproaches, nor oblique speech, nor any other such knavery against the listener did he use, when nevertheless Demosthenes in these especially displayed the terrible cleverness of his eloquence. (57) I think however that not from ignorance of any figure but by design did Thucydides leave such things out, putting together the speeches suitable to and harmonizing with the given person. For it was not suitable to Pericles, and Archidamus, and Nicias, and Brasidas—human beings high-minded, and well born, and holding heroic reputations—to bestow upon them speeches of irony and knavery, as if these did not possess the frankness openly to accuse or to censure without disguise, or that they wished not to speak so. For this reason therefore I think he made a practice of the sincere and un-characterized [form of speeches], preserving in these the fitting and the skill. For it belongs to the skilled man to keep watch over the reputation bestowed on the persons, and to apply to the deeds the corresponding embellishment.

(58) But one must see that some men cut his work up into thirteen histories, others otherwise. Nonetheless, by most and by common rule the work has been divided up to the eight; this Asclepius[43] also determined.

[43] Because of the use of *katetemon* ("they cut up") in the preceding sentence, I here follow the manuscripts, which read *Asklepios*, by whom doctors swore, in the Hippocratic oath, not to take the knife to anyone. Powell follows Poppo's suggested *Asklepiades*, which would make the sentence refer to one of five possible known writers by that name between the fourth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D.

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Thumos and Psychophysics in Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*

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Introduction

The Passions of the Soul, of 1649, is Descartes's last published and, compared to his other writings, least studied work (Descartes 1996, 11:301–497; 1989). It consists of a preface and 212 articles grouped into three major parts. Part I, containing 50 articles, is titled, "About the Passions in General, and incidentally about the whole nature of man (*DES PASSIONS EN GENERAL: Et par occasion, de toute la nature de l'homme*)." My intention in the following is to elucidate what Descartes means by "the whole nature of man"—hardly an incidental item.

Although brief compared to Descartes's other published writings (the *Discourse on the Method and Essays*, the *Meditations, Objections and Replies*, the *Principles of Philosophy*), *The Passions of the Soul* is laden with moral-psychological and, as I argue here, political-philosophical content. It purports to offer a new science of human being based on Descartes's new science of nature; as he famously says, "my purpose has not been to explain the Passions as an Orator, or even as a moral Philosopher, but only as a Physicist" (11:326; 1989, 17). The resulting account is supposed to be more adequate to the irrationalities of human life and more therapeutically effective than the traditional Scholastic-Aristotelian teaching. For Descartes, it is only on

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grounds of scientifically enlightened self-knowledge that we have any realistic hope of ameliorating the emotional disorders and dangerous propensities of our uncorrected nature.

Article 5, early on in Part I, states "[t]hat it is an error to believe that the soul imparts motion and heat to the body." Rather, from the preceding article 4, "all the heat and all the movements which are in us, insofar as they do not depend on thought, belong to the body alone," that is, to the Cartesian body-machine. Descartes says that this error, that the soul is the principle of vital heat and organic function, as Aristotle taught, is "a very serious one—so much so that I consider it the main reason why no one has yet been able to explain the Passions correctly, and the other things belonging to the soul" (a. 5). That is a large claim.

For the points I wish to make, it is essential to take account of the historical context, namely, the Thirty Years' War, 1618–1648, which Descartes mentions in the opening sentence of Part 2 of the *Discourse on Method*, and which spanned his intellectual career (6:11; 1985, 1:116).[1] Accordingly, the examples Descartes uses to illustrate the effects of the passions (aa. 36–40) and the soul's power over its passions (aa. 45–50) are military: We will to overcome the fear in our soul with courage, and turn our fleeing body back into the oncoming enemy. Descartes writes in a time and place before *embourgeoisement* or the attenuation of *thumos.*

Any decent course on the history of political philosophy will show that the eventual achievement of free government in the West involved the promotion and protection of what we could call the erotic and acquisitive desires and satisfactions, and the weakening or attenuation of the angry or *thumetic* passions, from the Greek *thumos*, found in Aristotle but especially in Plato, and often translated as spiritedness. It is the preeminent political passion, necessary for the preservation of the *polis* but also a serious problem. In Plato, spiritedness constitutes the combative, potentially warlike part of the soul, the ambiguous middle between the higher reasoning part and the lower desiring part (*Republic* 439e–441c, 547e).[2] According to Aristotle,

[1] By the end of the war, "Germany lay desolate. The population had fallen from 21 million to perhaps 13 million. Between a third and a half of the people were dead. Whole cities…stood in ruins. Whole districts lay stripped of their inhabitants.…Trade had virtually ceased. A whole generation of pillage, famine, disease, and social disruption had wreaked such havoc that in the end the princes were forced to reinstate serfdom, to curtail municipal liberties, and to nullify the progress of a century." (Davies 1996, 568)

[2] "[Spiritedness] is essentially obedient, while looking more masterful than anything else. But as such it does not know what it should obey, the higher or the lower. It bows to it knows not what.…The

"spiritedness undoes even the best of men when they rule" (*Politics* 1287a30).[3] The problem is that,

> on account of the heat and haste of its nature, when it has heard something, but has not heard the [whole] order, [spiritedness] rushes toward revenge. For reason or imagination (*logos ê phantasia*) showed that there was an insult or a belittling, and spiritedness, as though reasoning that it is necessary to go to war against any such thing, boils up straightaway. (*Nic. Ethics* 1149a30–35; 2002, 129)

The relation of reason to imagination, and the need for the direction of the latter by the former, is a major theme of the Cartesian philosophy (Sepper 1996), from the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, of 1628, to *The Passions of the Soul*.

By the erotic, I do not mean sexual licentiousness, but the love of husband and wife that generates children. The traditional American dream—a family in a home of their own on property that they own—is an emblem of what I am getting at. And some of us may remember being told by our parents that, in polite company, one shouldn't discuss two things: religion and politics—because opinions about these things often prompt angry, divisive, that is, *thumetic* passions. Let me coin a clumsy word and refer to the modern attenuation of *thumos* in our psyches as *athumetization*. The possibility of athumetization, and its reality in a particular civilizational orbit (the West today, and not the rest or, as noted, the West in the past) are testimony to the variability of human dispositions or character types over time and place. *Thumos* makes man (*anthrôpos*), more than any other species, a historical being.[4] This is reflected in Descartes's account of "the whole nature of man"—immutable and mutable. How it is reflected, how Descartes articu-

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spirited man is, as it were, always on the lookout, or on the search, for something for which he can sacrifice himself. He is prepared to sacrifice himself and everything else for anything.…Since spiritedness is undetermined as to the primary end, the goods of the body or the good of the mind, it is in a way independent of, or oblivious to, those goods.…It is therefore radically ambiguous, and therefore it can be the root of the most radical confusion." Strauss 1989, 166–67; see also Bloom 1968, 351–58. On the theme of spiritedness in the history of political philosophy see Zuckert (1988).

[3] "*Ho thumos archontas diastrephei kai tous aristous andras.*" The context is an argument for rule of law rather than men, for even the best of men (who as such can be moderate with respect to the ordinary desires) are vulnerable to excesses of spiritedness.

[4] *Thumos* rises and falls in peoples and places, like the tides, but, unlike the tides, its ebb and flow is irregular, unpredictable, as are its objects when it rises. Thus we have religious fanaticism in Descartes's time, extreme nationalism in the nineteenth century, totalitarian ideological fanaticism (fascism, Communism, Nazism) in the twentieth century, and, again, religious fanaticism in the twenty-first century. Removed or suppressed in one form, spiritedness returns in another. The project of athumetization is less than a complete success. Needless to say, those for whom it has succeeded are particularly vulnerable to those for whom it has not.

lates nature and history in terms of his phenomenology of human experience, on the one hand, and his new hypothetico-deductive science of body and soul ("as a Physicist"), on the other, forms the substance of this essay.

The *Passions of the Soul* is not much concerned with the erotic and acquisitive passions—it clearly was not written for people who have to work for a living, and there is only one article (a. 90) on sexual desire. But I think it does have things to say about *thumos*, and is intended by Descartes to contribute to the project of athumetization, or the weakening of the spirited, potentially warlike passions. Specifically, *The Passions of the Soul* contains an analysis and critique of the things that affect human imagination and volition such that we get ourselves and others killed without reason. Of especial concern to Descartes are overweening pride, love of military glory, superstition and fanaticism. The human faculty of imagination (as noted above), and the power of images, in pictures but especially in speech, to dispose or shape our souls, form a fundamental theme of Descartes's *Passions*.

Rising up out of ambition for one's own glory, out of jealousy of one's own or family honor, out of zeal for one's own friends, party, people, nation, leader, or religion, are acts of the power of *thumos*. The objects of *thumos* typically involve both *one's own* (reputation, ideology, ethnicity, nationality, loyalty, faith, etc.), and larger reasons, beliefs, principles that we think justify its spirited, often violent defense, often culminating in the loss of one's own life. Now generosity (*generosité*, aa. 152–59), the supreme Cartesian virtue (also a passion), entails the specification by Descartes of what is truly one's own, namely, one's own, individual free will, and nothing else: "there is nothing which truly belongs to [a man] but this free control of his volitions, and no reason why he ought to be praised or blamed except that he uses it well or badly" (a. 153). Generosity thus weakens the force of our attachments to the larger wholes in whose defense we would rise in anger. In contemporary parlance, generosity is incompatible with identity politics, for one cannot claim value by virtue of membership in a group but only by the right use of one's own will as an individual.[5] Descartes's distinctive

[5] "Right use" means autonomously: not in deference to the guidance (reasons, opinions) of others, but only as "he judges to be best" (a. 153). From our post-Nietzschean perspective, it is an unnerving question, what are the standards of judgment? The problem is well presented by Rethy (2000, 682–83). We can be assured that generosity does not make for a Nietzschean superman by the title of a. 49: "That strength of soul does not suffice without knowledge of the truth." It remains obscure, however, if that truth is supposed to be certified by Cartesian method (so that it counts as science; this is very unlikely since the method does not yield knowledge of good and evil; see n. 12, below), or in some other way, perhaps by the study of history "with discretion" and without "the charm of fables" (6:6–7; 1985, 1:114). Section 8, below, provides an example of the latter: Livy on the Decii.

individualism conduces to the attenuation of *thumos*. But this is an unusual claim from the perspective of the current scholarship, and it behooves me to anticipate significant objections. First, there is no word for *thumos* in *The Passions of the Soul* nor is there a thematic (clearly identifiable) discussion of it. Second, Descartes's single reference to historical events that exhibit a relevant phenomenon—the devoted self-sacrifice of the Roman Decii (a. 173)—appears to endorse the voluntary loss of one's own life in the service of a larger cause. Third, in private letters to his friends Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and Pierre Chanut, Descartes explicitly describes the subordination of the individual to larger wholes (communities) for the defense of which one ought to be willing to face death. I address the first of these directly and the remaining two in Section 8, below.

In *The Passions of the Soul* there is no single word for *thumos*. The likely candidate, *fougue*, does not appear (Voss 1995). Anger (*colere*) is the most visible form of *thumos* and the signature member of what in the Scholastic tradition came to be called the irascible, in contrast to the concupiscible passions (Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 81, a. 2; 1981, 1:410–11).[6] Descartes indeed singles out anger: "the desire to repel harmful things and avenge oneself is the most urgent of all" (a. 199). In fact, there is no passion "whose excesses should be more assiduously avoided.…[and] as nothing renders it more excessive than pride…Generosity is the best remedy for its excesses" (a. 203). Here, excessive anger stems from pride, something deeper than anger. Pride is an illegitimate form of self-esteem (a. 158). For Descartes, the desire to esteem oneself highly is perhaps the most fundamental trait of our humanity (Kennington 2004, 186). This desire, however, does not seem to fit within the Scholastic classification of the passions into concupiscible and irascible. Accordingly, Descartes rejects the associated distinction between concupiscible and irascible appetites as parts of the soul (a. 68). My point is twofold: First, *thumos* should not be identified with the traditional irascible passions,[7] which are

[6] From the division of the sensitive appetite, Aquinas derives six concupiscible passions (love, hate, desire, aversion, joy, sorrow) and five irascible passions (anger, fear, confidence, hope, despair); ST I–II, q. 23, a. 4 (1981, 2:696–97).

[7] "[T]he Platonic distinction [between desire and spiritedness] is not identical with the traditional distinction" (Strauss 1989, 166). Strauss indicates why (note 2, above): Spiritedness is "radically ambiguous, and therefore it can be the root of the most radical confusion." According to the tradition, "the irascible is, as it were, the champion and defender of the concupiscible, when it rises up against what hinders the acquisition of the suitable things which the concupiscible desires" (Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 81, a. 2, resp.; 1981, 1:411). Consider a suicide bomber. The traditional distinction as Aquinas describes it is *formally* correct. But it seems inadequate to the irrationality, the "radical confusion" of the phenomenon. I suggest that Descartes, in view of the religious extremism of his time—see the examples in Section 7—was thinking along similar lines.

treated by Descartes but, aside from his remarks on anger (cited above), are not given overriding importance. Second, Descartes's teaching in relation to *thumos* is not explicit but must be inferred from his account of "the whole nature of man."

In Section 1, below, I delineate Descartes's distinction between universal biological nature and what human beings esteem or scorn, which are particular and variable, and, to a great extent, provide the contents of human history. In Sections 2–5, I present the scientific modeling of the human soul-body composite that undergirds Descartes's account of biological nature and human history. The relation of imagination and volition, specifically, how they are incorporated in the psychophysical model, is the subject of Sections 4 and 5. In Section 6, I argue for an important distinction between voluntary (autonomous) and partially voluntary (heteronomous) imaginations in articles 17–20, wherein the active functions of the soul are introduced. Significantly, these articles are based not on Descartes's psychophysics but on his prescientific reading of human experience. Sections 7 and 8 continue my account of volition and imagination, which are strongly affected by *thumos* such that we, unlike any other species, voluntarily face death. Examples are provided in Section 7 and, in Section 8, I reply to significant objections to my thesis concerning Cartesian individualism and the attenuation of *thumos*. In Section 9, I examine Descartes's bold claim for the scientific mastery of the passions, and, finally, draw conclusions on the Cartesian component of early modern philosophy in light of *The Passions of the Soul*.

1. Biological Nature and the Humanly Estimable (Descartes's Final Dualism)

According to Descartes, most of our passions are originally "instituted by nature" (aa. 36, 50, 89, 90, 94, 137) for the sake of the health and conservation of the body.[8] As such they have a natural use (a. 52), a *purpose*, namely, the acquisition or preservation of what is suitable, and the avoidance or removal of what is harmful to the soul's body. But this baseline, beneficent teleology of our living, animate nature can be, and, for Descartes, as I

[8] The "institution of nature" always refers to properties of the union or composite of mind and body, as discussed in Section 2, below. Descartes's use of the term 'nature' in this context (the union of mind and body), not nature as matter (the subject of mathematical physics), means that we are dealing with something that is a starting point of his account of the experience of the human composite, which is not subject to further analysis into more primitive terms, thus not reducible to either unextended thought (*res cogitans*) or thoughtless extension (*res extensa*) or any combination of the two. Physical pain is a paradigm of nature in this sense, that is, for what arises from the union of mind and body (Kennington 2004, 161–86; Brown 2006, 13–14).

interpret him, too often has been, overridden by our pursuit of goods that we esteem more highly than bodily life:

> [P]ain always comes from some action so vigorous that it injures the nerves, so that, being instituted by nature to signify to the soul the damage the body receives by this action and its weakness in not having been able to withstand it, [pain] represents both of them to [the soul] as evils which are always unpleasant to it, except when they bring about goods it esteems more than them. (Article 94)

Now esteem, according to Descartes (a. 149), is a particular passion arising from the *opinion* one has of a thing's worth or greatness—including ourselves (aa. 54, 151). Its opposite is contempt or scorn, a passion arising from the opinion one has of the smallness or meanness of a thing.[9] Descartes makes clear that esteem and scorn "may be excited in us without our perceiving in any way whether the object causing them is good or bad.... [i.e.,] suitable to us...or harmful" (a. 56). Esteem and scorn, therefore, are not instituted by nature and have no natural use. As such, they do not subserve the preservation of the body and are, moreover, subject to great variation among individuals and especially groups.[10] Somehow, the words and pictures that frame our opinions about the magnitude of a thing—its greatness or smallness—come, not from nature, but from elsewhere.[11] Human history—past, present, and future—is the arena of their manifestation. Regarding the sources of such opinions in the past, Descartes says little beyond his references to Greek myth (the chimera, a. 20) and Roman history (the Decii, a. 173), discussed in Parts 6 and 8, below. As to the present (Descartes's present) and the subsequent (more enlightened) future, Descartes himself is the

[9] As Voss rightly notes, "every passion is normally aroused by an opinion that its object somehow matters to us" (Descartes 1989, 123, n. 29). What is distinctive about esteem and scorn is that in these passions our own good or bad need not matter. Descartes makes clear that esteem and scorn become connected to other, naturally instituted passions, e.g., love: it is not possible to love something without esteeming it (a. 83). We can, however, esteem something without loving or hating it, thus without judging whether it is suitable or, more importantly, harmful (and should be avoided). The limitations of an article-length essay preclude discussion of wonder (*admiration*), the first Cartesian passion (a. 53), which is "as it were" the genus of which esteem and contempt are species (a. 149) and which is an admixture in "almost all" of the passions (a. 72). Basic points about wonder are succinctly made by Rethy (2000).

[10] "I thought, too, how the same man, with the same mind, if brought up from infancy among the French or Germans, develops otherwise than he would if he had always lived among the Chinese or cannibals" (6:16; 1985, 1:119). "Things that are painful and hateful to some are pleasant and lovable to others" (Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics* 1176a8–12; 2002, 189).

[11] "What is notable...is the absence of any bodily or natural ground for esteem or contempt—indeed the absence of any ground at all. As 'principles of evaluation', they seem to ground without themselves being grounded" (Rethy 2000, 679).

source(!) through the revelation of his own opinion about that for which individuals can legitimately and most highly esteem themselves (a. 152): the right use of their own free will, or generosity. We thus end up in *The Passions of the Soul* with what I call Descartes's final and ultimate dualism. It is not his notorious metaphysical dualism of two independent substances, thinking thing and extended thing.[12] It is the anthropological dualism of (1) our fixed and universal, biological nature (instituted in us by nature), and (2) our variable and particular, historical being transcending biology, the latter being articulated especially by the goods that are esteemed more highly than life. *This* dualism constitutes "the whole nature of man." I have introduced it by consideration of the unique status of esteem and contempt in relation to the passions that are instituted by nature for the preservation of the body. There is a further, more characteristic basis for this dualism in the text of *The Passions of the Soul.*

Descartes's account of the emotions is very much entangled with his rather elaborate psychophysics—an awkward, if ingenious, theoretical apparatus that appears in his earlier *Treatise on Man* and *Sixth Meditation*, and is supposed to be based on his new, true physics as applied to the human body, specifically, to fluid flows (of blood and animal spirits), nerves (from the organs of sense and the limbs to the brain), and, famously, to the pineal gland, the only place where our souls directly (without mediation of nerves and animal spirits) meet our bodies (*Passions*, a. 31).[13] There (in the pineal

[12] For Descartes's metaphysical or "substance" dualism, see *Disc.* 4 (4:31–33; 1985, 1:126–27), and, most authoritatively, *Med.* 6 (7:78; 1985, 2:54). A second, epistemological dualism is identified by Kennington (2004, 161–86). It is the dualism of the certain ("clear and distinct") but value-neutral knowledge of means known by "the light of nature," or science, and the knowledge of ends known by "the teaching of nature," for example, pain, which does not meet the ("clear and distinct") criterion of scientific certainty (pain is clear but confused; 7:81; 1985, 2:56). This dualism develops into a characteristic feature of modern technological societies: we have certain knowledge of powerful means but no comparable certainty about the ends for the sake of which the means ought, or ought not to be applied. The anthropological dualism contained, as I argue here, in *The Passions of the Soul* would thus be Descartes's third dualism. Note that the word 'substance' (*substance*) appears three times in the *Passions,* at 11:335, line 11, 11:337, line 13, 11:352, line 13, in each case referring to the material of the brain or the nerves. *The Passions of the Soul* is premised on the experientially obvious reality of mind-body union. Accordingly, substance in the Cartesian metaphysical sense is not mentioned in the book.

[13] The preceding article, a. 30, provides Descartes's testimony for the traditional hylomorphism ("the soul is truly joined to the whole body…it is [not] in any one of its parts to the exclusion of others"). This thesis is never used in the subsequent account, whereas the restriction of the soul to the pineal gland, thereby enabling the mechanistic modeling of the brain, is crucial to Descartes's entire theory of the soul-body composite and its relation to the world. "[I]t is the soul that sees, and not the eye; and it does not see directly, but only by means of the brain" (*Optics* 6, 6:141; 1985, 1:172). "[T]he brain alone can act directly on the mind" (To Regius, May 1641, 3:373; 1991, 183). "[T]he soul's sensory awareness, via the nerves, of what happens to the individual limbs of the body does not come about in virtue of the soul's presence in the individual limbs, but simply in virtue of its presence in the brain"

gland), Descartes hypothesizes an association between motions of the gland and "thoughts"—which includes passions—in the soul. This *thought-motion association* has a fixed (innate) component and a variable (acquired) component (aa. 44, 50). The distinction between the two components provides the scientific framework undergirding Descartes's final dualism—the fixed component is instituted by nature, the time-variable component models human history. To see how this works, we must descend into the details of Descartes's psychophysics, beginning with the baseline teleology of nature in the *Sixth Meditation*.

2. Biological Nature: Sensation and the Teaching of Nature in *Meditation* 6

Meditations 1 through 5 and the first half of *Meditation* 6 concern speculative truths known "solely by the natural light," thus clearly and distinctly (i.e., with certainty). Principal among them, as announced by the title of the book, are the existence of God and the distinction between the soul and the body (7:15–17; 1985, 2:11–12). The subject matter is epistemological and metaphysical. In contrast, the second half of *Meditation* 6 treats in considerable detail the union or composite of mind and body, from which arise sensations that are less than clear and distinct (they are "confused modes of thinking"), but which are useful for practical life. Physical pain is the paradigm. Descartes refers to this class of cognitions as "the teaching of nature" (7:80–81, 87; 1985, 2:55–56, 60).[14] It differs from the light of nature by virtue of its reduced precision and certainty. According to Descartes, "the sensory perceptions [of pain, hunger, thirst and so on] given to me by nature are, properly, simply to inform the mind of what is beneficial or harmful to the composite of which the mind is a part" (7:83 and 81; 1985, 2:57 and 56).[15]

(*Prin.* 4.196, 8A:319; 1985, 1:283). Des Chene (2000, 5–6, 192) comments aptly on aa. 30 and 31.

[14] In the *Passions,* Descartes uses the term "institution of nature" (aa. 36, 50, 89, 90, 94, 137) rather than "teaching of nature." Although both refer to the experience of the composite, they do not mean the same thing (the institution of nature usually refers to the original "settings" of the sensation-motion association internal to the brain, while the teaching of nature refers to objects external to the body as beneficial or harmful). Rethy (2000) discusses the differences between the institution and the teaching of nature. For my present purpose, these distinctions are not important.

[15] The sensations are internal (pain, pleasure), external (perceptions of the five senses), and natural appetites (hunger, thirst); emotions and imaginations are not mentioned. The external sensations are good for registering differences in the bodies outside of us, but they are not trustworthy guides to the knowledge of the essential natures of those bodies. Kennington (2004, 171–72) sets out Descartes's distinction between the practical and reliable teaching of nature and the theoretical (apparent) and unreliable teaching of nature. Rodis-Lewis (1998, 205) makes the same point.

Unlike the light of nature, or science, the teaching of nature is purposive or teleological—it aims at an end: the health and preservation of the body.

There are, however, obvious cases in which nature instructs us mistakenly. The disease of dropsy causes one to be thirsty when drink would be harmful, and the amputee feels a pain that he mistakenly judges to be in his foot. In his explanation of these "true error[s] of nature" (7:85; 1985, 2:59), Descartes deploys basic elements of his psychophysics:

> The mind is not immediately affected by all parts of the body, but only by the brain, or perhaps just by one small part of the brain [the pineal gland]. Every time this part of the brain is in a given state [of size, shape, motion], it presents the same signals to the mind, even though the other parts of the body may be in a different condition at the time.…[W]hen I feel a pain in my foot, physiology tells me that this happens by means of nerves…which go from the foot right up to the brain to which they are attached, and produce a certain motion in them; and nature has instituted that this motion should produce in the mind a sensation of pain as occurring in the foot.…[Thus] it can happen that, even if it is not the part in the foot but one of the intermediate parts [of the nerve] which is being pulled, the same motion will occur in the brain as occurs when the foot is hurt, and so it will necessarily come about that the mind feels the same sensation of pain. And we must suppose the same thing happens with regard to any other sensation. (7:86–87; 1985, 2:59–60)

Descartes concludes:

> [A]ny given movement occurring in the part of the brain that immediately affects the mind produces just one corresponding sensation; and hence the best system that could be devised is that it should produce the one sensation which, of all possible sensations, is most especially and most frequently conducive to the preservation of the healthy man.…there is nothing else that would have been so conducive to the continued well-being of the body. (7:87–88; 1985, 2:60–61)

And this, again, is because of the optimal way in which "a given motion in the brain must always produce the same sensation in the mind" (7:88; 1985, 2:61).[16]

[16] The one-to-one determinacy of the relation between a sensation in the soul and a motion of the pineal gland is simply asserted by Descartes (it's a hypothesis) without justification. Shapiro (2003, 39) provides sharp criticism of Descartes's hypothesis.

Although Descartes mentions "the command of the will" (7:84; 1985, 2:58) over the body, nothing is said about it.[17] In the psychophysical theory of *Meditation* 6, then, there is no account of volition, or the power of the soul over its body and its passions. That account first appears in *The Passions of the Soul*. Here in *Meditation* 6, Descartes's model has three basic elements that remain essential for the future development of his theory: (1) the soul is retracted to the pineal gland; (2) the rest of the body outside of the ensouled pineal gland is modeled as a mechanism of nerves, muscles, animal spirits, other organs; (3) most importantly, the soul–pineal gland relation is specified as a one-to-one association between motions of the gland and the events (here sensations) thereby caused in the soul.

3. Modeling Man as Historical: Inertial Persistence of Brain Impressions

Descartes's retraction of the soul to the pineal gland extends the principles of his physics to the rest of the human body, in particular, it extends his first law of nature, a principle of inertial persistence of motions and impressions made in matter, to the material of the brain cavity in which the ensouled pineal gland is seated.[18] This idea first appears in his early (1630–1633), unpublished *Treatise on Man*:

> Assume…that the chief characteristics of these filaments [that make up the walls of the brain cavity containing the pineal gland] are that they can be flexed rather easily in all sorts of ways merely by the force of the spirits that strike them, and that they can retain, as if made of lead or wax, the flexure last received until something exerts a contrary pressure upon them. (11:170; 2003, 79)

The animal spirits are hot, fast, subtle fluids, thus purely material. They interact with the pineal gland, as described in article 31 of the *Passions*:

> the part of the body in which the soul immediately exercises its functions is…a certain extremely small gland, situated in the middle of [the brain], and so suspended above the duct by which the spirits of its

[17] Also in *Man,* "the force of the soul of which I shall speak later on" (11:179; 2003, 91) but that discussion does not appear in the extant text of *Man*.

[18] The first law of nature is given in *The World*, chap. 7 (11:38; 1985, 1:93), and again at *Prin.* 2.37 (8A:62; 1985, 1:240–41). As formulated in *Prin.* 2.37, it reads "each [material] thing, in so far as it is simple and undivided, always remains in the same state, as far as it can, and never changes except as a result of external causes." For an analysis of Descartes's first law of nature see Hassing (1984, 1992). In the present essay, I use the term "inertial" loosely, to refer to persistence of states of size, shape, and motion that are not goal-directed or teleological, that can be changed only by some external agency, and that (unlike a wound that heals) do not thereafter return to the previous state.

> anterior cavities are in communication with those of the posterior that its slightest movements can greatly alter the course of these spirits, and conversely the slightest changes taking place in the course of the spirits can greatly alter the movements of this gland.

Descartes's mechanical brain model is nicely pictured in the *Treatise on Man* (11:759; 2003, 77):

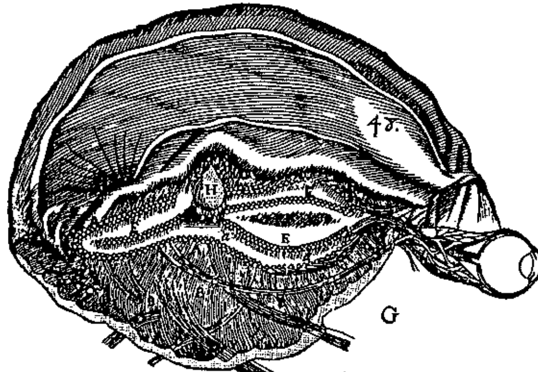

Figure 24

Fig. 24 shows the pineal gland, H, the cavity that contains it in its environing flow-field of (invisible) animal spirits; it shows eyes, and nerves (hollow fibers that transmit animal spirits) from the eye to the brain cavity.[19]

Most importantly (model element 3, above), movements of the gland are hypothesized to cause the soul to have various sensations. Let us call it for now the *sensation-motion association*. As he first states it in *Man*,

> I assert that when God will later join a rational soul to this machine… He will place its chief seat in the brain and will make its nature such that, according to the different ways in which the entrances of the pores in the internal surface of this brain [housing the pineal gland] are opened through the intervention of the nerves, the soul will have different feelings (*sentimens*). (11:143; 2003, 36–37)

The class of sensations treated by Descartes in *Man* consists of internal sensations (e.g., pain, pleasure), external sensations (perceptions of the five senses), natural appetites (e.g., hunger, thirst), and sixteen emotions. The list of emotions bears little resemblance to Descartes's final presentation in the

[19] The three figures from *Man* shown in the present essay (Figs. 24, 29, and 30) were drawn by Gerard van Gutschoven for Claude Clerselier's 1664 edition of the work (Descartes 1996, 11:119; 2003, xxiv, xxxv).

Passions, in particular, the passions of wonder, esteem and contempt do not appear in *Man*, or in any work prior to the *Passions*.[20] We thus have evidence that, while the psychophysical undergirding is in place from the beginning of Descartes's intellectual career, his enumeration of the passions changes, i.e., his account "as a Physicist" is necessary for the fulfillment of his anti-Scholastic intention, but not sufficient or determinative for his positive teaching. The non-use of physics in Descartes's account of the soul would then be just as significant as its use.

In the *Passions*, the sensation-motion association is introduced in article 34:

> And let us add here that the little gland which is the principal seat of the soul is suspended among the cavities containing these spirits in such a way that it can be moved by them in as many different ways as there are differences capable of being sensed in objects, but that it can also be moved diversely by the soul, which is of such a nature that it receives into itself as many different impressions—that is as many different perceptions—as there are different movements which take place in this gland.

Descartes's psychophysical theory thus allows for the accumulation over time of impressions in the lead- or wax-like parts of the brain with corresponding effects on the soul. Past encounters with sense objects, including words, spoken and written, are the typical sources of these impressions. The resulting effects in the soul are passions, perceptions, imaginations and beliefs; more specifically, they involve *connections* between a passion and a perception, a passion and an imagination, a passion and an opinion (I discuss these pair-correlations in Section 9, below). These effects persist until a new alteration is impressed in the brain, either by chance or by art. This non-teleological process takes place in the brain along with the fixed and purposive teaching or institution of nature, which is accordingly overlaid and, as noted above, can be overridden.[21]

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[20] For the sixteen emotions mentioned in *Man* (curiosity may be a seventeenth), see Descartes 1996, 11:164–67; 2003, 70–73. For the seven or more mentioned in *Principles* 4.190 and 197, see Descartes 1996, 8A:316–17, 321; 1985, 1:280–81, 284. These lists stand in clear contrast to the ordered list of forty passions in *The Passions of the Soul*.

[21] Descartes needs to account for the distinction between teleological and inertial brain alterations and associated events in the soul. For example: the perception in my soul caused by sticking my finger in a flame is permanent and permanently connected to a strong desire (a passion) to pull my finger out of the flame. Here the association between pineal gland motions (mechanically caused by the flow of animal spirits directed by nerves from my finger to my brain, etc.) and events in my soul cannot be overridden by any new experience that impresses a new channel in the lead-like surfaces of my brain cavity such that, e.g., I feel pleasure with my finger in the flame and a desire to keep it there. Descartes

Descartes's ingenious theory thus models the process whereby nature's original and beneficent teleology (the institution of nature) is altered over time by psychophysical "deposits"—by the accretion of perceptions, passions, and imaginations, and of unexamined opinions about the beneficial and the harmful, the great and the small.[22] Thereby man is a historical, not simply biological being. But I have gotten ahead of the story; the incorporation of speech (words) within the sensation-motion association occurs only with that of volition, Section 5, below.

It is important to draw the contrast between Descartes's new doctrine of the human soul, which we could call pineal-gland "hylomorphism," and what is thereby rejected, namely, Aristotle's whole-body hylomorphism.[23]

In the Aristotelian-Scholastic teaching, the soul is a principle of life and life-functions in the living body, whether plant, animal or human, that is, soul is a general, biological principle. The soul is not a quantitative part of the body, like the battery in a watch, but is rather in the whole body as such. In fact, the parts of an ensouled body are what they are and act as they do only in terms of the whole they compose. If separated by dissection from the whole, they cease to be what they were. As Aristotle says, "[T]he whole must of necessity be prior to the part; for if the whole [body] is destroyed there will not be a foot or a hand, except [metaphorically] as when one speaks of a hand made of stone" (*Politics* 1253a20–22; 1984, 37). Most importantly for our present purposes, soul is *entelecheia*—translated 'actuality' or, following Sachs (2001, 1–42, 79–80), 'being-at-work-staying-itself'. "If the eye were an animal, the soul of it would be its sight....just as the eyeball and the power of sight are the eye, so here the soul and the body are the living thing" (*On the Soul* 412b19–413a3; 2001, 83). One could discuss these remarkable formulations for a long time, but most relevant for my present purpose is that, on this

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does not provide this account; it is simply assumed that the association between pineal gland motions and events in the soul has these two components, one fixed by the purposive institution of nature, the other variable in function of our particular experiences.

[22] For Descartes's portrayal of this situation, see *Discourse* 1 and 2 (6:4–17; 1985, 1:112–19). Nothing that results from the particularity of our embodiment is any good.

[23] In the Aristotelian doctrine, the soul is in the whole body, as the Cartesian soul is in the whole pineal gland. But, in a more precise sense, my use of the term "pineal-gland hylomorphism" is inaccurate because the Cartesian doctrine omits the determinate form-matter (power-organ) correlativity that is distinctive of the Aristotelian account. As Aquinas explains it, "in reference to those...operations that a soul carries out through bodily organs, its whole capability, its power, is in the whole body but not in each part, because diverse parts of the body [e.g., an eye] are fitted to diverse operations of the soul [e.g., seeing]" (Aquinas 1984, 141).

traditional account, the soul is spatially coextensive with the body. Therefore, there is little scope for certain things that could be spatially external to the soul but internal to the body, and which affect the soul without the soul's knowing that the cause of its experience has no existence outside of its body.

4. First Fruit of the Theory: Involuntary Imaginations

The psychophysical model covers not only sense perception, but also a type of imagination that is involuntary and uncontrolled. Usually, according to Descartes, the flows of animal spirits to the brain proceed via the nerves from encounters with external objects of the senses, and this models sense perception, for example, seeing something (an arrow) as in Fig. 29 of *Man* (11:763; 2003, 84):

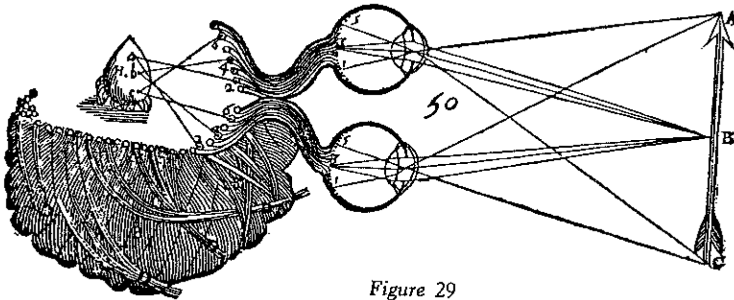

Figure 29

Here, rays of light from an external object enter the eyes, determining animal-spirit flows through the optic nerves into the brain cavity whose configuration directs them onto the pineal gland, which finally causes a representation of the visible object in the soul.[24]

But, in contrast to what happens usually, there may also be random flows of the animal spirits contained wholly within the brain and not coming via nerves from present objects of the senses. In such cases, as described in *Man*,

[24] Beyssade (2003) provides a thorough and accurate explanation of Descartes's neuro-mechanics of perception.

> …past things sometimes return to thought as if by chance and without the memory of them being excited by any object impinging on the senses.
>
> But if several figures are traced in this same region of the brain almost equally perfectly, as usually happens, the spirits will acquire a [combined] impression of them all, this happening to a greater or lesser degree according to the ways in which parts of the figures fit together. It is thus that chimeras and hypogryphs are formed in the imagination of those who daydream, that is to say who let their fancy wander listlessly here and there (*errer nonchalamment*) without external objects diverting it and without the fancy's being directed by reason. (11:184; 2003, 96)

As Descartes explains it later in article 21 of the *Passions*, "About imaginations that have only the body as cause":

> the [animal] spirits, agitated in various ways and coming upon traces of various impressions which have preceded them in the brain, haphazardly take their course through certain of its pores rather than others. Such are the illusions of our dreams and likewise the waking reveries we often have, when our thought wanders carelessly (*erre, nonchalament*) without applying itself to anything ofits own accord.

What Descartes describes here, based on his early-rising and long-standing model (note his use of the same words in the early *Man* and late *Passions*), are cases of involuntary imaginings, which "have only the body as cause." In these cases, physical traces or channels in the brain cavity were impressed in the past by animal-spirit flows from sense objects that are now forgotten, but the impressions have persisted in the brain in a way that can affect the present experience of the soul, unawares; that is, the soul can be unaware of the true cause—this peculiar mechanism of chance and necessity inside the brain—of its imaginations and associated passions, which it accordingly misinterprets.[25]

To sum up thus far: pineal-gland hylomorphism, body mechanism (of nerves and animal spirits), and sensation-motion association are the three essential components of Descartes's psychophysical theory. In *The Passions of the Soul*, a new addition, namely, volition, is built onto this edifice.

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[25] Malebranche (*Recherche de la Vérité,* Book 2, Part 3, Chap. 6, Sec. 1; 1997, 191–92) provides a striking example: people who believed they had really attended a witches' sabbath when they were only dreaming.

5. Development of the Theory: Volitions in the Soul Cause Motions in the Brain

In *Man* and *Meditation* 6 we have Descartes's account of the mind-body union or the composite of soul and body. But in these earlier writings, the soul remains passive in its union with the body. It is only in *The Passions of the Soul* that volition—the soul's active function in its union with the body—first appears (aa. 17–20) and is thematically treated.[26] There, the one-way connection from pineal-gland motions to sensations in the soul is generalized and becomes reciprocal: along with sensations in the soul, Descartes includes the soul's volitions, which are posited by him to cause pineal-gland motions, again (without justification), according to a one-to-one correspondence.[27] The mechanism of nerves and animal spirits then transmits volitional motion from the pineal gland to the organs of sense perception and the limbs of the body. Descartes's general term for the soul's sensations and volitions, as well as all that we would today call the contents of consciousness, including perceptions, imaginations, words and their meanings, judgments and, finally, the passions, is *thoughts*.[28] The correspondence between thoughts in the soul and motions of the pineal gland is the most important part of his psychophysical model; it is the only link between the psychic and the physical, the soul and the body—and the world beyond. The thought-motion association is fundamental to Descartes's entire account in *The Passions of the Soul*, it is "the principle on which everything I have written about them [the passions] is based" (a. 136).

Article 44 states the key feature of the thought-motion association: it has two components, one fixed by nature, the other variable over time in function of our experience:

> [E]ach volition is naturally joined to some movement of the gland, but…by artifice or habituation (*par industrie ou par habitude*) one can

[26] I exclude the earlier discussion of the freedom of the will in *Med*. 4 (1641) because that account is about the acquisition of (or restriction of the judgment to) clear and distinct knowledge; it not about the soul-body composite, which renders our perceptions confused and obscure (*Passions*, a. 28; compare *Med*. 4, 7:62). Furthermore, in contrast to *Med*. 4, wherein "we do not feel we are determined by any external force" (7:57), when it is a matter of the soul's relation to the body and the passions, we *do* feel the external force, e.g., of fear (our legs and back are turning to flee and we perceive it; aa. 36–38).

[27] See note 16, above.

[28] "[A]ll the operations of the soul, so that not only [clear and distinct] meditations and acts of the will, but the activities of seeing and hearing and deciding on one movement rather than another, so far as they depend on the soul, are all thoughts" (To Reneri for Pollot, April or May 1638, 2:36; 1991, 97), also *Med*. 2 (7:28 and 9A:22).

> join it to others….[N]ature or habituation (*la nature ou l'habitude*) has diversely joined each movement of the gland to each thought.

This, again, is the hypothesis that is "placed under" the phenomenon of the variability over time and place of human dispositions and character types. Like any hypothetico-deductive model in the modern scientific sense, it is supposed to yield a prediction. What it predicts is a new moral *techne*, namely, behavior modification, announced by the title of article 50: "[T]here is no soul so weak that it cannot, when well guided, acquire an absolute power over its passions"—this is to be the work of artifice (*industrie*) in the mastery of the passions. We examine the plausibility of this deduction in Section 9, below. It suffices for now to say that Descartes's ingenious psychophysical theory is intended to ground the distinction between nature and history, as explained above, and, within our history, the distinction between a dark and confused past and a brighter, clearer future.

It is important to be aware of Descartes's concern with speech, or, more accurately, human language. A simple textual indication of this is that the crucial, culminating section of the general theory of the passions—articles 45–50, on the soul's power over its passions—is bracketed by two articles that mention language: learning to speak a language in article 44, and learning to understand one in article 50. Learning to transmit and receive *meanings* through words exemplifies "habituation" in the variable component of the thought-motion association. The meanings of words are, for Descartes, the most important class of thoughts that can be associated with pineal-gland motions and resulting passions and movements of the human body. "For we see," he says, in *Principles* 4.197 (8A:320; 1985, 1:284), "that spoken or written words excite in our minds all sorts of thoughts and commotions."[29] For Descartes, then, volition, and thus the freedom of the will, can be adequately understood only as seated in the medium of our speech about good and evil, great and small. To be truly free, we must judge rightly what is beneficial and estimable. For this, we must be free of distorting imagination.

[29] "*Nam videmus verba, sive ore prolata, sive tantum scripta, quaslibet in animis nostris cogitationes et commotiones excitare.*" In the 1647 French translation: "*[N]ous voyons que les paroles, soit proferées de la voix, soit écrites sur du papier, luy sont conceuoir toutes les choses qu'elles signifient, et luy donent ensuite diuerses passions*" (*Principles*(F) 4.197, 9B:315–16).

6. Voluntary and Partially Voluntary Imaginations

We have seen Descartes's account of involuntary imaginations in *Man* and article 21 of the *Passions*. But the soul is not only passive, subject to imaginations having only the body as cause, it is now active, able to will, to think and speak, to form images voluntarily, and to move its body. This must be the case if Descartes is to account for his own production of his books. Articles 17–20 of the *Passions* begin Descartes account of the functions of the soul, both active and passive. These four articles are essential for the following analysis and I replicate them here.

Article 17. What the functions of the soul are.

> After having thus taken into consideration all the functions that belong to the body alone, it is easy to understand that there remains nothing in us that we should attribute to our soul but our thoughts, which are principally of two genera—the first, namely, are the actions of the soul; the others are its passions. The ones I call its actions are all of our volitions, because we find by experience that they come directly from our soul and seem to depend only on it (*& semblent ne dependre que d'elle*); as, on the other hand, all the sorts of cases of perception or knowledge to be found in us can generally be called its passions, because it is often not our soul that makes them such as they are, and because it always receives them from things that are represented by them.[30]

Article 18. About Volition.

> Again, our volitions are of two sorts. For the first are actions of the soul which have their terminus in the soul itself, as when we will to love God or in general to apply our thought to some object that is not material. The others are actions which have their terminus in our body, as when, from the mere fact that we have the volition to take a walk, it follows that our legs move and we walk.

[30] Any undergoing, being acted upon, or reception of the soul not initiated by itself is, for Descartes, a passion in the wide or general sense (a. 25), for example, seeing the color of a body; it is not up to us whether it is red or blue. The human emotions—passions in the narrow and proper sense and the subject of this book—are then a subclass of the passions in general. They are defined in a. 27 as "perceptions or sensations or excitations of the soul which are referred to it in particular [for example, I am afraid] and which are caused, maintained, and strengthened by some movement of the [animal] spirits." The *proximate* cause of my fear is thus something of which I have no awareness; it is not the apparently frightful object that is now before me. How the causality of our passions is distributed between internal brain processes, our past experience, and the presently appearing object is a major theme of *The Passions of the Soul*.

Article 19. About Perception.

> Our perceptions are also of two sorts, and the first have the soul as cause, the others the body. Those which have the soul as cause are the perceptions of our volitions, and of all [1] the imaginations or [2] other thoughts that depend on them. For it is certain that we could not will anything unless we perceived by the same means that we willed it. And though with respect to our soul it is an action to will something, it can be said that it is also a passion within it to perceive that it wills. Nevertheless, because this perception and this volition are really only a single thing, the denomination is always made by the nobler one, and so it is not usually named a passion, but an action only.

Article 20. About imaginations and other
thoughts that are formed by the soul.

> When our soul applies itself to imagine something which does not exist—as to represent to itself an enchanted palace or a chimera—and also when it applies itself to attend to something which is solely intelligible and not imaginable—for example to attend to its own nature—the perceptions it has of these things depend principally (*dépendent principalement*) upon the volition that makes it perceive them. That is why they are usually (*on a coustume*) regarded as actions rather than passions.

Article 17 specifies the actions of the soul as "all of our volitions, because we find by experience that they come directly from our soul and seem to depend only on it (*& semblent ne dependre que d'elle*)." What we are to make of the word *seem* is unclear but we can hazard an interpretation of it in view of the next article.

Article 18 subdivides our volitions into those that terminate (produce an effect) in the soul and those that terminate in the body. The latter are exemplified simply by willing "to take a walk" or to pick up a pen. Volitions that terminate in the soul are exemplified by "will[ing] to love God or in general to apply our thought to some object that is not material." Descartes's example points to metaphysics, theology and religion—to our highest and most compelling concerns, theoretical and practical. It reminds every reader of the Bible of the Judeo-Christian first great commandment.[31]

[31] "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord [Deut. 6:4–5]: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:29–30). See also Deut. 4:29, 10:12, 11:13, 13:3, Josh. 22:5, Matt. 22:35–38, Luke 10:27–28.

Now willing to love God may "come directly from our soul" at the moment of willing, but does willing to love God "depend [in general] only on [our soul]" (a. 17)? Consider: A child prays under the instruction of parents and religious. It is only later in life that one could affirm by one's own free decision the faith in which one had been raised, and, in the Christian teaching, that affirmation would not be simply autonomous but depend on God's grace. Perhaps these issues are indicated by Descartes's assertion in article 17 that our volitions (thus willing to love God) *seem* to depend only on the soul.

In any case, article 18 raises the immense question of the nature of God or the first principle of the universe: How should it be understood and taken as an object of our volition—of our will "to love" or "to apply our thought" to it? Could this question ever be adequately answered "as a Physicist"? Descartes makes no attempt to do so in *The Passions of the Soul.* There, in article 83, we learn that God (correctly known) is the principal object of devotion: "As for Devotion, its principal object is without doubt the supreme divinity, to which we cannot fail to be devoted when we know it as we should (*Pour ce qui est de la Devotion, son principal objet est sans doute la souveraine Divinité, à laquelle on ne sçauroit manquer d'estre devot, lors qu'on la connoist comme il faut*)."

As an object of devotion, "we expect only good" (a. 162) from God. It follows that God is not an object of veneration or reverence (as discussed in Section 8, below, on the Decii). Therefore, we need not fear and "try to render [God] propitious" (a. 162). This rather heterodox result (cf. Psalm 111:10) is part of knowing God "as we should." It accords with Descartes's noteworthy account of divine providence in articles 144–46, whereby all that lies beyond our power happens with an absolute, eternally decreed necessity. To believe otherwise is to reduce God to fortune, a chimera that men venerate.[32] What lies within our power are "the things which this same decree has willed to depend on our free will," namely, the scientific search for knowledge of causes (in order to dispel belief in fortune) and the practice of generosity (for the benefit of humanity; aa. 145–46, 156).

Article 19 is about perception. It states that "[o]ur perceptions are of two sorts, and the first have the soul as cause [in the sense of a.

[32] For a fuller account of Descartes's theology, we would have to go to his other writings—to the early correspondence, *The World, the Meditations, Objections and Replies,* the *Principles of Philosophy,* and to his notorious doctrine of the divine creation of the eternal truths. For a collection of relevant texts, see Hassing (2010).

18], the others the body"—the body (rather than objects of sense) because of the mediating role of the nerves and animal spirits between the soul and the world. Descartes takes up first those perceptions that have the soul itself as cause, namely, the perceptions of its own volitions.

First, then, "are the perceptions of our volitions, and of all the [1] imaginations or [2] other thoughts that depend on [our volitions]" (a. 19). For Descartes, we cannot will something without being aware, thus perceiving, at the same time that we are willing it. Most significant here is that Descartes now begins his explicit account of imagination. Of our volition to love, or apply our thought to God, what perceptions do we, or should we, have—imaginations, i.e., mental pictures, or other thoughts, say, of a pure mind, which cannot be pictured? In his letter to Chanut of 1 February 1647 (4:607–10; 1991, 308–10), Descartes states that "nothing that is in God can be imagined….[for] he is a mind, or a thing that thinks," and this suffices to secure God as an object of intellectual love (aa. 91, 141, 147), which the soul could have even without its body (unlike the passion of love).

The title of article 20 repeats this dichotomy (between what is and is not accessible to picture-thinking): it is "[a]bout imaginations and other thoughts that are formed by the soul." In contrast, article 21, as we have seen, is restricted to "imaginations [but not other thoughts] that have only the body as cause." With the exception of love in article 18, the passions are first mentioned by Descartes in article 21, on haphazard imaginings. Although sense objects are the "most common and principal causes" (a. 51) of the passions, Descartes, nevertheless, asserts again, in the title of article 26, "[t]hat the imaginations that depend only on the haphazard movements of the spirits may be passions as truly as the perceptions that depend on the nerves." My point is not to make clear something obscure, namely, why Descartes would *identify* passions with haphazard imaginations; it is rather to note more generally that he is conspicuously concerned with imagination as a problem.[33]

By imagination here is meant not simply the reception and reproduction of interior images derived in the past from the senses—a capacity that is common to many animals—but a distinctively human, creative, *poiêtic* power. Descartes is interested in the question whether the things we thereby imagine are imagined voluntarily, involuntarily (as in a. 21), or in a

[33] "[E]verything presented to the imagination tends to deceive the soul, and to make the reasons for favoring the object of its Passion appear to it much stronger than they are, and those for opposing it much weaker" (*Passions*, a. 211).

manner intermediate between these two. Let us see how this issue emerges from the text.

Article 20: The soul can apply itself to imagine something that does not exist, for example, it can "represent to itself an enchanted palace or a chimera." It can also "attend to something which is solely intelligible and not imaginable—for example…its own nature." The soul can thus will (deliberately, voluntarily) to imagine non-existents and to think existents that are not imaginable (because only intelligible). In these cases, "the perceptions it has of these things depend principally (*dépendent principalement*) upon the volition that makes it perceive them [and so] they are usually (*on a coustume*) regarded as actions rather than passions." The idea here is that the more the soul depends on itself alone and not on anything other in its functions, the more it is truly active or *autonomous*. So how should we interpret the adverbs "principally" and "usually" (or "customarily") here in article 20? Clearly enough, one's ability to think about intelligibles that are not imaginable, like the soul, or the mind, or the self, would depend principally on the one who is thinking, but also partly on others, namely, past teachers of philosophy, so in this case the soul would not be *completely* autonomous. The other case, here in article 20, willing to imagine something that does not exist—the enchanted palace or the chimera—is more subtle. Let us try to use Descartes's example of the chimera, a grotesque, fire-breathing monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail.[34] The chimera appears in Homer, *Iliad* 6.179–83, where it is killed by the heroic Bellerophon, *Iliad* 6.155–203.

In deliberately willing to imagine a chimera, one clearly depends on having seen the three different animals, or pictures of them, whose parts compose the chimera. So the soul would, again, be principally but not completely autonomous in its activity of imagining. But there still remains a significant difference between the following two cases: (1) someone who wills to imagine a chimera, knowing that it does not exist outside of the imagination, and (2) someone who wills to imagine a chimera without that knowledge, thus falsely believing that it exists or has existed. The first imagining could be for the sake of entertainment, for example, for making Harry Potter movies. The second imagining might occur, for example, to instill courage in the soul for a fight against a frightening enemy by recalling the inspiring precedent of Bellerophon in accordance with article 45: "[I]n

[34] As suggested by his 19 June 1639 letter to Desargues (2:554–55), Descartes's other example, the enchanted palace, may refer to his greatest scientific achievement, analytic geometry, the cardinal example of the right, reason-guided use of imagination.

order to excite boldness and displace fear in oneself…one must apply oneself to attend to reasons, objects, or precedents (*les raisons, les objets, ou les exemples*)."[35]

Setting aside the question of how the chimera was originally created, we can say that, in the first case, the imaginer heard about the chimera from others and learned that it is fictitious. In the second case, the imaginer heard about it from others and believed the story.[36] In both these cases of voluntary imagining, we could say that the perception depends principally upon the volition to imagine the chimera, but the presence of the error—the false belief in the real existence of the chimera—in the second imaginer means that his or her volition is less free or autonomous, partaking less of action and more of being acted upon (by the opinions of others), than the volition of the first imaginer. For, from article 49, "there is…a great difference between resolutions [volitions] that proceed from some false opinion and those that rest on knowledge of the truth alone." The second case would then, in view of article 18, be exemplified by one who believes in, and wills to love a chimerical (imaginary, unreal) God. The range of such a person's will, which could exhibit great strength, would exceed that of his or her knowledge. This is Descartes's standard formula for error in *Meditation* 4 (7:58; 1985, 2:40) and *Principles* 1.35 (8A:18; 1985, 1:204). Note that articles 45 and 49 together pose the question, what *are* the "[true] reasons, [best] objects, or [right] precedents" that one should think of in order to inspire in oneself the courage to face death? In other words, *for what ought one to be willing to die and to kill?* Obviously, free government is impossible in a society that cannot answer this question correctly to within reasonable limits, that is, limits that permit internal moderation and external defense.[37]

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[35] In a. 45, Descartes gives three examples of reasons, objects, precedents to which the soul should attend: "that the peril is not great, that there is always more security in defense than in flight, that one will have glory and joy from having conquered, whereas one can expect only regret and shame from having fled." The first two aim at self-preservation, in accordance with the institution or teaching of nature, but with the third, glory, we transcend the biological in favor of goods esteemed more highly than life (a. 94).

[36] Descartes in fact describes this type of error in his early account of the composition of the simple natures in Rule 12: "we are liable to go wrong…when we take as true a story that someone has told us (*errori sumus obnoxii…si quis fabulam nobis narraverit, et rem gestam esse credamus*)" (*Regulae ad directionem ingenii,* 10:423; 1985, 1:47).

[37] For the Homeric hero, and the Decii, immortal glory is the object. For Socrates, was it not to save the life of philosophy that he accepted death? (*Apology*, 37e–38a). Neither Socrates nor Descartes could have imagined great nations dedicated to protecting the rights and freedoms (of inquiry, of conscience, of religion) of their citizens. Nor could they have imagined the colossal tyrannies of the twentieth century. For all who live after World War II, thus in the wake of Hitler and Nazism, Stalin and Communism, it is clear that some wars, although never desirable, are necessary and just; i.e.,

In the extreme, pathological case—beyond all limits—we have the fanatics, vividly described by Descartes in article 190 (11:472, lines 9–16), on self-satisfaction. They

> imagine that they are such great friends of God that…everything their Passion dictates to them is righteous zeal, even though it sometimes dictates to them the greatest crimes man can commit, such as betraying cities, killing Princes, and exterminating whole peoples just because they do not accept their opinions (*d'exterminer des peuples entiers, pour cela seul qu'ils ne suivent pas leurs opinions*).[38]

These are public, political crimes of men possessed by forms of *thumos*, not private transgressions related to the erotic pleasures or financial crimes prompted by the love of money. Their God—pleased by blood—is a Cartesian chimera. For the sake of recollection and a sense of our continuing history, let us consider some examples of what Descartes describes at the conclusion of article 190.

7. Imagination and Volition Deranged: Examples

On May 14, 1610, King Henry IV, a convert to Catholicism (formerly Calvinist) who had issued the Edict of Nantes (1598) granting freedom of worship to French Huguenots, was assassinated by François Ravaillac, a Catholic extremist, because Henry had allied himself with German Protestant princes against Catholic Spain in the wars for the independence of the Netherlands. Henry IV was the founder of La Flèche, the Jesuit college attended by Descartes from 1607 to 1615. The young Descartes was a participant in the ceremony of the interment of the heart of the slain king in the Church of St. Thomas at La Flèche (Gaukroger 1997, 43; Aczel 2005, 32–34). The crime of Ravaillac is a clear example of "killing Princes."

Henry Kissinger (1994, 60–61) contrasts Cardinal Richelieu with Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor from 1619 to 1637, whose coronation in Frankfurt on September 9 Descartes attended (*Disc.* 2, 6:11; 1985, 1:116):

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there is a consensus about what we should be willing to fight for, and against. But before the transformative fact of these regimes (thus in Descartes's time) the right reasons for facing death may not have been so clear.

[38] Jacques Maritain echoes these lines three centuries later in response to atrocities of the Spanish Civil War (Barré 2005, 315): "It is…sacrilege to pretend to enroll God in the passions of a struggle in which the adversary is considered unworthy of any respect or any pity whatsoever."

> Emperor Ferdinand II, Richelieu's foil, had almost certainly never heard of *raison d'état*. Even if he had, he would have rejected it as blasphemy, for he saw his secular mission as carrying out the will of God….Never would he have thought of concluding treaties with the Protestant Swedes or the Muslim Turks, measures which the Cardinal pursued as a matter of course….In 1596, while still an archduke, Ferdinand declared, "I would rather die than grant anyconcessions to the sectarians when it comes to religion"….In modern terms, he was a fanatic. The words of one of the imperial advisors, Caspar Scioppius, highlight the Emperor's beliefs: "Woe to the king who ignores the voice of God beseeching him to kill the heretics. You should not wage war for yourself, but for God."

In a similar vein, from the period of Dutch history just prior to Descartes, we have Ferdinand Alvarez de Toledo, the Duke of Alba (1507–1582), during the Eighty Years' War of Netherlands' independence from Spain, 1568–1648. Henry Kamen (2004, 85, 93) writes that:

> In perhaps the most memorable phrase he ever penned [in 1567, Alba said] "it is better that a kingdom be laid waste and ruined through war for God and for the king, than maintained intact for the devil and his heretical horde"….Alba's regime [in Flanders] had already in three years executed ten times more people than the Inquisition of Spain was to execute in the entire reign of Philip II.

But Kamen adds this note (184, n. 73): "These figures should, of course, be seen in perspective. The indigenous Inquisition of the Netherlands had, before the coming of the Spaniards, executed more people…than the duke of Alba ever did."

These four (Ravaillac, Ferdinand II, Scioppius, Alba) exemplify what Descartes describes in the conclusion of article 190. They, and all who followed them, believed themselves to be part of a far greater whole whose greatness they partook of, and whose mission they subserved—and this, according to the definition of generosity, is not a legitimate reason to esteem oneself.

They illustrate as well the second case, above: voluntarily imagining a chimera erroneously believing in its real existence. For all were motivated by their extreme interpretations (cf. Richelieu) of existing religious traditions—traditions that, in their judgment, demanded restoration and purification in order to save them from heresy and apostasy. They showed great resolution or strength of will. Their convictions about their relationship to God (they are his chief executive officers) and about God's will (they hear

his voice beseeching them to kill) were not wholly involuntary, that is, not simply haphazard imaginings as in article 21. As such, we could say that their imaginings were of the intermediate type: partially voluntary by virtue of their false belief (a. 49) in the real existence of a murderous God.

As a final example, pertinent to our continuing history, consider the following from Osama bin Laden:

> With God's permission we call on everyone who believes in God and wants reward to comply with His will to kill the Americans and seize their money wherever and whenever they find them….Our *umma* [the worldwide community of Muslims] has also been promised victory over the Jews, as our Prophet told us: "The Day of Judgment will not come until the Muslims fight and kill the Jews"….This *hadith* [al-Bukhari, no. 3,593] of the Prophet also contains a warning that the struggle against the enemy will be decided by fighting and killing, not by paralysis of the powers of our *umma* for decades through other means, like the deceptive idea of democracy….it is very important to mobilize our *umma* to defend itself against the Zionist-Crusader alliance. In fact, the Islamic *umma* is the greatest human power, if only the religion were properly established….Peace be upon those who follow true guidance. (Bin Laden 2005, 61, 190–91, 236).

On September 12, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI gave a speech at Regensburg in which he cited a Byzantine source criticizing Islam for its adherence to a God "pleased by blood" (Benedict XVI 2006). On October 13, 2006, 38 Muslim scholars and clerics replied (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute 2006) in a letter remarkable for its gracious and moderate tone. They rejected the God pleased by blood and spoke of the authoritative and literate tradition of Islam. On October 13, 2007, 138 Muslim scholars and clerics issued an open letter (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute 2007) to the Christian churches of the world affirming the centrality of the Two Great Commandments—to love God and to love one's neighbor—for both religions. In a recent article, titled "How Good a Christian Was Descartes?," Leszek Kołakowski (2000) writes that "Descartes has never fallen into oblivion…and controversies never stop." But there should be no controversy about this, that Descartes, the Pope, and the Muslim clerics and scholars would all agree that the God of today's violent jihadis and of the fanatics of Descartes's time is fictitious.[39]

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[39] Given their agreement that a God who wills that we kill each other over differing interpretations of God's will is a chimera, what might their disagreements be, that is, do Descartes, Christianity and Islam have the same or different teachings concerning how God wills, specifically, on the relation of divine will to divine intellect? That inquiry goes beyond the range of the present essay; see note 32, above.

Let us sum up: By means of articles 17–21, Descartes has pointed out a human poetic faculty, an ability to produce images in pictures and words that give rise to passions, but which faculty cannot, of and by itself, apprehend whether what is imagined really exists or not. Passionate images can leave persistent brain impressions, such that the representation of the image would reexcite the passion and vice versa (the model for such pair correlations is described in Section 9, below). This, according to Descartes, is part of "the whole nature of man," the account of which is undergirded by his distinctive psychophysical theory. It is important, however, to emphasize what the psychophysics does not explain: it does not explain either the origins or the particular contents—the meanings in words and pictures—of the passionate images whereby human beings act and are acted upon.[40] There is thus more to our nature than what can be ascertained "as a Physicist." This must indeed be the case because Descartes's own positive teaching—on generosity (aa. 152–59)—is not derived from or reducible to his psychophysics. In general, the most essentially human things (speech and moral self-consciousness, speech about the noble, just, holy, and the spirited passions thereby engaged) are compatible with, but not derivable from or explained by the psychophysical model.

Descartes's standpoint is, therefore, that his (aspirationally) scientific account of the causes of our passions and imaginations, together with his prescientific proclamation of the master virtue of generosity, can attenuate the otherwise destructive force of those imaginations and volitions that cause us to get ourselves and others killed "without knowledge of the truth" (a. 49), or at least without sufficient resolution to avoid error.

There are, however, two significant objections (listed in my Introduction, above) to my thesis on generosity, individualism, and the attenuation of *thumos*, which I now address.

8. Individualism as Athumetization: Objections and Replies

Let me begin by restating and sharpening my claim, in the face of which Descartes's reference to the devoted self-sacrifice of the Decii

[40] As the *Discourse on the Method* makes clear, the question of the origins of foundational opinions (Kennington 2004, 200) is to be superseded by the new dispensation: "regarding the opinions to which I had hitherto given credence, I thought that I could not do better than to get rid of them, all at once, in order to replace them afterwards with better ones, or with the same ones once I had adjusted them to the standard of [my own autonomous] reason," not the reason of my parents, friends, teachers, books, traditions (*Disc.* 2, 6:13–14; 1985, 1:117).

(aa. 83, 173), and his letters to Elizabeth of 15 September 1645 and to Chanut of 1 February 1647 on the subordination of the individual to the community appear to be strong counterevidence (4:293–95 and 607–13; 1991, 266–67 and 308–11).

The most serious disorders of human life come not from our biological nature but from the distinctive passions of esteem and contempt, for one's own self and for other objects (think of sectarian conflict, then and now). These passions, although variable in time and place by virtue of the different opinions from which they arise are, for Descartes, not simply by chance and beyond our control. They are humanly alterable, that is, they can be modified and corrected to a degree by Cartesian education, at the heart of which is the revelation of Descartes's own opinion about the one single thing in any human being that is truly worthy of esteem, namely, the right use of what is truly one's own, the only thing "for which we could rightly be praised or blamed"—one's own free will:

> And because one of the principal parts of Wisdom is to know in what manner and for what cause anyone should esteem or scorn himself, I shall attempt to give my opinion about it here. I observe but a single thing in us that could give us just cause to esteem ourselves, namely the use of our free will and the dominion we have over our volitions. (Article 152)

Thus, in the master virtue and passion of generosity, what is truly one's own is identified as the sole source of legitimate self-esteem.

The account of generosity as seated in the individual involves the denial that one's being a part of a larger whole can be a legitimate reason for esteeming oneself: "whatever may be the cause for which we esteem ourselves, if it is anything other than the volition we feel within ourselves always to make good use of our free will…[then] it always produces a most blameworthy Pride" (a. 158; recall a. 203 on anger). Furthermore, "believing we cannot survive by ourselves" is a form of weakness and contributes to servility (a. 159). Indeed, for the generous, "there is nothing whose acquisition does not depend on them which they think is worth enough to deserve being greatly wished for" (a. 156). It is this strong individualism—an individualism of self-sufficiency, not of liberal-capitalist dependency on the market and division of labor—that I believe is essentially related to Descartes's project of athumetization in *The Passions of the Soul.* Descartes's teaching is that it is unwise for people to imagine themselves to be parts of greater wholes whose greatness they partake of, and whose mission they subserve, and thereby to

scorn or to fear and hate those whom they imagine to be opposed and harmful to that whole and its mission. In the context of the religious wars then, and religious and tribal violence now, we can see the sense of this and can thus appreciate a serious reason for the rise of liberal individualism in the West (even if some of us think it has gone too far). Nevertheless, the example of the Decii and the letters to Elizabeth and Chanut seem to contradict my claim that, for Descartes, it is in general unwise for people to imagine themselves to be parts of greater wholes. I consider each in turn, first, the Decii, then the two letters.

Devotion and the Decii. Article 83 is titled, "About the difference between simple Affection, Friendship, and Devotion." Devotion is defined as the form of love in which the lover esteems the beloved more highly than himself. Descartes says that,

> in Devotion we so prefer the thing loved to ourselves that we are not afraid to die to preserve it. We have often seen examples of this in those who have exposed themselves to certain death in defense of their Prince or their city, and sometimes even on behalf of private people to whom they were devoted.

The vivid example of the ceremonial acts of devotion by the Roman military commanders Publius Decius Mus (at Veseris in 340 BC), his son (at Sentinum in 295), and grandson (at Asculum in 279) is cited in article 173:

> [W]hen the Decii threw themselves into the midst of the enemy and flew to certain death….their end was to enliven their soldiers by their example and cause them to win the victory, of which they had Hope; perhaps their end was also to have glory after their death, of which they were sure.

The actions of the Decii at Veseris and Sentinum are described by Titus Livy, in Books 8 and 10 of the *Histories* (Livy 1982).[41]

According to Livy (8.6.8–8.10.8; 1982, 164–71), shortly before the battle at Veseris,

> both consuls [Manlius and Decius], it is said, were visited [in a dream] by the same apparition…who told them that the general on one side

[41] The book of Livy covering Asculum is lost. There can be little doubt that Descartes read Livy's accounts of the Decii at Veseris and Sentinum in Books 8 and 10. In his letter to Elizabeth of October or November 1646 (4:528–32; 1991, 296–98), which continues their discussion of Machiavelli's *Prince*, Descartes writes that "I have recently read his discourse on Livy [*Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*] and found nothing bad in it" (4:531; 1991, 297). The Decii are cited by Machiavelli in *Discourses*, 2.16.1, 3.1.3, 3.39.2, 3.45 (Machiavelli 1996, 160, 211, 298–99).

> and the army on the other were due as an offering to the gods of the Underworld and Mother Earth; if either army's general should devote to death the enemy's legions and himself in addition to them, victory would fall to the people on his side. [Entrails and soothsayers corroborate the vision.] They then agreed together that on whichever flank the Roman army started to give way, the consul in command there should sacrifice himself on behalf of the nation and citizens of Rome.

The battle is joined and after some time, the Roman left wing commanded by Decius begins to buckle. After supplications and prayers to the gods, he devotes himself and rides into the midst of the enemy, "a sight to admire for both armies, almost superhuman in its nobility, as if sent from heaven to expiate all anger of the gods and deflect disaster from his own people to the Latins." The Latins are terrified, the Romans "freed from religious uncertainty." In the meantime, Manlius skillfully launches a counterattack by fresh troops. He reassures them that they face enemy troops who are tired, exhorts them in the name of their country, their family, and their consul, "who lies dead to bring you victory." The Latins are routed, three quarters of them are killed. Livy:

> But of all the citizens and allies, the consuls won the greatest glory in that war. One of them [Decius] drew all the threats and dangers from the gods above and below on to himself alone, while the other [Manlius] displayed such courage and wise tactics on the field that it is readily agreed amongst Romans and Latins alike who have handed down to posterity a record of this battle that which ever side had been led by Titus Manlius would undoubtedly have been victorious. (1982, 169–71)

Both Manlius and Decius won glory, but Manlius won the battle; i.e., the act of devotion by Decius was not the real cause of the victory.[42]

Livy's description of the battle of Sentinum (10.28.1–10.29.17; 1982, 327–31) makes the same point: the act of devotion was not the essential cause of the Roman victory and, furthermore, there was needless loss of life due to the impatience and spiritedness of Decius, Jr.:

> But although victory was still open to both sides and Fortune had not yet decided which way to tip the balance, the fighting was completely

[42] In fact, it was not even necessary—Decius could have devoted someone else: "Here I think it should be said that when a consul, dictator or praetor devotes the legions of his enemy he not need necessarily devote himself, but may choose any citizen he likes from an enlisted Roman legion" (8.10.11; 1982, 171–72). Whom should he devote? The soothsayer who gave him the bad report ("the head of the liver was cut where it had special reference to his family"; 8.9.1; 1982, 169); see Livy, 10.40–41 (1982, 345–48), and Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 1.14.1–2 (1996, 41–42), on the chicken-men.

> different on the right and left wings. The Romans with Fabius stayed on the defensive instead of pressing the attack....Fabius was satisfied that both Samnites and Gauls were fierce fighters at the start of an attack but only needed to be withstood, for if the struggle dragged on [they would soon weaken]. He was therefore keeping his men fresh, with vigor unimpaired as far as he could, until the time came when the enemy usually began to fail. But Decius was more impatient, being young and high-spirited (*ferocior Decius et aetate et vigore animi*; 10.28.6), and let loose all the resources he had at the first encounter.... they would win double glory, he said, if victory came first to the left wing and the cavalry.

Decius ends up with a fiasco and has to perform the act of devotion like his father. Then,

> [w]ith these imprecations upon himself and the enemy he galloped his horse into the Gallic lines...to meet his death....[T]he pontiff Livius... cried out that the Romans had won the day....The Gauls and Samnites now belonged to Mother Earth and the gods of the Underworld; Decius was carrying off the army he had devoted...and on the enemy's side all was madness and terror. Then as the Romans were restoring the battle, up came Lucius Cornelius Scipio and Gaius Marcius, sent by order of Quintus Fabius to support his colleague, with reserves taken from the rearmost line....25,000 of the enemy were killed on that day and 8000 taken prisoner. Nor was it a bloodless victory; for the casualties in the army of Publius Decius amounted to 7000, while Fabius lost 1700. (Livy 1982, 327–31)

Had Decius not given in to his desire for glory ("they would win double glory"), had he remained cool and shown the tactical skill of Fabius, he would not have been responsible for the loss of over three times the number suffered on Fabius' side.

Descartes does not endorse what went on at Veseris and Sentinum. Specifically, he does not endorse either zeal for military glory or the use of religion as an instrument of war. Regarding the former, Descartes's view can be discerned in the amusing conclusion of article 211: "beg for mercy."[43] Regarding the latter, Descartes's distinction between devotion and veneration pertains.

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[43] The passage is addressed to "those who are accustomed to reflecting on their actions" and what they can do in the face of the distorting passions of fear or anger, "[a]s...when one is unexpectedly attacked by some enemy." Descartes advises that, if "they feel both the Desire for vengeance and anger inciting them to rashly pursue those attacking them, recall that it is imprudence to lose oneself when one can save oneself without dishonor, and that if the contest is very unequal, it is better to make an honorable retreat or beg for mercy than to expose oneself senselessly to certain death" (11:487–88; 1989, 134).

What the soldiers feel for their gods in Livy's account is called *veneration* by Descartes (aa. 55, 162), not devotion. It is the passion we have for objects that we highly esteem and believe to be "capable of doing us good or evil," but we are uncertain "which of the two they will do," i.e., we do not know what to expect. Before such an object, we therefore "submit… with a certain apprehension, in order to try to render it propitious" (a. 162). The highest or most extreme form of propitiation is the killing of a sacrificial human victim. The difference between veneration (what Livy describes as devotion) and true devotion—for Descartes, the highest form of love (a. 83)—is that, in the latter, "we expect only good" from the object that we love and greatly esteem: "For we have Love and Devotion, rather than a simple Veneration, for those from which we expect only good" (a. 162). Descartes thus revises the meaning of religious devotion (as discussed in Section 6, above) by purging it of uncertainty, apprehension, and propitiation.

The letters to Elizabeth and Chanut. Descartes's individualism does not mean that we should isolate ourselves from, or neglect our obligations to family, friends and community. In the letters to his friends Elizabeth and Chanut, Descartes makes clear that we are parts of certain larger wholes for the defense of which we should be willing to risk our lives if necessary:

> [W]hen a person risks death because he believes it to be his duty, or when he suffers some other evil to bring good to others, then he acts in virtue of the consideration that he owes more to the community of which he is a part than to himself as an individual (*qu'a soy mesme en son particulier*). (To Elizabeth, 4:294)

But a careful reading of these letters accords with what we could call the de-politicization and (a barbarism) *de-religionization* of *thumos*—or, equivalently, with the athumetization of religion and politics. In the following, I treat the two letters together, citing only the page numbers in Descartes 1996, vol. 4. Both contain instructions regarding (1) our relation to God and (2) our relations to other people.

Regarding our relation to God: Both letters make a distinction between "loving divinity" ("a very great error") and "loving God" (608), for which we must know God as we should (294), which in turn requires that we form an idea of the immensity of the created universe and, by comparison, our own minuteness (292, 609–10). The great error consists in wanting to take God's place (609), i.e., wishing "to belong to God's council and assist him in the government of the world," which is "absurdly presumptuous" and "will

bring us countless vain anxieties and troubles" (292). The root of the error is the belief that we are the peak of creation (292, 608). There is obviously no basis for sacrificing one's life out of devotion (a. 83) to God because God is indestructible; our death will not save God's life. Both letters enjoin absolute submission to God's will (294, 609) but this can only mean focusing on "the things that [God] has willed to depend on our free will" (a. 146), acquiring generosity, and seeking the knowledge of causes in order to dispel belief in fortune (a. 145).

Regarding our relations to others: In practice, "none of us could subsist alone…each one of us is…a part of the earth, the state, the society and the family to which we belong by our domicile, our oath of allegiance and our birth," and "the interests of the whole, of which each of us is a part, must always be preferred to those of our own particular person—with measure, of course, and discretion" (to Elizabeth, 293), which includes the rule that "all our passions represent to us the goods to whose pursuit they impel us as being much greater that they really are," so beware of distorting imagination (a. 211).

We can order ourselves in relation to the whole in a variety of ways. Descartes describes a hierarchy of cases, from the selfish subordination of "everything in relation to [one]self" to the complete subordination of oneself to the community, i.e., someone who "would even be willing to lose his soul (*voudroit perdre son ame*) to save others" (293). This is striking and puzzling from any Christian perspective (Matt. 16:26). Is Descartes accusing Christians of not being truly dedicated to others because of their ultimate self-concern? In the wars of religion, did not Christians in fact do the opposite of what Descartes describes: kill others (Christians) in order—as they imagined it—to save their own soul? Or is he saying that no one is absolutely selfless, not even the Christian, so self-concern must be given its due as fundamental to our being? Perhaps both are implied. At any rate, "one must… examine minutely all the customs [and opinions] of one's place of abode to see how far they should be followed," thereby to avoid irresolution (295).

The letter to Chanut also includes a striking passage, on devotion to one's "prince or [one's] country," i.e., it is political:

> [I]f his love is perfect he should regard himself as only a tiny part of the whole which he and they constitute. He should be no more afraid to go to certain death for their service than one is afraid to draw a little blood from one's arm to improve the health of the rest of the body. Every day we see examples of this love, even in persons of low

> condition, who give their lives cheerfully for the good of their country or for the defense of some great person they are fond of. (612)

Keohane (1980, 191, n. 18) provides evidence that this is bitter irony or Machiavellian black humor. Descartes's "persons of low condition" are without education, have nothing to gain and nothing to lose; as described, they are hapless cannon fodder. But most striking is the juxtaposition of this passage with the sentence that follows, which is religious: "From all this it is obvious that our love for God should be, *beyond comparison*, the greatest and most perfect of all our loves" (613; my emphasis). Should we die cheerfully for prince or country, objects incomparably less lovable than God, for whom (rightly known) it makes no sense to die? The implication is that if rulers understood things this way (as Elizabeth and Queen Christina of Sweden, revered by Chanut, no doubt did) fewer people would be dying absurdly for a "very great error." This is what I mean by the athumetization of religion and politics; it would indeed be useful, and if Descartes stands for anything, it is certainty (as much of it as possible) for the sake of utility: "I had an extreme desire…[to] acquire a clear and assured knowledge of all that is useful for life" (*Disc.* 1, 6:4; 1985, 1:113).

Let us then turn to a final piece of Cartesian psychophysics, to his quaint model of the connection or pairing—accidental but inertially persistent—of a passion with a perception, an imagination, or an opinion. It is supposed to shed new light on the heretofore unrecognized causes of certain of our passions, and thereby open new possibilities for the amelioration of their disorders, i.e., it is supposed to be useful.

9. Making New Connections: A Claim for Mastery of the Passions

Article 50 of *The Passions of the Soul*, which concludes Descartes's general theory of the passions, is provocatively titled, "That there is no soul so weak that it cannot, when well guided, acquire an absolute power over its passions." How is this possible? Is the scientific apparatus supposed to show its possibility, and, if so, does it succeed? I argue here that (1) the scientific apparatus *is* supposed to reveal this remarkable possibility but (2) it does not succeed.

Figure 30 of the *Treatise on Man* shows a linen cloth pierced by an array of needles:

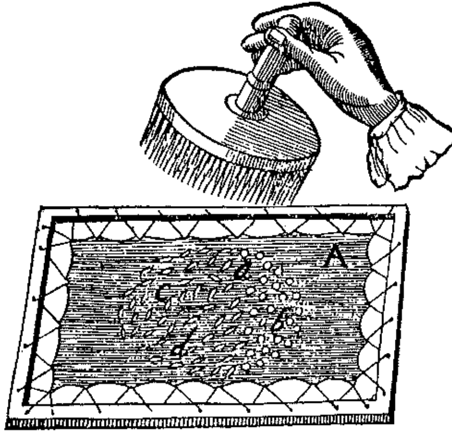

Figure 30

This quaint Cartesian model is supposed to represent concomitance in the origin of two or more impressions in the brain cavity (which is supposed to be like the cloth) in which the pineal gland is seated. Once made, the impressions (holes in the cloth) then persist in such a way that "if one were merely to reopen some, like a and b, that fact alone could cause others like c and d to reopen at the very same time" (11:178; 2003, 90). In Descartes's psychophysics, the model works as follows: Each of the concomitant impressions in the surface of the brain cavity channels animal-spirit flows such that the pineal gland is moved in a compound way that causes the soul (via the thought-motion association) to have a set of passions and perceptions, or passions and imaginations, or (again, a. 149) passions and opinions that are connected to each other such that the excitation of one causes the excitation of the other(s).[44]

Descartes's immediate aim here in *Man* is to account physiologically for associative memory in humans and animals, or "how the recollection of one thing can be excited by that of another" (11:178; 2003, 89–90). Accordingly, the array of needles in Fig. 30 is rigid so that the distances and correlations between the holes in the cloth are not accidental. Thus, for example, we imagine a whole face whenever we see any of its parts. The set of physical imprints on the brain associated with such past perceptual experiences accounts for the persistent connections in the way we now

[44] An important assumption is well noted by Voss (Descartes 1989, 110, n. 14): "On what grounds should it be expected that the *mechanical* combination [the vector sum] of the movements of spirits that [via the pineal gland] separately produce [a pair of thoughts, e.g.,] joy and desire will yield a passion that is" a combination of joy and desire? Descartes assumes without justification that his thought-motion association is, in mathematical language, linear.

remember and imagine wholes whose parts are by nature connected. But the concomitant brain impressions need not be connected or correlated in this way (by nature, essentially). Thus, as discussed above, we also imagine certain wholes whose parts are in reality not connected at all, for example, chimeras.

Finally, the two or more concomitant brain impressions may represent objects that are really connected (unlike the chimera) but only accidentally (unlike the normal human face). Descartes provides an example of this in his letter to Chanut of 6 June 1647, in which he describes a quirky episode from his own past, namely, his youthful affection for girls with slightly crossed eyes—an instance of an emotion (love) being excited by the perception of something accidental to its object (slightly crossed eyes):

> [T]he impression made by sight in my brain when I looked at her crossed eyes became so closely connected to the simultaneous [brain] impression that aroused in me the passion of love that *for a long time afterwards* when I saw persons with slightly crossed eyes I felt a special inclination to love them more than others simply because they had that defect. (5:57; 1991, 322; emphasis mine)

Here, brain-impression concomitance and thought-motion association link our perceptions and passions in ways that are irrational, leading to the excitation of passions that we may not wish to have, or, by an easy extension of the theory, ought not to have, for example, hatred (religious, ideological, racial, ethnic), but which we cannot control without adequate knowledge (heretofore lacking) of their causes. Descartes thus goes on to say that, having understood "the reason for [his] love;…as soon as [he] reflected on it and recognized that it was a defect, [he] was no longer affected by it" (5:57; 1991, 322). Through scientific self-knowledge, Descartes disconnected the passion of love in him from the perception of slightly crossed eyes.

Despite Descartes's fanciful physics (the needles and cloth model, whose behavior is not warranted by his laws of nature), his deeper point is that the object of our passion—what presently appears before us in sense perception—may not be the essential (*per se*) cause of the passion. Rather, it may be only an accidental cause, the real cause being some past but inertially persistent connections in the brain of which we have no present awareness.

Can the new awareness that this sort of "mechanism" might underlie the genesis of certain human psychological characteristics—individual or collective—make it possible to change them? More pointedly, on what is the radical claim for human empowerment announced by the title

of article 50 based? It is based on the two peculiar examples given there, foul food and canine training. First, the foul-food effect:

> It is also useful to know that although the movements—both of the gland and of the spirits and the brain—which represent certain objects to the soul are naturally joined with those which excite certain passions in it, they can nevertheless by habituation (*par habitude*) be separated from them and joined with other quite different ones; and even that this disposition (*habitude*) can be acquired by a single action and does not require long practice. Thus when someone unexpectedly comes upon something very foul in food he is eating with relish, the surprise of this encounter can so change the disposition (*disposition*) of the brain that he will no longer be able to see any such food afterwards without abhorrence, [a. 89], whereas previously he used to eat it with pleasure.

Here, a perception and a passion are connected via two associated and naturally, that is, originally concomitant motions of the pineal gland. But now by changing one member of the pair of pineal-gland movements (by forming a new impression in the brain with resulting new animal-spirit flow), the perception can be connected to a new and "quite different" passion. Thus a new perception-passion pair in the soul can be artificed by "rewiring" the brain. But let us take a closer look.

The passion of abhorrence is instituted by nature "to represent to the soul a sudden and unexpected death" (a. 89). What has in fact happened in Descartes's example is that one natural perception-passion pair (sweets, say, and delight) has been replaced by another natural and much stronger one (sudden death and abhorrence). Is it, therefore, accurate of Descartes to call the foul-food experience *habituation*, that is, something subject to human control for the sake of regulating the passions, even acquiring "an absolute power over [them]"? It is moreover noteworthy that the change exemplified here in the soul of the eater is a jump from one extreme to the other (from ardent desire to abhorrence). Could we somehow modify Descartes's example in a way that would just get the desire for sweets into the old-fashioned reasonable mean so that there would be a technique for producing the virtue of moderation with respect to pastry? The answer to these questions is, fairly clearly, no. One example remains (canine training), but we can at this point conclude that article 50 falls far short of the bold intention proclaimed by its title. We conclude as well that, in this culminating section of Part I of the *Passions*, the scientific apparatus is falling away. Let us review the training of setters, and then draw our conclusions concerning Descartes "as a Physicist" and "the whole nature of man."

The human brain alterations of the foul-food effect are analogous to those occurring in certain non-human animals through training. "[W]hen a dog sees a partridge it is naturally inclined to run toward it, and when it hears a gun fired the noise naturally incites it to run away." Here, the dog's perception of the bird is originally conjoined with the movements of nerves, muscles, and legs for chasing it, and the dog's perception of the gunshot is conjoined with the movement of fleeing. Hence, we have, not a perception-passion pair, but a perception-motion pair in the dog that is about to be modified. There can only be an analogy between human beings and non-human animals because the latter "have no reason and perhaps no thought [thus perhaps no passions] either." Therefore, even if they do have some passions, they lack the speech- or opinion-based ones that we humans possess.

Now setters can be trained for hunting. This effectively disconnects the motion of chasing from the perception of the partridge, and the motion of fleeing from the perception of the gunshot, and reconnects the perception of the partridge with the nerve and muscle movements for stopping, and the perception of the subsequent gunshot with those required for running up to the fallen bird. And so Descartes concludes that,

> since with a little skill one can change the movements of the brain in animals bereft of reason, it is plain that one can do it even better in men, and that even those who have the weakest souls could acquire a quite absolute dominion over all their passions if one employed enough skill in training and guiding them. (Article 50)

We know, however, as Descartes must, that this claim is much exaggerated because the problem is much more difficult for us humans. Animals are mechanized by nature for energetic self-preservation. The relevant movements of their bodies cannot be opposed by passions or volitions aimed at goods esteemed more highly than life; lacking speech, they cannot have opinions about what is estimable and contemptible.

But perhaps we can forgive Descartes his exaggeration in view of his motivational purpose, which is, "to give everyone the courage to study the regulation of his passions." This might even be considered a new object of *thumos*, so that Descartes would intend not simply the attenuation of *thumos*, as I claimed earlier, but a redirection of it to a new goal: the mastery of the passions in the service of generosity. *Thumos* would then become zeal in the struggle to remove all obstacles to one's own self-sufficient autonomy.

Conclusion

Two questions guide this essay: First, what is "the whole nature of man" according to Descartes? Second, what is the real role of his natural philosophy in the fulfillment of his stated purpose, "to explain the Passions…only as a Physicist"? I have moreover taken a narrowing and uncommonly political-philosophic point of view, focusing on *thumos* in relation to imagination and volition. It is a post-9/11 perspective.

Descartes's final dualism constitutes "the whole nature of man." This is the anthropological dualism of our fixed and universal, biological nature, on the one hand, and our variable and particular, historical being, on the other. The latter is articulated especially through our opinions about the great and the small, the estimable and contemptible, in view of which we, unlike any other living species, voluntarily face death. But, for Descartes, the human power of imagination has too often been problematically implicated in volition; human beings have too often suffered and sacrificed—spiritedness has rushed off to war (*Nic. Ethics* 1149a34)—in the service of chimeras (aa. 18–20), beings that have no existence outside of the imagination and the realm of its depicted images. The role of the psychophysics is to support the critique of imagination by providing a new account of the causes of our "thoughts." This account removes the traditional power-act-object doctrine of soul and its fundamentally harmonious relation to the world in favor of various mechanisms of chance and necessity in the brain, thereby showing how we have misjudged the causes of our own passions, perceptions, and imaginations, and thus failed to use our free will well.

In the Aristotelian-Thomistic teaching, "all actions which proceed from a power are caused by that power in conformity with the nature of its object.…[such that] the soul has, through its appetitive power, an order to things as they are in themselves" (Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 1, a. 1, resp., and q. 22, a. 2, resp.; 1981, 2:583 and 692).[45] Descartes would say, in fundamental contrast, that the soul has through its "thoughts" an order to certain processes in

[45] The Aristotelian-Thomistic teaching contrasts the cognitive and appetitive powers according to the manner in which the object of each is related to the soul. The object of the cognitive power, the true, is in the soul without matter; the object of the appetitive power, the good, belongs to the being of the thing as it is in itself (a composite of form and matter). Thus the fire in my knowledge does not burn; I can neither warm myself nor burn myself by that fire. It is the fire in the fireplace that is hot in itself, can warm me, and to which I draw near (but not too near). Will or rational appetite is, on this account, an inclination *following upon* knowledge. More generally, as Dewan writes (1980, 586) "it is the property of diverse powers that (1) one have in oneself what is outside, and (2) that one tend towards the outside thing."

the brain of which it has no direct awareness, yet which strongly mediate its relation to the world. Between the soul, sequestered in a tiny part of the brain, and the world a large amount of bodily apparatus intervenes whose workings we have heretofore failed to understand due to our ignorance of the laws of nature and our belief in the erroneous Aristotelian doctrine of soul. The most important of the laws of nature is that of the inertial (purposeless) persistence of the states of matter and thus the matter of the brain, with corresponding effects in the soul that we are ill-equipped to interpret without the light of science. Hence the confusion and darkness of our past, and the hopeful benefactions of Cartesian science for the future.[46] Human history not only transcends biological nature, it is itself divided into a dark past and a bright future by the moment of reason's discovery of its own mission: From human action that has been at best partially voluntary or *heteronomous*—by virtue of our being acted upon by opinions or meanings arising from elsewhere—we progress to genuinely *autonomous* volition grounded in the resolution to avoid error to the greatest extent possible. And so the heretofore "curved and uneven" course of history—more by "chance rather than the will of certain men using reason" (6:11–12; 1985, 1:116)—is henceforth to be straightened and rationalized. This is the intention of early modern philosophy. It is (was) a grand conception, whereby philosophy ceases to be contemplative and becomes useful, that is, it assumes responsibility for the care of humanity; the classical rank ordering of theory over practice is inverted. The Cartesian version of this large project has the three parts described in the French Preface of the *Principles*: mechanics, medicine and, as completed in *The Passions of the Soul*, morals, "the ultimate level of wisdom" (9B:14; 1985, 1:186).

The regulation of the emotions under the aegis of generosity forms a core element of the ultimate level of wisdom. Generosity makes each of us be (or aspire to be) self-sufficient, thus tolerant, and beneficent: "it renders us like God in a way" (a. 152). As his own language in articles 152–53 makes clear, the doctrine of generosity is not, and is not supposed to be grounded in the new psychophysics; it is the product of Descartes's own reading of "the human experience of the human" (Kennington 2004, 186). Same for the doctrine of God and providence adumbrated in articles 83, 144–46, and 162. Much is merely asserted by Descartes. That which *is* supposed to be grounded in the psychophysics—the prominent claim in article 50 for empowerment over the passions—is not successfully demonstrated.

[46] See the First Letter of the Preface to *The Passions of the Soul* (11:301–22; 1989, 1–15) for a lapidary expression of Enlightenment optimism.

The Passions of the Soul ends with the following sentence: "But Wisdom is useful here above all [in the face of the pains the passions can cause]: it teaches us to render ourselves such masters of them, and to manage them with such ingenuity, that the evils they cause can be easily borne, and we even derive Joy from them all" (a. 212). Wisdom is to be useful, like medicine. It is difficult not to think of Aristotle: "[wisdom produces happiness] not in the way that the medical art produces health, but in the way that health produces health" (*Nic. Ethics* 1144a6–7; 2002, 115). For Aristotle, wisdom is the formal cause of happiness; for Descartes it is the efficient cause of mastery.

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Libertarianism Ancient and Modern: Reflections on the Strauss-Rothbard Debate

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"It is not the business of the law... to make anyone good or reverent or moral or clean or upright." – Murray N. Rothbard (2006, 127).

"I am afraid that we shall have to make a very great effort in order to find a solid basis for liberalism" – Leo Strauss (1989, 29).

Introduction

In an obvious echo of the title of one of Leo Strauss's major books, I have taken the liberty of entitling this article "Libertarianism Ancient and Modern." I do so even though it is almost axiomatic that there was no libertarianism in the ancient world in any sense of the contemporary ideological definition of the word. But perhaps the title might be allowed to stand on the grounds that Strauss was very much focused on the *polis* and the small self-governing community as the scene where human nature itself could find its fullest development. The relevant point here is that the classic form of this kind of community made no distinction between civil society and the state such as we have become used to in modern times. Consequently the classical *polis* frequently saw such activities as education, banking, policing, legal prosecutions and even tax collection placed in private hands. In short, we as moderns might be shocked and surprised at the extent of "libertarianism" in certain areas of life in an ancient political system under which virtue was very much a public concern and in which there was no such thing as church-state separation or the constitutional adumbration of the citizen's indefeasible private rights. Thus it seems a reasonable license to claim that to

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the extent Strauss directed our gaze to the phenomenon of the classical *polis* he might in some sense be taken as suggesting we take note of the related phenomenon of classical libertarianism, even as he frequently reminds us of the strengths of classical social science with its emphasis on common sense and the greatness of classical political philosophy with its focus on virtue and human excellence.

In any case we may begin by noting that, in the years since the great triumph of modern natural right or classical liberalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a broad spectrum of those who could be described as liberals have frequently identified the cause of the good society with the protection of the individual from all claims on his or her freedom of thought and action that could not be justified in terms of the absolute necessities involved in maintaining a minimal social order. One distinguished and outspoken defender of the original rights based liberal political vision is Murray N. Rothbard (1926–1995). As a voice of modern natural right, Rothbard's critical attitude to the prevailing liberal democratic *status quo* is matched only by his conviction that the standard for criticism is the ontological primacy of the individual person over all other considerations when it comes to all questions of law and policy.

In contrast to Rothbard, Leo Strauss spent his career very much maintaining that the ultimate solution to the problems generated by modern natural right cannot be generated from within the tradition of modern natural right itself. From Strauss's point of view Rothbard's analyses and criticisms of prevailing laws and policies must of necessity involve an excessive confidence that the further administration of the modern prescription which liberal democracy has been imbibing over many years will in due course lead it back to full health. Strauss's diagnosis on the other hand is such as leads him to recommend a "back to the future" prescription of classical natural right for liberal democracy's ills, which very medicine had been eschewed in the earlier stages of the patient's development. In Strauss's estimation this particular prescription bids fair to moderate and perhaps overcome the debilities caused by too great a dependence on the newer medicines developed and prescribed in the nineteenth and subsequent centuries. In a word, Strauss's professional disagreement with Rothbard consists in the fact that while the latter would prescribe to the liberal democratic patient a strong potion constituted by a marriage of classical liberalism and traditional natural law allegedly made possible by Locke, Strauss is more confident that a course of treatment involving the classical natural right teachings of Plato

and Aristotle and their case for the best regime would be the most salubrious and beneficial tonic.

Although Drs. Strauss and Rothbard never directly debated each other on the matter of their differing professional diagnoses of the crisis of liberal democracy, a dialogue between the two can now be reasonably reconstructed. This is so as a result of the recent publication of the private book reviews produced by Rothbard during the 1950's and early 1960's in his capacity as a research analyst for the Volcker Fund. Towards the end of his tenure in this position Rothbard penned reviews of Strauss's *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (1958), *What Is Political Philosophy?* (1959), "Relativism" (1961) and *On Tyranny* (1963) (Rothbard 2009, 92–103, 113–15). The availability of these reviews now makes it possible to place the thought of Rothbard into a sharpened comparative perspective with that of Strauss. In so doing we are examining two figures who are frequently identified, whether rightly or wrongly, as the intellectual godfathers of contemporary libertarianism and neoconservatism respectively.

Relativism and Absolutism

Rothbard describes himself as an "absolutist" and an absolutist "believes that man's mind, employing reason…is capable of discovering and knowing truth: including the truth about reality, and the truth about what is best for man and best for himself as an individual." By contrast the relativist "denies that man's reason is capable of knowing truth, and does so by claiming that rather than being absolute, truth is relative to something else." Rothbard says that "Philosophically, I believe that libertarianism—and the wider creed of sound individualism of which libertarianism is a part—must rest on absolutism and deny relativism" (Rothbard 2009, 103; Doherty 2009).

Within the confines of his own school Rothbard rejects the views of Ludwig von Mises, who says in no uncertain terms that "it is vain to pass judgment on other people's aims and volitions" and that "No man is qualified to declare what would make another man happier or less discontented (Kristol 1995, 95; Mises 1998, 18–19).

Rothbard appears to be closer to Strauss on the fundamental issue than to the Austrian Economics with which he is in more or less practical agreement. He says that Strauss deserves praise because "he is on the forefront of the fight to restore and resurrect political philosophy from the interment given it by modern positivists and adherents of scientism." In

short, Strauss "wants to restore values and political ethics to the study of politics" (Rothbard 2009, 91).

Rothbard, then, is drawn to Strauss because they both seek the goal of an objective and rational basis for social life. Strauss states his assessment of the situation in terms of nihilism. "The lack of resistance to nihilism," he says, "seems to be due ultimately to the depreciation and contempt for reason" (Strauss 1999, 364). In the light of this comment, it is not surprising that Rothbard should say that "Mises [is] wrong and Strauss is right." Strauss is right, according to Rothbard, "because he believes in the possibility and demonstrability of rational, objective ethics," and he denies the ethical relativism that "holds that ethics are purely subjective and arbitrary, and not subject to rational demonstration" (Rothbard 2009, 105–6).

But for all this Rothbard rejects Strauss's call for a return to the ancients as the only sane step in the face of the crisis of modern subjectivism and relativism. Rothbard will not follow Strauss in the direction of "the classic natural right doctrine in its original form" and with it the "the doctrine of the best regime" (Strauss 1953, 144). While for Strauss the Platonic quest for the best political order is political philosophy itself, Rothbard associates Plato's *Republic* along with all philosophies based on the quest for the best regime with totalitarianism. This is the case despite or precisely because Rothbard's prime concern is to establish an objective ethics as the basis of political freedom and the concomitant rejection of statism (Rothbard 1998, 21). This special concern may explain why Rothbard is moved to place Strauss in the company of colleagues with whom he (Strauss) might not feel altogether comfortable. Strauss does not really belong in the school of thinkers with whom Rothbard associates him.

In his *Ethics of Liberty* Rothbard locates Strauss in a parade of authorities which is deployed to illustrate Rothbard's overall argument. Strauss appears in a sequence of referenced or footnoted scholars which includes such names as H. W. B. Joseph (1916), A. P. d'Entreves (1951), John Toohey (1952), John D. Wild (1953), Etienne Gilson (1956), Carl L. Becker (1957), Otto von Gierke (1957), F. C. Copleston (1959), Henry B. Veatch (1962, 1971), Alvin Plantinga (1974), and Philippa Foot (1978). Rothbard fails to alert us here to the vigorous attack made by Strauss on the arguments of some of these thinkers, especially John Wild (Strauss 1946, 326–67). Nor do we get any hint of the antipathy to Strauss expressed by Rothbard in his earlier Volcker Fund reviews.

At a certain point Rothbard turns to the question "Which doctrine, natural law or those of its critics is to be considered truly rational?" (Rothbard 1998, 15). Rothbard says that this question was "answered incisively by the late Leo Strauss, in the course of a penetrating critique of the value-relativism in political theory of Professor Arnold Brecht." "[I]n contrast to natural law," Strauss had said, "positivistic social science…is characterized by the abandonment of reason or the flight from reason." The prevailing "positivistic interpretation of relativism" maintains that "reason can tell us which means are conducive to which ends" but "cannot tell us which attainable ends are to be preferred to other attainable ends." In fact, "If rational conduct consists in choosing the right means for the right end, relativism teaches in effect that rational conduct is impossible" (Strauss 1961, 144–55).

After quoting this passage from Strauss, Rothbard then goes on to "the modern Thomistic philosopher, the late Father John Toohey" who affirmed "the unique place of reason in natural-law philosophy." He did so by defining sound philosophy as "an attempt on the part of man's unaided reason to give a fundamental explanation of the nature of things" (Rothbard 1998, 7). In this way Strauss is folded in with a number of thinkers, some of whom are very inclined to a natural law philosophy to which Strauss never subscribed.

Rothbard thinks that Strauss "is at his best on only one fundamental point" and that is "when he is criticizing ethical relativism and advocating a grounding of ethics on natural law [as he did in his relativism paper]." Nevertheless, Strauss's reservations about the whole philosophical basis of modern liberalism and the doctrine of modern natural rights [with an "s" means for Rothbard that Strauss takes away with one hand what he giveth with the other. On "more specific topics" such as the "detailed content of the natural law or in historical discussions of political philosophers," Strauss simply shows himself "to be a fallacious political philosopher and a worse historian" (Rothbard 2009, 103).

So Rothbard makes a division between a 'good Strauss' (ethical absolutist) and a 'bad Strauss' (fallacious theorist). But how could Strauss be both so right and so wrong at one and the same time? How is it possible to accept the fundamental soundness of Strauss's major claim concerning political philosophy and yet conclude that at the end of the day he is a "fallacious philosopher and a worse historian"? We must look further at Rothbard's differences with Strauss, especially on the history of Western thought.

Hobbes the Founder

There is no disagreement between Strauss and Rothbard over the "individualistic" nature of modern philosophy. Rothbard is convinced of the "methodological and hence political individualism" of modern thought (1998, 21). Strauss is in agreement here: "The rights of man are the moral equivalent of the *Ego cogitans*" (Strauss 1964, 45). For his part Strauss plays up modern philosophy's "consistent denial of the common good" and its concomitant "radical individualism" whereby "everyone is by nature the sole judge of what is to his interest" while "his judgment regarding his interest is not subject to anybody else's examination on the issue whether his judgment is sound." Both Strauss and Rothbard, then, see the individual being moved front and center in the period at issue. The question is whether this development was wise and therefore desirable, which in turn leads to the question of who is responsible for this development. For Strauss it is Hobbes who must bear most responsibility for the rise of 'absolutist individualism,' if we may call it that. It was Hobbes who made the case for this new philosophy "with the greatest rigor" and "opposed it to the opposite premise which had been the basis of the old political science proper" (Strauss 1962, 323–24). Thus we must go to Hobbes "if we desire to understand the specific character of modern natural right" (Strauss 1953, 166).

But Strauss's historical claim here means in effect that the philosophical source of the modern individualism so beloved by Rothbard is not by Rothbard himself acknowledged. Rather this founder of modern, Anglo-American individualism is maligned by Rothbard as being a statist. But Strauss's Hobbes is *the* philosopher of the individual or the classic exponent of anarcho-capitalism, to speak anachronistically. It is Hobbes who announced that "[I]n all kinds of actions, by the laws praetermitted, men have the liberty of doing what their own reasons shall suggest, for the most profitable to themselves...such as the Liberty to buy, sell, and otherwise contract with one another; to choose their own aboad, their own diet, their own trade of life and institute their children as they themselves think fit" (Hobbes, *Leviathan* Ch. XXI; Cropsey 1980, 304–5).

Rothbard considers the refutation of the view that Hobbes is the father of modern liberalism to be final. Indeed, he says that "The older view of Hobbes as a statist and a totalitarian" has been vindicated by Williamson M. Evers (Rothbard 1998, 23; Evers 1975, 4–6; 1977, 187–88). What Rothbard is driving at here is the obedience side of Hobbes. It is this aspect of Hobbes's thought that leads Rothbard astray from the Straussian point of

view. And here is the key point—what Rothbard characterizes as Hobbes's authoritarianism or totalitarianism is described by Strauss as being "contradicted by Hobbes's own teaching." What Strauss means here is that Hobbes's teaching that the natural law commands "one and only one thing: unqualified obedience to the sovereign power" is contradicted by his teaching of the absolute primacy of individual rights over natural duties (Strauss 1983, 211). This "paradoxical" character of Hobbes's political thought highlighted by Strauss is overlooked by Rothbard in his effort to tar Hobbes with the authoritarian/totalitarian brush.

Rothbard also considers the sympathy which the 'pro-Nazi' German political theorist Carl Schmitt expressed for Hobbes's absolutism as indicative of the latter's illiberalism (Schmitt 1982). But Strauss argued in his famous critique of the German theorist that in effect Schmitt had got Hobbes backwards. Schmitt thought Hobbes pointed the way to a solution of the problem of liberalism, but Strauss insists that Hobbes is in fact the source of the problem. Rothbard, however, fails to consider Strauss's critique of Schmitt as relevant to the whole Hobbes debate, distracted as he is by the case made by Williamson M. Evers.

Strauss's case, then, is that Schmitt had made a mistake similar to the one we later see in Rothbard—i.e. taking Hobbes to be an intensely anti-liberal statist. Thus Hobbes is attractive to Schmitt for the same reason he is anathema to Rothbard. Hobbes represents to Schmitt an alternative to classical liberalism, which liberalism by contrast is eminently defensible in the view of Rothbard. In arguing with Schmitt and by implication Rothbard, Strauss asserts that "Hobbes is to a very high degree the originator of 'the ideal of civilization'" and it is by "this very fact he is the founder of liberalism" (Strauss 1982, 338). Strauss notes that even "the harshest critic" whom the philosophy of Hobbes has recently found (C. E. Vaughan) "remarks with obvious surprise" that this philosophy is itself based "on assumptions representing an extreme form of individualism more uncompromising than that of Locke himself." We have no choice, Strauss insists, but to accept Hobbes as "the founder of modern political philosophy" (Strauss 1984, 156).

Strauss explains that the manner in which Hobbes "lays the foundation for the natural right to the securing of bare life suggests the whole system of the rights of man in the liberal sense." Hobbes may not necessarily make the "whole system of the rights of man indispensable." But the fact that "the right to the securing of bare life" was "the only natural right that Hobbes recognize[d]" and that this right subsequently took on the character of an

unalienable claim of the individual "which precedes the State and determines the purpose and limits of the State," makes of Hobbes the ultimate source of the liberal program (Strauss 1982, 338–39).

Strauss further explains that Hobbes "did not recognize any primary human obligation preceding all claims or 'rights' (i.e. justified claims)." This is because Hobbes "understood man as being by nature free or in other words under no binding obligation." For Hobbes natural right meant "the justified claim of every individual, while duty or obligation was a *subsequent* restriction of that right." Setting out from this premise, Strauss explains that

> it is impossible to raise objections of principle against the proclamation of the rights of man and claims of the individual on the State and against the State, against the distinction between society and the State, and against liberalism, assuming liberalism is not indeed the inevitable consequence of Hobbes's starting point. (Strauss 1982, 344)

It is fair to suggest, then, that the whole disagreement between Rothbard and Strauss as to the true meaning of liberalism hinges on the nature of Hobbes's role in the evolution of modern thought. This is because, if Rothbard is right, then the man who Strauss insists founded the doctrine of natural rights is in fact their biggest enemy. On the other hand, if Strauss is right, then Rothbard will not be able to account for the liberal society's dependence on statism, which for Rothbard is what Hobbesianism represents.

From Hobbes to Locke

The key question for Strauss in portraying Hobbes as the founding father of modern liberalism is his relation to the preceding natural law tradition. It is Hobbes, he says, "who, with a clarity never previously and never subsequently attained, made the 'right of nature', i.e. the justified claims [of the individual] the basis of political philosophy, without any inconsistent borrowing from natural or divine law." Indeed, Hobbes himself "was aware that the precise subordination of Law to Right, that even a clear and consistent distinction between them, was an innovation" (Strauss 1984, 156). This is the central issue because, as Strauss sees it, the natural law associated with modern liberalism is in fact a radically different kettle of fish than the version which preceded it. "Modern natural law as originated by Hobbes, did not start as traditional natural law did from the hierarchic order of man's natural ends but from the lowest of those ends (self-preservation)."

Hobbes's point was to make us see that "a civil society ultimately based on nothing but the right of self-preservation would not be utopian." Hobbesian natural law derives duties from the natural right of self-preservation, which in effect means that "the right is absolute while all duties are conditional" (Strauss 1983, 144). Strauss's whole effort was to show that the meaning of the language of rights and natural law had been radically transformed by Hobbes such that they are really unrecognizable from a pre-modern point of view.

Strauss does allow a distinction between Hobbesianism on the one hand and the well-known elements of liberalism which we more or less take for granted today on the other. Hobbes does in fact "differ from full grown liberalism." But at the same time the absolute primacy of the individual "was preserved despite the important modifications that Hobbes's doctrine underwent at the hands of his great successors." Hobbes had reinterpreted "the moral law or the natural law…as derivative from...the right of self-preservation" and in due course the "new spirit" which was involved in this process of seeing "the fundamental moral fact (as) a right, (and) not a duty" became "the spirit of the modern era, including our own age" (Strauss 1983, 212).

In contrast to Strauss's approach, Rothbard opts for the continuity thesis which sees the modern idea of individual natural rights as flowing in a straight line from elements in the traditional natural law doctrine. Rothbard begins the story, tellingly enough, not with Hobbes but with Locke. He notes that "While Locke developed libertarian natural rights thought more fully than his predecessors, it was squarely embedded in the natural law tradition" (Rothbard 2009, 12). For Rothbard the proper perspective within which to see Lockean individualism is as a kind of internal development of Scholastic, Thomist, and Christian ideas. Locke is not a corrupter of the natural law tradition but rather an enricher of it. "My quarrel with Strauss, [Russell] Kirk, et al.," he explains, "is not only valuational—that they are anti-natural rights and liberty, and I am for them—but also factual and historical: for they think that the Lockeans had an entirely different concept of natural law, whereas I think that the difference — while clearly there — was a sharpening development, rather than a perversion or a diametric opposite" (Rothbard 2009, 93). For Rothbard, the Straussian opposition of the Great Tradition and Modernity is an artificial construct that is the product of Strauss's scholarly ingenuity rather than a clear view of the history of political and moral thought.

But from Strauss's point of view Rothbard has here missed the question of "inconsistent borrowing." "At first glance," Strauss says, Locke's doctrine "appears to be a compromise between the traditional and the Hobbean doctrines." While appearing to disagree with Hobbes, Locke nevertheless, like Hobbes, "denies the natural law is imprinted in the minds of men, that it can be known from the consent of mankind and that it can be known from men's natural inclination" (Strauss 1983, 144–45). Locke's doctrine might be "a profound modification," but it is one which connects "the natural right of self-preservation" to "the natural right of property." Thus Locke's natural law doctrine "is the original form of capitalist theory"—much to Rothbard's satisfaction, we might note (Strauss 1983, 145).

Strauss says that "Locke enlarged self-preservation and this laid the theoretical foundation of the acquisitive society" (Strauss 1983, 212). What this transformation ultimately means is stated by Strauss in the following terms:

> Locke's teaching on property, and therewith his whole political philosophy, are revolutionary not only with regard to the biblical tradition but with regard to the philosophic tradition as well. Through the shift of emphasis from natural duties or obligations to natural rights, the individual, the ego, had become the center and origin of the moral world, since man—as distinguished from man's end—had become that center or origin. (Strauss 1953, 248; Locke 1960, 305–7)

While Strauss and Rothbard are very evidently at odds on the relationship between traditional and modern natural law, they are at one in emphasizing the expansion and purification of natural rights theory following on from Locke. The difference comes in their respective attitudes to "Lockeanism." In the case of Strauss, there can be little doubt that he wished to put a certain distance between his thought and that of Locke. Indeed, one of Strauss's most proverbial lines is his observation at the close of the Locke chapter in *Natural Right and History* that Locke's philosophy amounts at bottom to "the joyless quest for joy" (Strauss 1953, 251). But with Rothbard the case is different. He would rather emphasize "the similarity between Locke's view" and the theory which he (Rothbard) "sets forth." It was in fact "the Lockean individualist tradition (which) profoundly influenced...the dominant tradition of libertarian political thought in the revolutionary new nation," and it is "this tradition of natural-rights libertarianism upon which (my) *The Ethics of Liberty* attempts to build" (Rothbard 1998, 21; 2009, 22).

Rothbard's commitment to the Lockean individualist tradition remains firm, even though he is ready to allow that "Current scholars, ranging from Marxists to Straussians, consider Thomas Hobbes rather than Locke as the founder of systematic individualist, natural rights theory." It also remains firm even though "Locke's natural-rights theory, as historians of political thought have shown, was riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies" (1998, 23; cf. Strauss 1967; Fortin 1982; Zuckert 2002, 2005; Stoner 2004; Myers 2005; Schaefer 2005). But as Rothbard assesses the situation, it is only to be expected that "the pioneers of any discipline (or) any science," like Locke, "are bound to suffer from inconsistencies and lacunae that will be corrected by those that come after them." If there should be any "divergences from Locke" in Rothbard's own work, this would come as a surprise only "to those steeped in the unfortunate modern fashion that has virtually abolished constructive political philosophy in favor of a mere antiquarian interest in older texts" (Rothbard 1998, 21).

But Rothbard's openness to a Hobbes-Locke Connection and to the possible inconsistencies in Locke's own doctrine cannot ultimately put the issue between him and Strauss to bed. This is because, if Strauss is right in his interpretation of modern thought, then in seeking to re-energize liberalism on a fuel compounded of both traditional natural law and modern natural rights, Rothbard is in effect attempting to make liberalism's engine run on a mixture of oil and water. Strauss's primary emphasis, then, is on the oil and water relationship between classic natural law and its modern counterpart. This "oil and water" interpretation stems from Strauss's manifest coolness to the profoundest tendencies of modern thought, an attitude not shared by Rothbard.

Strauss's attitude to liberal modernity is evident when he says that "The ideal of *modern* civilization" (italics Strauss's) is a "tendency of the (particular) intellectual development" which in due course "exploded in the French Revolution." Strauss sums up this "tendency" in the following terms: It sought "to lower moral standards, the moral claims, which previously had been made by all responsible teachers, but to take better care than those earlier teachers had done, for the putting into practice, into political and legal practice, of the rules of human conduct." And how was such a massive reorientation of the Western mind made possible? It "was most effectively achieved" via "the identification of morality with an attitude of claiming one's *rights* [italics Strauss's], or with enlightened self-interest, or the reduction of honesty to the best policy; or the solution of the common interest and private

interest by means of industry and trade." At this point Strauss allows himself a little editorializing. He says that "the thought of Germany stood up" against "this debasement of morality, and against the concomitant decline of a truly philosophic spirit," and such a negative stance towards the "ideal of civilization" [as represented by Locke] was "to the everlasting honor of Germany" (Strauss 1999, 370–71).

Needless to say, the tone of Strauss's comments here suggests a profound disagreement between him and Rothbard on the very nature of the relationship between philosophy and politics. "Responsible teachers," Strauss suggests, do not identify morality with an "attitude of claiming one's rights" or with the notion that justice is simply a question of the distribution of "industry and trade." For Strauss society is more about what we might loosely call metaphysics than it is about "industry and trade" or the question of "property," while for Rothbard the reverse is very largely the case. Rothbard is especially attracted to Locke's announcement that "Every man has a *property* in his own *person*" (Locke 1960, 305).

Politics and Metaphysics

The critical tenor of Strauss's account of modern thought as distinguished from that of Rothbard, points to the view that politics and ethics imply or require metaphysics or a conception of an overarching natural order within which man finds his place and which supplies a standard for human evaluation, i.e. a standard for judging who is virtuous and who is not. In this connection Strauss recommends that we never forget "that even the atheistic, materialistic thinkers of classical antiquity took it for granted that man is subject to something higher than himself, e.g. the whole cosmic order, and that man is not the origin of all meaning." However, the tendency of modern philosophy according to Strauss is to argue that "all truths, or all meaning, all order, all beauty, originate in the thinking subject, in human thought, in man." Strauss gives us some "famous formulations" of the modern frame of mind such as Hobbes's "We only know what we make" and Kant's "Understanding prescribes nature its laws" (Strauss 1989, 244).These phrases symbolize for Strauss the "ipsissimosity" of the modern mind (Nietzsche 1966, 126).

Strauss explains that this subjectivistic philosophical orientation gives modern philosophy an exceedingly anthropocentric character which is in turn connected with "a radical change in moral orientation." This radical change is to be seen "with particular clarity" in the way in which

"virtue itself is understood as passion." Over time this tendency leads to the result of freedom gradually "tak[ing] the place of virtue." The result is that the good life ceases to consist "in compliance with a pattern antedating the human will, but consists primarily in originating the pattern itself." In a word, for modern thought "man has no nature to speak of." In fact "he makes himself what he is" and his "very humanity is acquired" (Strauss 1989, 244–45).

For Strauss it is not possible to have the modern notion of rights, rooted as it is in the subjectivism of modern philosophy, together with the classical idea of a given nature or human pattern following at the same time. Either one sees the human will as the origin of the "pattern" or one sees this pattern as existing outside and independent of human will and as something with which we need to comply if we are to have the good life.

For his part Rothbard is very clear that if modern thought is indeed as denying of the intrinsic or inexpungeable humanity of man as Strauss claims it to be, he is then in disagreement with it. He is sure that man has a definite nature. He is certain that we can say "with absolute assurance" not only "that certain methods and means are irrational" but also "that certain ends are irrational" (2009, 109). But he does not interpret this to mean that there is a metaphysically transcendent order or "sacred canopy" (Berger 1990) under which man must live and of which the political order should in some sense be a reflection. Rothbard's version of the objective order comes down to the absolutism of rights against those who would claim to rule on the basis of an absolute conception of the good. At bottom Rothbard rejects metaphysical metaphysics in the name of scientific metaphysics or what Strauss calls "metaphysically neutral physics," meaning a theory of the whole that suggests no natural purpose or teleology for man and his fellow living creatures. For Rothbard metaphysical metaphysics necessarily implies limitation on human freedom.

Rothbard's solution to the problem represented by the tension between the absolutism of human rights and the notion of an external and eternal pattern of human nature is to attempt a splitting of human life into two discrete spheres. Following the lines laid out by James A. Sadowsky, Rothbard would make a "crucial distinction" between "a man's *right* and the morality or immorality of his exercise of that right." "When we say that one has the right to do certain things we mean this and only this, that it would be immoral for another, alone or in combination, to stop him from doing this by the use of physical force or the threat thereof. We do *not* mean that any use a

man makes of his property within the limits set forth is necessarily a moral use" (Rothbard 1998, 24; Sadowsky 1974, 120–21).

With respect to behavior pursued within "the limits set forth" by the concept of rights, Rothbard says that whatever may be the possible "moral or immoral ways of exercising" any individual right "a man's right to do whatever he wishes with his person" and "not to be molested or interfered with by violence from exercising that right" remains sacrosanct. This is because the actual choice between various options of conduct conferred by the right in question is "a question of personal ethics rather than of political philosophy" (Rothbard 1998, 24). What Rothbard has to mean here is that there is no rational distinction between right and wrong that extends throughout "all creation" (so to speak). There is in fact a sphere of human existence that is or should be somehow value free.

The importance of this "crucial distinction" between "personal ethics" and "political philosophy" cannot be "overemphasized," according to Rothbard. "In our view," Rothbard says, "the major task of … 'political philosophy' is to construct the edifice of natural law pertinent to the political scene." What this means is that political philosophy is "concerned *solely* with matters of right" (emphasis added). But what does the word "solely" here imply? Why not simply say that political philosophy is "concerned with matters of right"? The implication is that there are certain boundaries to the scope of political philosophy or that some human concerns are outside its purview. In short, when it comes to an ethical question to do with my personal life, it is optional to listen to the voice of political philosophy. If anyone should claim that my personal choices are "matters of right," I would be entitled to insist he or she is in error. "Personal ethics" do not fall within the scope of "matters of right," and so they are not properly the subject of political philosophy's reasoning. Political philosophy can talk of civil peace and "the proper or improper exercise of physical violence in human relations" (Rothbard 1998, 25), but when it attempts to speak to what one may wish to do within the realm of private rights or "personal ethics," it has no valid claim to priority. For all his confidence in the power of reason to give us access to objective reality, Rothbard is at some level an irrationalist.

But Rothbard cannot possibly leave it at this. He is still prepared to assert "with absolute assurance" that "torture and love of torture is contrary to the nature of man and to what is required by that nature for man's true happiness." Moreover, "it can be demonstrated that such perversions of man's nature are profoundly irrational." Such a conclusion "is not just my or

your subjective point of view" but is the product of an "objective, absolute insight into the discoverable nature of man" (Rothbard 2009, 109).

Surely such a statement brings Rothbard close to the naturalism of Strauss. But the question remains—should this "objective, absolute insight into the discoverable nature of man" be enforced in the sphere of "personal ethics"? Should the fact that a practice is *contra naturam* be warrant for breaking down the wall between "personal ethics" and "political philosophy"? Should "nature" be supported in the sphere of "personal ethics" by the authority of "political philosophy"? Surely there is a legitimate question as to whether or not "love of torture" (as distinct from actually torturing another citizen) is a matter of "personal ethics" on the one hand or of "political philosophy" on the other. If indeed the "love of torture" was a "matter of right," it would come under the aegis of "political philosophy" and so could be refereed in terms of a philosophy of human perfection or of virtue and vice. But how on Rothbard's showing can two consenting adults wishing to inflict pain on each other come under the aegis of "political philosophy" unless one abandons the distinction between "political philosophy" and "personal ethics"? Rothbard's "crucial distinction" breaks down in the crunch. There is an Either/Or here which he does not wish to face.

The City and Man

Rothbard's conclusion that there is in fact a sphere of "personal ethics" within which moral judgment may apply but upon which the law must above all avoid imposing "external" principles involves him in the difficulty of insisting that we can definitely know what is good for man but that society must refrain from promoting this good where it most likely would count most, i.e. in our own personal and private lives. We must behave lawfully in public because in that zone we are candidates for the improvement which living by a common set of rules can supply to us. But the absolutism of Lockean rights means that such improvement cannot really extend beyond these ethical rules of the road.

In contrast to Rothbard, Strauss is clearly dubious about the special claims made for the sphere of "personal ethics." This is because of the centrality of the concept of the regime to his political science. "[T]he principles of any particular regime," Strauss says, "pervade the societies throughout, in the sense that there are no recesses of privacy which are simply impervious to that pervasion" (Strauss 1959, 38). If there were such "recesses of privacy" in modern society then there would be much less talk about the "democratic

personality," to say the least. Contrary to Rothbard, Strauss suggests that the notion of a sovereign sphere of "personal ethics" free from what we might call regime pressure is a myth. At the end of the day there can be no shelter from the regime, or in Rothbard's terms from "political philosophy," and thus a widespread belief in "the right to life, liberty and property" is in fact evidence of, in this case, the liberal regime's dominance over the private sphere rather than a sign of its limitation. For Strauss there is no way the ordinary citizen will not be fundamentally shaped by the regime, whatever his or her private rights. The moral pressure from the outside world is final in some sense.

But it should not be concluded for a minute here that, because Strauss was skeptical of the capacity of the sphere of "personal ethics" to stand against the pressure of the surrounding regime, he was indifferent to its importance—quite the contrary. His concern was to protect this sphere. "[B]y educating people to cooperate with each other in a friendly spirit, one does not yet educate nonconformists, people who are prepared to stand alone and fight alone. Democracy has not yet found a defense against the creeping conformism and the ever increasing invasion of privacy it fosters" (Strauss 1959, 38). In other words, the evidence that Rothbard's distinction between a sphere of "personal ethics" and a sphere of "matters of right" or of "political philosophy" is a problematic one is the actual failing of this distinction under democratic conditions. Strauss wants us to be realistic about this failure and absorb the lesson that the distinction between public and private is an extremely elusive one.

For Strauss, there can be no doubt that the private sphere should be protected against the outside regime in certain decisive respects. But his reasoning here is the need for private life to be protected from succumbing to the forces unleashed by external freedom. In other words, if the regime was in fact dedicated to the primacy of virtue and was evidently 'pro' the rational ends of man (a pious wish at all times, one might say), then the strengthening of the walls of privacy might be in some sense an evil because it would mean more opportunity for people not to be at their best. But if the prevailing regime has no concept of the rational ends of man (a good bet most of the time) and represents only such values as "life, liberty and property," then the protection of the private sphere as a possible haven for higher values—values higher at least than those of "life, liberty and property"—would be a definite good. "While we are not permitted to remain silent on the dangers to which democracy exposes itself as well as human excellence, we cannot forget the obvious fact that by giving freedom to all, democracy

also gives freedom to those who care for human excellence. No one prevents us from cultivating our garden or from setting up outposts which may come to be regarded by many citizens as salutary to the republic and as deserving of giving to it its tone" (Strauss 1968, 24).

So let us allow for the moment that Strauss's heart is in the right place as far as the creeping Leviathan State is concerned. Even allowing this, we are still left with the question of how he would explain, given his emphasis on the "pervasion" of the regime, the undeniable existence under civilized conditions of a certain number of individuals, albeit spatio-temporally variant as a proportion to the whole, who are not in fact "children of their place and time." Strauss would be the very first to say that it has always been of immense significance that there have been individuals from Socrates to Spinoza and beyond who, while certainly children of their regime, are not for that reason simple ethical reflections of the *zeitgeist*. Indeed, the tragic conflict of 'right and right' in the case of Socrates and Athens suggests that Rothbard is correct to distinguish between "personal ethics" and "political philosophy." And yet Strauss denies that any such distinction could be indefinitely and consistently viable, at least on the practical level.

Inequality: Ancient and Modern

Strauss's answer to the problem of individual privacy vs. regime pressure is very much tied to the question of equality. Rothbard, committed to the equality of rights as he is, sees the threat of outside regime pressure as equally present to all citizens. It follows naturally enough from this starting point that each citizen should have an equal right to be free of this pressure. For freedom's sake I should close my door tightly against the outside world in the hope that the outside world will have no impact on my willing of my preferred pattern of life. But again here we have to go back to Hobbes. One element of Strauss's re-introduction of Hobbes as the patron saint of Anglo-American liberal modernity is to stress the way in which he is the father of the modern principle of human equality. For Hobbes "all men are created equal" because all men are "equal regarding the desire for self-preservation as well as the power of killing others." There is then "no natural hierarchy of men." The sovereign in Hobbes's system becomes "the representative or agent, of each." Such an arrangement allows for "the primacy of the individual—of any individual—and his natural right remains intact (cf. *Leviathan* ch. 21)" (Strauss 1983, 144).

But for Strauss the possibility that there is a nature of man, if anything, suggests a hierarchy of human types rather than natural equality. For Strauss natural right is about inequality, and this means that the pressure exerted by the dominant regime or "political philosophy" (as Rothbard calls it) on the individual citizen will have a varying impact according to the intelligence and capacities of the individual. Strauss takes up the question of equality when reviewing a book by one of Rothbard's major authorities—John Wild.

In his critique Strauss takes Wild to task for his extreme egalitarianism as indicated in his saying that wisdom "is accessible to all." And it is right on this point that Strauss draws the distinction between *natural rights* and *natural right*. Wild's wish "to make Plato out to be something like a political liberal," he says, "leads him to assert that according to Plato 'all men are philosophers.'" But in fact Plato never tires of saying "that no one can become a philosopher who does not have specific natural gifts, and that philosophic natures are extremely rare." For Strauss the consequence of accepting "the Platonic theses that wisdom constitutes the only absolutely valid title to rule, or to participate in ruling, and that wisdom (which is virtue in the strict sense) requires certain very rare natural gifts" is to be forced to admit "that the natural inequality among men as regards intellectual gifts is politically decisive, that is, that democracy is against natural right" (Strauss 1946, 357; Tarcov 1991, 8).

With these "Platonic theses" in mind Strauss cannot but conclude that the social contract or rights teaching is radically egalitarian and as such is contrary to natural right. Wild misses this whole question because he conflates the sophistic ideas of Plato's Callicles and Glaucon with what Wild calls "the famous social-contract theory which has played such an important role in modern political thought." In order to be able to make such a connection, Strauss says, Wild has to overlook "the fact that the views of Callicles, as well as those of Plato and Aristotle, presuppose natural inequality of men." By contrast "the famous 'social contract theories' of modern times assume the natural equality of men, or at least the irrelevance for natural right of men's natural inequality" (1946, 357).

Strauss's case, then, is that to the extent we opt for the modern doctrine of natural rights we must assume "the irrelevance for natural right of men's natural inequality." To be sure, Rothbard, like all decent men, wishes to advance the cause of natural right or basic human justice. But from Strauss's perspective Rothbard is implicitly defeating his own purpose by

adhering to the modern version of natural right, which is premised above all on the notion of pre-civil natural *rights*. In other words, what Strauss sees as *the* problem—the rights of the individual against all claims—is seen as *the* solution by Rothbard. Rothbard interprets the political world in terms of a struggle between the noble defenders of individual rights and the relentless forces of statism and collectivism. But if one follows the drift of Strauss's arguments, he forces us to the conclusion that both individual rights and the collectivist state are two boats which, while repeatedly bumping into each other, nevertheless launched their respective journeys in the same headwaters and ever since have been sailing down the same stream. Rothbard's lack of gravitation to the classical alternative, which is so evident in Strauss and which axiomatically comes with a certain distancing from modern thought, ultimately means that Rothbard sees as a great divide what is in fact a homogeneous whole. For Strauss it must never be forgotten that the modern egalitarian natural rights version of natural right is at tension with the older inegalitarian natural right version of natural right.

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Jeff J. S. Black, *Rousseau's Critique of Science: A Commentary on the* Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009, 330 pp., $80.

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In the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* (1751; hereafter, the *First Discourse*), Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously argued that popular enlightenment always and necessarily has a morally corrupting effect on societies. Morally pure and virtuous people, such as the Spartans and Romans of the republican period, have always been "ignorant," and enlightened peoples, such as the Athenians or the Romans of the imperial period, have always been morally corrupt and vicious. The Enlightenment's conviction that progress in the arts and sciences could foster broader moral, social, and political progress was, therefore, utterly unfounded. The *First Discourse* caused a sensation among the literary public, and its contrarian thesis inspired a large number of attempted refutations. Rousseau responded selectively to these refutations, progressively revealing more and more of the thinking behind it. Within a few years, believing his thesis sufficiently clarified and defended, he moved on.

Jeff J. S. Black has written an excellent, meticulous commentary on Rousseau's *First Discourse* and his replies to its critics. Whether or not one agrees with Black's conclusions, *Rousseau's Critique of Science* is a book that it is impossible not to learn from. Black probes Rousseau's arguments so deeply, he draws connections between so many of Rousseau's works, and he engages the secondary literature so thoroughly, that his book serves as an education not only in the *First Discourse*, but in Rousseau's thought as a whole. Hence, *Rousseau's Critique of Science* ought to be mandatory reading for Rousseau specialists, as well as for ambitious graduate students who plan to devote their research to the study of Rousseau. The work will be especially

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of interest to those looking for a thorough account of how the argument of the *First Discourse* relates to Rousseau's accounts of natural goodness and social corruption in the *Discourse on Inequality* and *Emile*. None of this is to say that *Rousseau's Critique of Science* is pleasant or easy reading. It is not. The book is dense and slow-going and requires careful, attentive reading in order for its strengths to reveal themselves; but it will certainly reward those willing to invest the necessary time and energy.

The book is structured as a textual commentary on the *First Discourse*, though Black gives the commentary focus by laying out in the introduction four specific questions to guide his analysis. These questions are as follows:

> First: what is the basis of Rousseau's thesis in the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* that scientific progress contributes to moral corruption? Second: what does the *Discourse* teach us about the origin of Rousseau's philosophical system, and about the method that Rousseau follows to establish it? Third: what is the place of the *Discourse* in Rousseau's system? And fourth: what are the consequences of Rousseau's critique of science for the future happiness of mankind? (10)

Generally speaking, Black's answers are subtle, thorough, and plausible. Rather than present a chapter-by-chapter account of the book, I will discuss Black's answers to these questions; in the process, I will try to draw attention to the particular strengths of the work, as well as to a few arguments that seem to me incorrect or insufficiently defended.

First Question: On what grounds does Rousseau assert that intellectual progress fosters moral corruption? Black's answer to this question is worked out primarily in chapters 3, 6, and 7. He begins by establishing that the *First Discourse*'s thesis is not the blanket statement that intellectual progress fosters moral corruption; it is, more specifically, that popular enlightenment contributes to the decline of popular morals (10, 265). (Implicitly in the *First Discourse* and explicitly in some of his replies to critics, Rousseau affirms that some rare individuals can combine intellectual cultivation with virtue.) That is to say, a society consciously devoted to fostering and popularizing progress in the arts and sciences will necessarily grow more corrupt as a consequence. Black provides a complex account of how and why Rousseau thought that popular enlightenment fosters moral corruption—too complex to be summarized here. In its broad outlines, Black's account is not significantly different from that of scholars such as Leo Strauss or Victor Gourevitch. The strength of Black's account lies in the immense detail into

which he enters. For example, his reconstructed genealogy of moral corruption (201–2, 263–65) and his account of the role played by the arts and sciences in this corruption (ch. 7 generally) are excellent, as is his account of the way in which vanity in particular lies at the root of the evils caused by popular enlightenment (see 197–201 especially). All of these discussions benefit greatly from the extreme scrutiny Black applies. His account of moral corruption in chapter 3 (46, 55–64) is less successful, I think. I do not think he necessarily says anything false, but he almost immediately plunges below the surface of Rousseau's argument. Hence, the relative simplicity and conventionality of Rousseau's initial account of moral corruption (Rousseau, *First Discourse*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, in *Collected Writings of Rousseau,* vol. 2 [Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992], 5–7) gets submerged in a broader discussion of how and why moral corruption is inevitable and irreversible, and how Rousseau's definition of virtue as "strength of soul" relates to the conventional understanding of the virtues. These are genuine questions, but they do not seem to me to be suggested by the portion of the text ostensibly under discussion. Black could have saved these concerns for later in his analysis. As it stands, they lead him to overstate the degree to which Rousseau's arguments early in the *Discourse* must necessarily be supplemented by his other principal writings (see 63–64), about which I will say more below.

Second Question: What does the First Discourse *teach us about the origin of Rousseau's system (that is, his fundamental principles) and about the method he uses to establish it?* This question is not occasioned by anything Rousseau says in the *First Discourse* itself; rather, Black raises it in response to statements Rousseau makes elsewhere that (1) he had a "system" at the time he wrote the *First Discourse*, and that (2) contemplating the question of the *First Discourse* was the occasion for discovering the first principles of that system. (Black discusses the textual sources of these statements on pp. 3–9.)

Black's answer to the second question, in brief, is that Rousseau's system (or its first principle) has its origin in introspection, and is confirmed through a method of "analysis and synthesis" (265–66). The explication and proof of these claims come mostly in chapter 4, with some corroborating evidence in chapter 7. Chapter 4 is one of the treasures of the book. In it, Black meticulously follows up the historical allusions that Rousseau makes in the First Part of the *First Discourse* in support of his thesis that enlightenment leads to moral corruption (Rousseau 7–9). Black deftly shows

that Rousseau's examples are full of factual distortions and do not in fact establish a causal connection between popular enlightenment and moral corruption (Black 76–88 and notes). Black further shows that Rousseau is fully aware of the limitations of his "historical inductions." Drawing on the discussions of history in the replies to critics and the *Emile*, Black persuasively demonstrates that Rousseau offers in the *First Discourse* an "idealized history of humanity" (92) that plays fast and loose with the historical record, but he is justified in doing so because the story is still faithful to human nature and because human history, when correctly interpreted, does indeed support Rousseau's thesis. Since Rousseau's principle therefore guides his interpretation, presentation, and distortion of the historical record, Black concludes that Rousseau's principles cannot originate from an analysis of that historical record, but must rather have their source in "introspection" prompted by some "non-historical fact or experience." (See 266 for Black's specific evidence for the claim that Rousseau's principles originate in introspection.)

These principles are then "confirmed through a method of analysis and synthesis" that Black lays out on pp. 88–93, making use of replies to critics and the *Emile*. Black's account is complex and somewhat abstract. Here is how he describes it:

> A meditation on some non-historical fact or experience led Rousseau to reflect about the relationships between general moral objects. These reflections eventually yielded a fundamental principle [the process of "analysis"], and deductions from this principle yielded the corollary that is the thesis of the *First Discourse* [the process of "synthesis"]. Historical examples can confirm the truth of this corollary by showing its effects in practice, and they can be used selectively to illustrate this corollary [the "idealized history of humanity" presented in the *First Discourse*]. Apparent exceptions in the historical record are explained with reference to particular, secondary causes—and so they do not undermine the truth of Rousseau's thesis. (92)

Hence, in establishing both his system and the argument of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau engaged in "an analytical ascent from experience to the most general human principle, and then … a synthetic descent from this principle back to particular historical facts, which acquire through this process a new meaning" (93). These statements no doubt sound obscure here, but Black makes a very strong case for them, in the process showing the continuity between the use of history in the *First Discourse* and the reflections on history in the *Emile*—yet another confirmation of the systematic nature of Rousseau's thinking.

Third Question: What is the place of the First Discourse *within Rousseau's system as a whole?* This question follows naturally from the last one. Black provides a convincing, two-part answer, developed over the whole of the book and summarized on pp. 266–68. On the one hand, the *First Discourse* belongs to Rousseau's system as a whole because "it provides the beginning of its analysis and the end of its synthesis" (266, and repeated elsewhere). By "the beginning of its analysis" Black refers to the fact that contemplating the Dijon Academy's question was the impetus for Rousseau's discovery of the first principle of his system—namely, that human beings are naturally good and corrupted by society (Black 4–5). Hence, the *First Discourse* contains the beginning of Rousseau's analysis in the sense that it presents the facts that, when contemplated properly, prepare one for the discovery of Rousseau's fundamental insight. In claiming that the *First Discourse* contains the end of Rousseau's synthesis, Black means that in it Rousseau draws his ultimate practical conclusions regarding the future happiness of humankind (which I will discuss below).

The *First Discourse* is also an integral part of Rousseau's system, according to Black, because its argument relies on, but does not spell out, Rousseau's principle of natural goodness (Black 267–68). It does so in a number of ways, according to Black. For example, Rousseau presents an "amoral" account of morality that he does not explicitly relate to ordinary moral consciousness. He discusses moral purity and virtue in terms of simplicity, unity, and strength of soul, and he associates moral purity with the adoption of stable and satisfying objects of esteem. (Human beings, once they become social, inevitably develop a need for esteem; see Black 53–54 and 69 n. 24.) Hence, Rousseau associates moral purity with happiness. But he does not explain why strong souls pursuing stable objects of esteem will most often take the form of morally virtuous, pious, and patriotic souls, and hence why virtue, piety, and patriotism are more conducive to happiness than their opposites. In addition, Rousseau's account of the moral corruption of societies suggests that a people can be morally pure only at its origins, and that every morally pure people inevitably suffers an irreversible decline into moral corruption; but, again, Rousseau does not explain the basis of these claims. Black argues, in sum, that the amoral account of morality, the incomplete discussion of objects of esteem, and the insufficiently grounded account of popular corruption all point towards the need for "a developmental account of human nature that explains more fully the psychic needs of human beings, and how they may be satisfied; that accounts for our experience of morality with reference to these needs and their satisfaction; and that explains the

overall decline seen in human history" (268). This account is to be found in the *Discourse on Inequality* and *Emile*. Black thus provides a precise and persuasive explanation of the place of the *First Discourse* within Rousseau's system, in the process providing even more circumstantial evidence for the existence of that system (for those who are not yet convinced).

Fourth Question: What are the consequences of Rousseau's argument for the future happiness of mankind? Here, Black is asking both about Rousseau's *predictions* regarding the future happiness of mankind, given the spread of enlightenment, and about Rousseau's *prescriptions* for responding to it. Black pursues this question primarily in chapter 8, and, to a lesser degree, in chapter 3 and the conclusion. As we've already noted, Rousseau claimed in his replies to critics that corruption is irreversible. Hence, his predictions were largely pessimistic, though tinged with some hope, since Rousseau could not rule out the future occurrence of "great revolutions" that would make it possible for new, morally pure societies to be founded. (On these "great revolutions," see Black 67–68 n. 16.) As a result, Rousseau's prescriptions are limited to two general sorts: palliative prescriptions for societies already wholly or partially morally corrupt; and preventive prescriptions for potential future morally pure societies that somehow have access to his writings (see Black 247–48 for a summary account). In his own presentation of his prescriptions, Rousseau does not explicitly distinguish between these two kinds, each aimed at a different audience (Rousseau 19–22). Hence, his discussion can seem confusing—since, for example, he praises some kings for having established academies, and he (apparently, at least) praises others for smashing printing presses and burning down libraries. By considering the different possible audiences for the different prescriptions, Black shows the underlying consistency of Rousseau's discussions of how to manage the cultivation of arts and sciences. Black's discussion of these matters is another of the book's high points.

In going through Black's answers to these questions, I have omitted much discussion of three chapters: chapter 2, which concerns the "rhetorical situation" of the work—that is, Rousseau's presentations in the *Discourse* of himself, his intentions, and his audience (Rousseau 1–4); chapter 5, which concerns the different meanings of "ignorance" in the *First Discourse*, as these can be discovered in Rousseau's presentations of Socrates, Cato the Elder, Fabricius, and the "savages" of North and South America (Rousseau 9–12); and chapter 6, which concerns Rousseau's three-paragraph discussion of the origins, objects, and vanity of the sciences (Rousseau 12–13).

Chapter 2, when supplemented by the discussions found on pp. 175–76, 191–94, and 225–40, provides a sophisticated account of Rousseau's intentions and of the different groups into which he divides his audience. Those interested in Rousseau's practice of authorship will nonetheless find grappling with Black's arguments here rewarding.

Chapter 5's discussion of ignorance is one of the other high points of the book. Drawing on the *Discourse* and replies to critics, Black parses out four different forms of ignorance (127–30): the ignorance of the wise, popular/heroic ignorance, savage ignorance, and criminal ignorance. The ignorance of the wise is exemplified by Socrates' knowledge of ignorance; while popular and heroic ignorance is exemplified by figures such as Cato the Elder and Fabricius (Rousseau 9–11). Whereas Socrates claims ignorance of the true, good, and beautiful, Cato and Fabricius hold confidently to particular opinions about them—opinions that underlie their piety, patriotism, and virtue. Black does an excellent job of showing how Rousseau uses the blanket term "ignorance" to partially conceal the tension between these two forms of ignorance—forms whose common ground is their compatibility with moral purity. Black also plausibly suggests (240–42) that the tension between the wise and the civically virtuous cannot be permanently suppressed in even the best society. Along with chapter 4's discussion of history, chapter 5's discussion of ignorance contains some of Black's most novel and useful contributions to Rousseau scholarship.

Chapter 6, on science, is to my mind the least successful chapter of the book. His discussions of the frontispiece, and the vicious origins and objects of the sciences (145–55) are all very good, but his discussion of Rousseau's paragraph on the "vanity" of science appears to me wrong on two counts. Here is the paragraph (Rousseau 13):

> What dangers there are! What false paths when investigating the sciences! How many errors, a thousand times more dangerous than the truth is useful, must be surmounted in order to reach the truth? The disadvantage is evident, for falsity is susceptible of infinite combinations, whereas the truth has only one manner of being. Besides, who seeks it sincerely? Even with the best intentions, by what signs is one certain to recognize it? In this multitude of different sentiments, what will be our *Criterium* in order to judge it properly? And hardest of all, if by luck we finally find it, who among us will know how to make good use of the truth?

In his discussion of this paragraph (155–62), Black appears to me to make a false inference. He takes Rousseau to be saying that there exists some single "*Criterium*" by means of which one can judge *both* the

truth *and* the utility of all other truths. He apparently draws this conclusion because he understands judging a truth "properly" to entail determining not only its truth but also its utility. He then correctly concludes (160–62) that no candidate for such a criterion can be found in the *First Discourse* and replies to critics, and says that the identity of the criterion must remain a subject for future research.

I think, however, that any such research is likely to be a wild goose chase, because I see no reason to believe that Rousseau thought a single criterion could determine both truth and utility. If there were a single criterion, it would seem impossible that one could legitimately discover some truth while at the same time having no idea how to make it useful—yet the phrase, "And hardest of all…" seems to refer to just such an occurrence. Further, if determining the utility of a truth is harder than determining its truth (as Rousseau suggests), it does not seem plausible that there is one and only one criterion that determines *both*. Black's suggestion for future research is, therefore, misleading or, at the very best, insufficiently supported by the arguments he provides. It seems to me, rather, that this passage raises the question of how to square the apparently extreme skepticism of this paragraph with the more positive assertions of all kinds (about both truth and utility) that we find in the rest of Rousseau's writings.

I should add in conclusion that the book's scholarly apparatus is superb. Black's endnotes consistently situate his arguments relative to other positions in Rousseau scholarship; they provide information about Rousseau's historical allusions and contemporary sources; they also draw extensive connections between the *First Discourse* and Rousseau's other writings. (For example, note 70 of chapter 8 provides an excellent resume of the discussion of conscience in *Emile*.) Along with the notes, Black supplies three appendices that treat particular interpretative puzzles of the *First Discourse*, including the identity of Rousseau's additions to the published version of the *First Discourse* (Appendix A), and the source and meaning of the alterations to Rousseau's extended quotation from Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (Appendix B). All three appendices are well-informed and judicious. Finally, along with the notes and the appendices, the book is equipped with an exemplary index. Between the text, the notes, and the index, Black provides the reader with a systematic means of assembling Rousseau's most important statements on many topics central to his thought (for example, virtue, *amour-propre*, sentiment, vanity, conscience, reason, and goodness). Readers have reason to thank Black for the sheer amount of information (and work) he has put into this book. It is a one-stop reference for the *First Discourse*.

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