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ON THE EUTHYDEMUS

LEO STRAUSS

From the Crito we are led to the Euthydemus by the consideration that the Euthydemus contains the only other conversation between Socrates and Kriton. The two dialogues stand indeed at opposite poles. The Euthydemus is the most bantering, not to say frivolous and farcical dialogue while the Crito is the most solemn one: the Crito is the only dialogue in which there occurs almost a theophany. Yet there is a remarkable kinship between the two dialogues in regard to structure. In the Euthydemus Socrates’ performed conversation with Kriton surrounds and interrupts the conversation, narrated by Socrates, between Socrates, Euthydemos and others. The only other dialogue which has a comparable structure is the Crito in which Socrates’ performed conversation with Kriton surrounds the quasi-conversation, evoked by Socrates, between Socrates and the Laws of Athens.

The farcical character of the Euthydemus stands in a superficial contrast with the fact that Socrates praises therein the patently absurd and ridiculous “art” of Euthydemos, not only to Euthydemos’ face, but in his absence when speaking to Kriton, as very great wisdom; he even expresses his desire to become a pupil of Euthydemos. Everyone will say, everyone has said that this is “that customary irony of Socrates.”1 But Kriton, the direct addressee of Socrates’ report about his conversation with Euthydemos, does not say this. Was Kriton unaware of that irony? Was he impervious to it? Would thus the Euthydemus not reveal to us Kriton’s most important limitation? Would it thus not throw light retroactively or in advance on the Crito?

I. The prologue: the initial conversation between Kriton and Socrates

(271 a1-273 d8)

Kriton opens the dialogue by asking Socrates “Who was it, Socrates, with whom you conversed yesterday in the Lykeion?” Kriton is therefore responsible for the dialogue’s taking place; the dialogue is as it were imposed on Socrates. Kriton’s question “Who was . . .” reminds us of Socrates’ “What is . . .” questions. Yet it is not philosophic but rather “anthropologic,” i.e. belonging to the sphere of gossip, of ordinary curiosity. Kriton could hear and see that Socrates was conversing with someone, presumably a stranger, but a big crowd standing around Socrates and the man with whom he conversed prevented him from seeing everyone and hearing anything distinctly. Since the conversation in which Socrates was engaged is called philosophic by Socrates himself, we may say that Kriton’s access to philosophy was blocked. He could see the man sitting next but one to Socrates on Socrates’ right,

1 Republic 337 a4–5.
and he could recognize the boy sitting between Socrates and that man; the boy reminded him of his son Kritoboulos who is more or less of the same age but the boy Kleinias had grown much lately and is beautiful and good to look at, while Kritoboulos is rather defective. We assume then that Kriton’s initial question is inspired not by aimless curiosity but by paternal concern for Kritoboulos who gave him cause to worry. This assumption is borne out by the end of the dialogue.²

The stranger whom Kriton has seen was Euthydemos; he had not seen Euthydemos’ brother Dionysodoros who had been sitting on Socrates’ left. Kriton does not know either of them at all whereas Socrates has known them for quite some time. Kriton believes that they are sophists; he wishes to hear where they come from and what their wisdom is; he does not ask how much they charge.³ Socrates is not certain as to their place of origin but he knows that they have been tossed around quite a bit among Greeks. As for their wisdom, they are the greatest masters in doing battle, i.e. winning battles, that Socrates has ever seen. Not only can they fight in heavy armor and enable others to do the same; they are also proficient in doing battle before law courts and in teaching others to speak before law courts and to compose speeches to be delivered before law courts. Above all, they have made themselves masters in the battle of speeches simply: they can refute everything that is said at any time regardless of whether it is false or true. Socrates speaks of pay only when he speaks of the two brothers’ ability to teach the art of fighting in heavy armor. The reason becomes clear at the end of his account: he declares to Kriton that he contemplates handing himself over to the two men for instruction in their art. They will of course demand pay for it and Socrates is poor. He must therefore persuade Kriton to participate in the venture. Kriton gives him an opportunity for doing this.

Kriton is not convinced that Socrates’ thought is wise: Socrates seems to be too old for the venture. The situation here is the reverse of that in the Crito where Socrates uses his old age as a reason for declining the venture offered by Kriton.⁴ Socrates replies that the two brothers themselves were already of advanced years when they took up that wisdom which he desires and which he now calls eristics. He grants that he and his hoped for teachers might become ridiculous to his boyish fellow pupils and that this must be prevented by all means since the two brothers are strangers. They might even refuse to accept Socrates as a pupil on this ground. But he has already an experience of how this difficulty can be overcome. He is also taking lessons in harp-playing together with boys; he got rid of the embarrassment caused to him and to the teacher by persuading some elderly men to become his fellow pupils. Socrates will therefore attempt to persuade some other elderly men – the combination of harp-playing and eristics is not suitable to most people – to become his fellow pupils at the two brothers’. He begins his attempt with

² cf. Crito 45 b4–6.
⁴ Crito 52 e2–4, 53 d7–c1.
Kriton: why does Kriton not go to school with him? As a bait they will take Kriton's sons to the two brothers. Kriton does not reject the proposal. He leaves the decision to Socrates. He surely does not show the eagerness he showed in the Crito.\textsuperscript{5} He wishes to hear first from Socrates what kind of wisdom they will learn if Socrates decides on handing himself and Kriton over to the two brothers. Socrates is only too willing to comply with Kriton's wish, i.e. to give a full and truthful, if not verbatim report, of yesterday's conversation.

According to some divine dispensation Socrates was sitting alone in the dressing room, in the place in which the conversation was to take place a little later, and was already about to leave. Then unexpectedly, when he had already got up, the customary sign, the daimonion, occurred to him, whereupon he naturally sat down again. According to its wont the daimonion had then warned Socrates against what he was about to do. In so doing however it rendered inevitable the conversation with Euthydemos and the others. The conversation was then imposed on Socrates by his daimonion. Yet, as the sequel shows, the conversation was the opposite of compulsory. The daimonion forbade him to leave the dressing room, as the Laws forbade him to leave the prison. By forbidding him to leave, the daimonion permitted, nay, sanctioned the conversation that followed. No other conversation presented by Plato has so high an origin. The high origin could be thought to explain why the Euthydemus is so extraordinarily rich in Socratic oaths.

Shortly after Socrates had sat down again, Euthydemos and Dionysodoros with a train of many pupils entered without taking notice of Socrates. A short while later Kleinias entered; he was followed by many lovers among whom Ktesippos stood out.\textsuperscript{6} Socrates confirms Kriton's remark that Kleinias had grown much; he would never himself have made that remark to Kriton. Kleinias did take notice of Socrates who was still sitting alone, and hurried to him at once. Kleinias had barely sat down at Socrates' side when Dionysodoros and Euthydemos after a short deliberation joined Kleinias and Socrates. Kleinias, who attracts so many lovers, attracts also Dionysodoros and Euthydemos with their crowd of pupils and is in turn attracted by Socrates. It is in this way that Kleinias' bipartite train, whose parts were joined only by chance, becomes in a manner the train of Socrates. But most obviously Kleinias is the center.

\textit{II. The first series of the two brothers' speeches (273 c1 - 278 e2)}

Socrates introduced the two brothers to Kleinias as men wise not in the small things but in the great ones: they understand everything pertaining to war which is needful for the future good general; they can also enable a man to help himself in the law courts if someone wrongs him. One sees at once

\textsuperscript{5} 46 b1.

\textsuperscript{6} Socrates speaks of Ktesippos "being beautiful and good in regard to his nature" (273 a8). Kriton speaks of Kleinias being beautiful and good in regard to sight (271 b4–5). Kriton never speaks of "nature."
that the description of the two brothers' arts which Socrates had given to Kriton is already considerably colored by what he learned from them soon afterwards. We note only that when speaking to Kriton Socrates had not mentioned the two brothers' mastery of the art of generalship: Kriton is less likely to be an aspirant to that art than Kleinias, the grandson of Alkibiades; besides he had mentioned to Kriton that they teach their arts for pay and that they teach one how to compose speeches to be delivered by others before law courts: if Kleinias keeps his promise, he will not need a speech writer, to say nothing of becoming one. Socrates' introduction met with contempt and laughter on the part of the two brothers; they teach the things mentioned by Socrates no longer as serious but only as by-work; their serious claim now is that they believe to be able to transmit virtue better and more quickly than any other human being.

What they understand by virtue becomes clear from Socrates' report to Kriton about their newly acquired power: they can refute whatever is said, be it false or true and they can enable anyone within a short time to do the same. This power is necessarily identical with virtue if virtue is wisdom and if wisdom in the proper sense—knowledge of the most important things—is impossible. For in that case the highest superiority of a man to others in speeches is eristic superiority. The brothers' view of virtue entails that in particular the art of generalship is not virtue, at least not the highest virtue.

Socrates seemed to be deeply impressed by the claims of the brothers. He wondered where they found their new possession; the last time they visited Athens they were experts in fighting in armor only; Socrates is now silent on the expertise in forensic rhetoric. We assume that Socrates had heard of their new claims during their present visit but in introducing the brothers to Kleinias deliberately refrained from mentioning their highest claim in order to hear that claim stated in public by the brothers themselves. Be this as it may, he then declared that if they truly possess the knowledge, the science, which they claim to possess, he ought to treat them like gods; only gods, it seems, could conceivably give men virtue. But considering the magnitude of the claim they must forgive Socrates' unbelief. The brothers were willing and even eager to exhibit their wisdom: they were on the lookout for pupils. No fee will be demanded for the exhibition. Socrates in his turn vouched that all those present who lack that wisdom—he, Kleinias, Ktesippos and all the other lovers of Kleinias—wish to acquire it.

Ktesippos happened to sit rather far away from Kleinias; when Euthydemos talked to Socrates, he happened to obstruct Ktesippos' view of Kleinias; thereupon Ktesippos who wished both to see his beloved and to hear what would be said, jumped up and took his stand opposite Socrates and the three others sitting with him; the others—both Kleinias' lovers and the brothers' comrades—did the same. It was then in the first place Ktesippos' desire to prevent the obstruction of his view of his beloved that led to the blocking of Kriton's access to philosophy. (Kriton is not an erotic man). As a result of Ktesippos' action the lovers and the pupils together formed a semi-circular wall around those who are neither pupils nor lovers.
Socrates appealed to the brothers to exhibit their wisdom since everyone present—not only Kleinias’ lovers but also the brothers’ comrades—are eager to learn: the brothers have a very large public. His appeal was greeted with great eagerness by Ktesippos and all the others. Apparently the brothers did not respond immediately. They surely gave Socrates the opportunity to address them once more. He asked them now to gratify the others and for his sake to exhibit their wisdom. He thus indicated that his interest in the exhibition differs from the interest in it taken by the others. The peculiarity of his interest appears from the question that he addressed to the brothers: can they transmit virtue only to someone who is already convinced that he ought to learn from them or also to someone who is not yet convinced of it because he does not believe that virtue can be taught or that they are teachers of virtue? There are reasons for believing that Socrates was doubtful whether virtue can be taught. Certainly the brothers must be able to dispel that doubt; they must possess an art which proves the teachability of virtue. But, Socrates wondered, that art will not necessarily prove that the brothers are excellent teachers of virtue. Dionysodoros assured him that one and the same art dispels both doubts: the teachability of virtue stands or falls by the two brothers’ teaching virtue most excellently.

Dionysodoros’ reply encouraged Socrates to ask him whether the brothers would not be best, at least of all human beings living now, at urging people on toward love of wisdom (philosophy) and an active concern with virtue. He obviously assumed that virtue and wisdom are identical or at least inseparable. But it is not clear why he is concerned with exhortation. Perhaps he thinks that exhortation to virtue does not presuppose that the question regarding virtue’s teachability be decided either way: even if virtue is acquired by means other than teaching, men must be encouraged to strive for it. On Dionysodoros’ replying again in the affirmative Socrates asked the brothers to exhort Kleinias to philosophizing and to caring for virtue: he and Kleinias’ lovers desire that the boy, the scion of a blessed house, should become as good as possible, and they fear that he might be corrupted. The youngest and most beloved member of the group is naturally in the greatest danger of being corrupted and therefore the fittest object of the brothers’ exhortation to virtue. Far from warning Kleinias against the mischief which the two sophists might do to him, as he warns Hippokrates against Protagoras, Socrates hands him over to the two sophists for education in virtue or in order to prevent his corruption. This difference is not sufficiently explained by the facts that in the case of Kleinias the sophists are present and Socrates is courteous; perhaps Hippokrates is more corruptible than Kleinias. We must also not forget that Socrates tells the story of Hippokrates to a nameless comrade, while he tells the story of Kleinias to his old and familiar friend Kriton.

Euthydemos was not disturbed by Socrates’ concern for Kleinias: he was not interested in Kleinias as Socrates is, with a view to the boy’s virtue or incorruption; the only thing which is necessary according to Euthydemos is that the boy be willing to answer. (Euthydemos laid down no other condition than that laid down by Socrates on other occasions.) Socrates re-assured him
on that score. Before he goes on with his report, he expresses to Kriton his apprehension that his report might not do justice to the amazing wisdom of the brothers: like a poet he must call to his assistance not only Memory but the Muses as well. Just as the dialogue would never have taken place without the intervention of the daimonion, its narration too is not possible without superhuman help. The narration is a kind of epic poem; it is in a way as poetical as the speech of the Laws in the Crito.

The questioning was begun by Euthydemos who asked Kleinias which human beings are learners, the wise or the unwise? Kleinias was embarrassed and turned to Socrates who encouraged him as well as he could. While Kleinias was still silent, Dionysodorus, whispering into Socrates’ ear, predicted that whatever the boy would answer, he would be refuted. Kleinias answered that the wise are the learners and when he was cross-examined by Dionysodorus, he was forced to admit that the unwise are the learners. Both answers were refuted by the brothers. The refutation is possible because of the equivocity of “unwise” which may mean both “stupid” and “ignorant”; the human beings who learn are those who are intelligent and do not (yet) know. The character of the reasoning was not made clear by Socrates or anyone else present. Socrates merely reports that the refutations were greeted with noisy laughter by the brothers’ pupils whom he now calls their lovers: from admiration to love there is only one more or less long step. On the other hand, Socrates and the other friends of Kleinias, while filled with admiration for the brothers, were depressed. We on our part can hardly fail to notice that each of the two elenchos looks like a Socratic elenchos. We may also note that if the fallacy is disregarded, the two refutations prove either that neither the wise nor the unwise learn, i.e. that learning is impossible, hence presumably that wisdom proper is impossible, and hence that the only wisdom possible is eristics; or they prove that both the wise and the unwise learn, i.e. that wisdom is not only possible but even most easy to acquire: while being the best it is the cheapest, like water (304 b 1–4). The contradiction between the two implicit results leads us to the question as to whether wisdom is possible. The final result leads then beyond the brothers’ wisdom.

There followed a second round similar to the first; Euthydemos addressed a question to Kleinias, Kleinias replied; Euthydemos refuted the reply and, on being cross-examined by Dionysodorus, Kleinias reasserted what he had answered first. Yet this time there was apparently no laughter and applause. Euthydemos was about to start a third round when he was stopped by Socrates. As he tells Kriton, he did not wish that Kleinias be still further discouraged. But we must not forget that Socrates was unable to stop the brothers earlier since their perfect teamwork had obviously taken him by surprise. In the speech by which he stopped them and which he addressed in the first place to Kleinias, he showed himself a changed man. Gone was the depression which he had felt before and very little remained of his admiration for the brothers. Someone might say that Socrates was never depressed and that he never admired the brothers. But why did he say “we were depressed” and “we admired Euthydemos”? Why did he then identify himself with
Kleinias' lovers and did no longer do so now? Socrates' narrative must be presumed to be coherent on all levels. The fact that the second round was hardly more than a repetition of the first surely contributed to the change. The full explanation however is that Socrates had understood in the meantime what the brothers were about. He explained this to Kleinias in an uninterrupted speech of unusual length: the two strangers have been doing to Kleinias what the Korybantes do to someone about to be initiated; it was a play, a prelude to the initiation into the sacred rites of sophistry; for one must learn first of all the right use of words, as Prodikos says; in accordance with this the strangers showed Kleinias his unawareness in this respect; but all this is play, enabling one at best to practise boyish pranks on people, for even if one has full knowledge of the right use of words, he will not know the things a bit better. Socrates comes close to saying to the brothers to their face that they have been practising boyish pranks on Kleinias. The strangers will of course from now on act seriously and fulfill their promise to exhibit their art of urging people on to virtue. Socrates turned next to the brothers themselves with the same reminder: they should show Kleinias in what manner one ought to be concerned with wisdom as well as with virtue. There are then various manners of urging on: although the brothers did not claim that their preceding speeches were serious and in particular that those speeches were protreptic, Dionysodoros at any rate had said that eristics and protreptics are one and the same art. What he meant can be inferred from what he and his brother did: if virtue is above all superiority in speeches or the ability to refute every speech, the mere exhibition of this ability will urge on every ambitious youth toward virtue. Socrates indicated his disagreement by declaring that he will give the brothers a doubtless poor specimen of what he understands by a protreptic speech. The protreptic speech will no longer belong to the prelude; it will be part and parcel of the sacred rites of "sophistry" in the wide sense of that term.

III. Socrates' protreptic speech I (278 e2-283 a4)

Now Socrates asked Kleinias to answer his questions. In contradistinction to the brothers he begins at the beginning. The brothers' tacit premise had been that their potential pupils are ambitious, that they are filled with the desire for what they regard as a great, if not the greatest, good. Socrates began his protreptic speech by inducing Kleinias to state that premise and to correct it.

He asked him first whether we human beings - all of us – do not wish to do or act well. He went on from there to propose a list of the good things which we need in order to do or act well. Since he did not suggest to Kleinias any alternative, and not only for this reason, one can say that his questions are leading; he surely wished to encourage Kleinias. Kleinias agreed with every point Socrates made. In this way it was established that first being rich, second being healthy, beautiful and the like, and finally noble birth, power and honor in one's city are good things. The order would be one of ascent for an ambi-
tious human being. Socrates did not ask Kleinias whether he thought the list is complete but he raised a question which would permit the answer that the list is complete. While he had divulged his own view in the former cases, he did not do so now. He asked the boy whether moderation, justice and courage are good things or not, adding that their being good could be disputed. It could be disputed on the ground that the only good things are those mentioned earlier and that the virtues are not necessarily needed for obtaining them. Nevertheless Kleinias replied that the three virtues are good. Only after Socrates had asked him whether wisdom belongs to the good things and had received an affirmative reply did he ask him whether in his view the list is complete; he thought that it is. Wisdom apparently belongs to another class of virtues than moderation, justice and courage. But then Socrates suddenly remembered the greatest of all goods, good fortune, which is universally and therefore of course also by Kleinias understood to be the greatest good. Yet with equal suddenness Socrates changed his mind by remembering that wisdom is good fortune, as even a child would know. But the child Kleinias did not know; he was astonished by Socrates’ contention. Socrates made him agree with him by showing him that in all cases wisdom makes human beings fortunate. The cases which he mentioned are flute playing, letters, seafaring, generalship and medicine. In speaking of the central case he indicated most clearly that the wisdom in question does not always guarantee good luck. Kleinias who was not supposed to notice this, did not notice it. We have then reached the result that wisdom is, humanly speaking, omnipotent. In the words of Socrates, he and Kleinias eventually agreed together, he did not know how, that in the main a man who possesses wisdom does not in any way need good fortune in addition. But if this is so, what becomes of the goods of fortune in the wide sense, like wealth, health and political power which occupied so conspicuous a place in Socrates’ list and which seemed to be indispensable for doing or acting well or for happiness? Socrates brought it about that Kleinias agreed to these propositions: we are happy on account of those goods only if they benefit us, and they benefit us only if we do not merely own them but use them; to convince Kleinias he used the examples of food and drink and then of a craftsman’s (a carpenter’s) tools and materials. (He implied that craftsmen using their tools and materials might act well but would not be happy.) Here the question arises whether we can use those goods if we do not own them and therefore whether a wise man who is poor or even a slave can be happy; in other words, the question arises whether good fortune is guaranteed by wisdom: needless to say, the question was not explicitly raised. Instead Socrates drew Kleinias’ attention to the fact that the mere use of good things will not suffice for making a man happy; the use must be right use; while wrong use is bad, non-use is neither good nor bad; right use is brought about by knowledge. Knowledge then brings about the right use of the good things figuring in the beginning of the previous list. No possession whatever is of any benefit if its use is not guided by prudence, wisdom, intelligence; a man possessing little but using it intelligently is more benefitted than a man possessing much but using it without intelligence;
hence a man without intelligence is better off if he is deprived of the good things previously listed than if he possesses them, for instance, if he is poor rather than rich, weak rather than strong, obscure rather than honored.\footnote{Compare what Socrates explains to Kriton's son Kritoboulos in the first chapter of the \textit{Oeconomicus}.}

When Socrates asked next who would do less, a courageous and moderate man or a coward, and therewith which of the two is better off without intelligence, Kleinias replied "the coward", i.e., the coward without intelligence is better off than the courageous man without intelligence; Socrates gave Kleinias no opportunity to decide whether the unintelligent man is better off if he is moderate or if he is immoderate. He gave him even less opportunity to decide whether the unintelligent man is better off if he is just or if he is unjust; judging by the analogy of the other cases the answer would have to be that he is better off if he is unjust. But this thought verges on the absurd. It is much better to say that justice seems to be the only good, the only virtue that is beneficent (on the whole) even if not guided by intelligence, perhaps because the laws which the just man obeys supply the lack of intelligence in the man himself.\footnote{That justice in contradistinction to courage and moderation cannot be misused is an important ingredient of the first paragraph of the text of Kant's \textit{Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals}. – Cf. \textit{Republic} 491 b7–10 and \textit{Meno} 88 a6–e4.} Accordingly Socrates' abstraction from justice here would be tantamount to an abstraction from law; he surely is silent about the laws in the \textit{Euthydemus} as distinguished from the \textit{Crito}. Be this as it may, the ruthless questioning of what Aristotle would have called the moral virtues,\footnote{\textit{Republic} 619 c7–d1 (and context).} served the purpose of bringing out the unique significance of wisdom: wisdom – and of course not honor or glory – is not only the greatest good; it is the sole good; only through the presence of wisdom and the guidance by it are the other goods good. This purpose is most appropriate in a speech meant to exhort to the practice of wisdom.

Socrates summarized the result of his preceding conversation with Kleinias and drew the conclusion to which Kleinias assented that every man must strive in every way to become as wise as possible. In particular he must beseech his lovers, nay, every human being to let him partake of wisdom, gladly doing every menial service which is not base in return. Kleinias wholeheartedly agreed. Only one difficulty remained: they had not investigated whether wisdom is teachable, let alone reached agreement on this point. Speaking in a more lively manner than ever before, Kleinias proclaimed his opinion that wisdom is teachable. This pleased Socrates since it saved him a long inquiry on this subject; he did not say that he and Kleinias have reached agreement on it. Socrates drew the final conclusion that since our happiness depends altogether on our wisdom and if virtue can be acquired by learning, learning, striving for wisdom, philosophizing is the one thing needful.\footnote{Kleinias' threefold use of "O Socrates" (280 d4, 282 c4, d3) is a very obvious example of that use of vocatives that is prompted by self-confidence.}
The premise of the two brothers' speech was that wisdom proper is impossible and therefore that its place is properly taken by eristics. Socrates seemed to be uncertain whether wisdom is teachable; it is not clear whether that doubt affects the possibility of wisdom. Yet the reasoning addressed to Kleinias seems to imply that in order to be wise one must know all the arts, and this does not seem to be possible for any one man; thus wisdom would be impossible. Socrates and the brothers agree as to virtue proper being different from "moral virtue". But as is indicated by Socrates' reference to the honorable services which the beloved boy may do in order to acquire wisdom, Socrates admits that there is some awareness of the honorable which antedates the acquisition of wisdom. His doubt of the teachability of wisdom may be connected with what he intimated regarding the limited power of wisdom in regard to luck or chance; perhaps one must be particularly "wellborn" in order to learn wisdom.

Socrates was pleased with his success in urging Kleinias on toward philosophy. He apologized again to the brothers for the inadequacy of his protreptic speech and asked them to repeat as craftsmen what he had done as a layman or else to continue his exhibition by discussing with Kleinias whether he must acquire every branch of knowledge or whether one who wishes to be happy and a good man needs to acquire a single branch of knowledge only and what this branch is. He also reminded them again of how important it is to him and the others that Kleinias should become wise and good.

This was the turning point in the dialogue. Socrates brings this out by addressing Kriton and stating to him that he was watching with the greatest attention what would happen next and observing in what manner the brothers would lay hold on the speech and from where they would start their exhorting Kleinias toward wisdom and virtue.

IV. The central series of the brothers' speeches (283 a5-288 d4)

It could be thought to be a good omen that it was Dionysodoros, the brother remotest in years from boyhood, who started the conversation. Socrates' and the others' expectations to hear something extraordinary were not disappointed: the speech was extraordinary as an exhortation toward virtue. Dionysodoros no longer addressed Kleinias nor did he pay any regard to what Socrates had said. He asked Socrates and Kleinias' lovers whether they are serious in wishing Kleinias to become wise. Thinking that it was the brothers' disbelief in their seriousness that had induced them to proceed so playfully before and fearing a repetition, Socrates assured them emphatically of their seriousness. This is all that Dionysodoros needed for his refutative speech: desiring that Kleinias become wise means desiring that he cease to be the one he is now - that he cease to be - that he perish; fine friends and lovers you are! Whatever else might have to be said about this speech, as an exhortation to virtue it is indeed extraordinary. Dionysodoros' thesis could be understood as a most shameless admission of the worst crime imputed to
sophists: education in wisdom is corruption of the young (see 285 b1). Or did Dionysodoros think that his speech was protreptic since it refuted Socrates and Kleinias’ lovers and thus enabled Kleinias to recognize the two brothers as the true teachers of wisdom? Was this the reason why he and his brother no longer addressed Kleinias himself?

We might have expected that Socrates would rebuke Dionysodoros for continuing with his boyish pranks. He failed to do so. This fact is of considerable importance for the understanding of the dialogue as a whole. The speeches of the brothers are obviously ridiculous and yet Socrates says to Kriton that he contemplates becoming their pupil and he even tries to induce Kriton to join him. Of the first series of speeches Socrates said in so many words that he could not take them seriously. His final judgment as stated to Kriton near the beginning of the dialogue makes sense only if at one point or another the conversation with the brothers had ceased to be playful and taken on a serious turn. We must watch to see how this change came about.

Did Socrates consider that philosophizing is learning to die? The obvious reason for his failure to rebuke Dionysodoros for his levity is that before he could say anything, Ktesippos vented his anger and indignation: Dionysodoros lied by imputing to him such an unholy wish. Euthydemos was not intimidated by Ktesippos’ outburst; he asked him whether in his opinion it is possible to say a falsehood or to lie. Ktesippos replied of course in the affirmative. Euthydemos refuted him by starting from the fact that one can speak about, or say, only what is and not what is not; he led up to the explicit result that Dionysodoros must have said the truth when he drew the conclusion that angered Ktesippos. (If Euthydemos’ reasoning were valid, all men would always think or say the truth whenever they think or speak; all men would be wise and there would be no need for wishing that Kleinias should become wise.) Ktesippos was not disconcerted by the refutation. He granted that Dionysodoros said somehow the things that are but not as they are. He tacitly presupposed that one can say the truth. It was this presupposition that was next questioned by Dionysodoros. (Dionysodoros’ argument would lead to the conclusion that all men always think or say the untruth, i.e. that wisdom is impossible on the ground opposite to the one advanced by Euthydemos.) Ktesippos contended that gentlemen as well as other men speak the truth. Euthydemos rejoined: if the gentlemen say the truth, they speak ill of evil things and of evil human beings; do they also speak bigly of big men and hotly of hot men? Whereupon Ktesippos replied: they speak frigidly of the frigid and say of them that they frigidly converse. The brothers had no expedient left but for Dionysodoros to complain about abuse; Ktesippos rejected that complaint as unfounded since Dionysodoros had so rudely said that Ktesippos wished the perdition of those whom he cherishes most. This round ended then clearly with a defeat of the brothers: Ktesippos’ manliness got the better of their wisdom. It was to be expected that the sophists would arouse sooner or later the susceptibilities of a hot-tempered young gentleman.

At this juncture Socrates was forced to intervene in order to prevent a conflagration. In order to appease Ktesippos, he was forced to speak to him
playfully: far from being able to blame the brothers for what could seem to be their continuing playfulness, the extreme seriousness of the situation that had arisen between Ktesippos and Dionysodoros forced him to become playful himself. He alluded to the fact that the issue was still merely verbal: the strangers insist on calling corruption what in ordinary parlance is called education to virtue and wisdom; if they know how to destroy human beings so as to make them good and sensible out of bad and senseless, let them destroy Kleinias and make him sensible and let them do the same to all of us; but if the young are afraid, let the strangers make their dangerous experiment on old Socrates. Therewith Socrates handed himself over to Dionysodoros to do to him whatever he pleased: Socrates’ handing himself over to the sophists of which he speaks to Kriton as of being contemplated by him only, has already taken place to some extent the day before, and it took place then with a view to appeasing Ktesippos’ wrath against the sophists.

Ktesippos, that generous youth, could not stay behind old Socrates and offered himself to the strangers for anything they might do to him provided their doings would end in him becoming altogether virtuous. He denied being angry at Dionysodoros: he only contradicted him. As if he had learned something from Proditkos, he pointed out that contradicting and abusing are two different things. The somewhat dangerous incident thus ended in perfect reconciliation between Ktesippos and Dionysodoros. We must not overlook the fact that Socrates established concord exclusively by influencing Ktesippos: the sophists were not angry. By speaking of contradicting, by taking it for granted that contradicting is possible, Ktesippos offered a flark to Dionysodoros. The fact that Dionysodoros and Ktesippos contradicted one another regarding contradicting was somehow noticed by Ktesippos. But Dionysodoros reduced him to silence. He did this by making use of the same point formerly used for showing the impossibility of lying; but the present case lacked the potential for anger or indignation which the former had.

Socrates was astonished by Dionysodoros’ argument. As he told Dionysodoros, he was always astonished at that particular argument for he had heard it from many people and many times – Protagoras used it and even people before him. It astonished him because it is incompatible with the claim of the men who use it. If it is impossible to lie, to say or think a falsehood, all men are wise, and there is no need for teachers like the brothers. While Socrates expounded this argument, Euthydemos took the place of his brother. So it happened that it was Euthydemos, the wisest or cleverest of the brothers, whom Socrates decisively refuted. The decisive character of this event could easily remain unnoticed. Socrates did not put the slightest emphasis on his victory and as for Euthydemos having been reduced to silence we can only infer it from the fact that Dionysodoros took the word again immediately afterwards. He blamed Socrates for reminding the brothers of something which they had said earlier: their claim that they can refute what is said at any one time (272 b1) is to be taken quite literally. Eristics, mental wrestling, is a game which as such is constituted by certain arbitrary but inviolable rules. As appears from the sequel, another rule of this kind which Socrates unwit-
tantly transgressed is that he who is questioned must not reply with questions of his own. Socrates bowed to this rule on the explicit ground that a man who is altogether wise regarding the matter determines reasonably whether to answer questions or not. Despite his compliance Socrates succeeded in refuting Dionysodoros and in fact the two brothers on fundamentally the same ground as before. This time Socrates put the proper emphasis on his victory. But this had the embarrassing consequence that Ktesippos became very abusive so that Socrates had to calm him again. The net result was therefore again that Socrates' refutation of the brothers could easily remain unnoticed.

Socrates calmed Ktesippos by a consideration that resembles the one by which he had encouraged Kleinias earlier. He spoke again of the brothers not being serious but on the other hand he studiously avoided the word "play" and derivatives from it. He spoke to Ktesippos of the brothers' witchcraft. Since the brothers imitated the Egyptian sophist Proteus, Ktesippos and Socrates ought to imitate Menelaos who forced Proteus to reveal his secret. Needless to say, Socrates will not use force. He proposed that he continue his protreptic speech: perhaps the brothers will from compassion with his serious endeavor be serious themselves.

V. Socrates' protreptic speech II (288 d5-290 e8)

Socrates asked Kleinias to remind him of where they left off but, without waiting for Kleinias' doing so, did the reminding himself: he had no faith in Kleinias' memory. Or did he have too great faith in it? They had finally agreed, he said, that one must philosophize. Strictly speaking they had not agreed on this since it followed from the premise, regarding which Socrates had suspended judgment, that wisdom is teachable. Be this as it may, philosophy is the acquisition of knowledge: of which knowledge? Not remembering their earlier discussion Kleinias regarded it as possible that kinds of knowledge which do not entail the good use of the knowledge concerned could be the desired knowledge. They agreed thereafter that they are in need of a kind of knowledge in which both the making (production) of something and the knowledge of how to use that something coincide. That knowledge as to how to make a thing which is not accompanied by knowledge of how to use it is insufficient for our happiness had become clear in the earlier exchange between Socrates and Kleinias; that knowledge of how to use a thing which is not accompanied by knowledge of how to make it or procure it is insufficient for our happiness was implicit in the earlier exchange; one could say that Socrates corrected in his second protreptic speech the defect of the first—the defect which consists in the abstraction from the power of chance. Using the criterion thus established they examined at Socrates' suggestion first the art of making speeches and then the art of generalship, i.e., the two arts of the brothers that are lower than eristics. Kleinias rejected the art of speech making on the ground that those who make (i.e. write) speeches to be delivered before courts of law and the like do not know how to use them: even regard-
ing speeches the art of making them and the art of using them are different. What is at least as important as this judgement is the amazing, the wholly new self-confidence with which it was made by young Kleinias. Socrates agreed with Kleinias’ main point that the art of speech making does not make men happy but he claimed that he had had great expectations from it: it is a marvelous art, not far inferior to the art of the enchanters; it bewitches crowds as the enchanters bewitch snakes, tarantulas and the like. All the more impressive is Kleinias’ firm verdict. (We must not forget however that “the art of making speeches” is an ambiguous expression: the art of making speeches that Socrates possesses is inseparable from the art of using them.) Socrates turned then to generalship as an art most likely to make its possessor happy. This proposal was again firmly rejected by Kleinias: generalship is an art of hunting but no art of hunting is an art of using; for instance, geometers, astronomers, and calculators do not make the figures which they use but find or discover them, and since they do not know how to use them, they hand their findings over to the dialecticians for use. For this remark Kleinias was praised by Socrates very highly – as highly as never before or after. Socrates did not say a word to the effect that if Kleinias’ statement were unqualifiedly true, dialectics, being neither a hunting nor a productive art but only an art of using, could not possibly be the desired science. The ironical character of his high praise did therefore not become quite obvious. Kleinias, obviously encouraged, went on to say that the generals hand over their conquests to the political men. But since he said nothing to the effect that the political men produce or hunt what they know how to use, he seems to imply without being aware of it that the political (or kingly) art too is not the desired science either. Within the context of the discussion the defect of dialectics and of politics (to say nothing of speech writing) cannot but redound to the benefit of eristics. And that defect was due to the use of a criterion established by Socrates.

V. a. The central conversation between Socrates and Kriton (290 e1-293 a8)

Kriton suddenly interrupts Socrates’ narrative. The reason for this is not that he is greatly concerned about the desired science but that he is concerned about his sons; Socrates’ glowing report about Kleinias has reminded him of his domestic difficulty. But without Socrates’ assistance or serious resistance he finds comfort in his unbelief; he is certain that Socrates’ report about Kleinias’ answers is a complete falsehood. He is then by no means incapable of becoming aware of Socrates’ irony in any point. Socrates admits that Kleinias or even Ktesippos may not have given the clever answers that he ascribed to Kleinias but he insists on not having given them himself; he claims to have heard them perhaps from some higher being. Kriton’s reaction to this claim is of the same force as if he had said in the Crito that not the laws but Socrates had made that impressive speech. Socrates provoked Kriton’s intervention by his unfounded praise of Kleinias in order to put a stop to Kriton’s
hesitation to send his sons to some teachers of wisdom. As a matter of fact Kriton now takes it for granted that youths not as advanced as Socrates' fictitious Kleinias might be benefited by becoming Euthydemos' pupils.

Kriton's interest is not exhausted by his interest in Kleinias; he is also interested in the subject matter of the conversation; he is interested to know the sequel of Socrates' protreptic conversation with Kleinias and especially whether they found the art they were looking for. Limiting himself to the most important, Socrates tells him what happened to them when they examined the kingly art which is the same as the political art; the term "kingly art" is perhaps preferred because it corresponds to the splendor, the claim of the art in question. The kingly art seemed to them the art which by ruling all other arts makes all things useful. Yet they were hard put to it to tell what the work of the kingly art is. At this point Kriton has become a participant in the conversation, as it were, at the side of Kleinias. (How would Kriton have reacted to Socrates' protreptic questions if he had been in the place of Kleinias?) While he knows quite well what the work of his art - the art of farming - is, he is as unable as Kleinias to tell what the work of the kingly art is or what good it transmits. But Socrates and Kleinias had agreed that there is no other good but some knowledge. This deprives such good things as freedom of the claim to be the work of the political art; in the light of the premises agreed upon by Socrates and Kleinias, freedom as such is neither good nor bad. (Hence it is better to speak of the kingly art.) It likewise follows that the kingly art must make the human beings wise, for only wisdom makes men happy. The kingly art is then an art which both "makes" (produces) something and guarantees the good use of that something. Kriton regards it as necessary to make clear that these things were agreed upon by Socrates and Kleinias: we do not know where Kriton stands. At any rate there is agreement between Socrates and Kriton as to the kingly art not transmitting all arts, for the products of all arts other than the kingly art are neither good nor bad. But in what will the kingly art make the human beings wise and good? Kriton knows that Socrates and Kleinias were in a great predicament: he is not affected by it and he has no suggestion to make as to how that predicament could be overcome. Socrates tells him that in his despair he called on the two brothers for help, urging them to be serious. Kriton is curious to hear whether Euthydemos helped Socrates and Kleinias: he has noticed the superiority of Euthydemos to Dionysodoros; he has become mildly interested in Euthydemos' wisdom.

Socrates' effort to determine the science which makes human beings happy has ended in complete failure. He has confirmed by deed the view of some of his critics that he was most excellent in exhorting men to virtue but not able to guide men to it:11 he proved to be excellent in exhorting Kleinias to strive for that wisdom which makes human beings happy but was unable to tell what that wisdom is. Someone might say that the predicament arises solely

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from the almost complete disregard of dialectics: dialectics is obviously the desired art or science. But then one must explain why Socrates abstracted from dialectics. Looking at the result of his action, one will be inclined to say that the abstraction from dialectics redounds in the circumstances of the dialogue to the benefit of eristics. But why is eristics to be benefited?

VI. The final series of the brothers' speeches (293 a8-304 b5)

Euthydemos came to Socrates' assistance by putting Socrates' question on the broadest possible basis. Instead of continuing Socrates' questioning on the kingly art, he asked him whether there is anything which he does not know. In other words, he proved that Socrates possesses that science regarding which he and Kleinias were in a predicament for such a long time by proving that Socrates is omniscient. He proceeded as follows. Socrates admittedly knows some things, however trivial; he is therefore a knowing man; being a knowing man he cannot be a non-knowing man at the same time; hence he must know everything. Socrates raised no objection to this monstrous argument but he showed by deed that he had learned Euthydemos' art: he raised no objection because he had learned Euthydemos' art. Instead he tried to turn the tables on the brothers by compelling them to admit that they, nay, all human beings too know everything. Dionysodoros made this admission without any ado. If we still remember the kingly art, we might be inclined to say that on the basis of Dionysodoros' admission the kingly art is compatible with democracy. Socrates made sure that the brothers were serious in raising the claim to omniscience; as a consequence Dionysodoros here used his only oath. When Ktesippos became aware of the exorbitant character of Dionysodoros' claim, he demanded a massive proof: does each of the brothers know how many teeth the other has? The brothers refused to comply with this demand since they believed that he was poking fun at them: they did not appeal to the rules of eristics since they were eager to answer any questions regarding the many skills however lowly they possessed. Socrates intervened by appealing from Dionysodoros to Euthydemos. Euthydemos succeeded in keeping Socrates properly obedient to the rules of eristics despite his knowing that Euthydemos wished to entrap him in merely verbal snares, i.e. despite his realizing the unserious character of the proceedings, for he was already resolved on becoming the pupil of Euthydemos, of that master in the dialectical art: the true dialectics was completely forgotten.

Socrates asked Euthydemos to begin his questioning again from the start. Thereupon Euthydemos asked him whether he knows what he knows by means of something. Socrates replied: yes, by means of the soul. This reply was not in conformity with the rules of eristics, for he had not been asked by means of what he knows. When Euthydemos pointed this out to him, Socrates became properly apologetic which did not prevent him from making a similar mistake immediately afterward. Socrates presents himself to Kriton as acting the part of a rather slow pupil - of a Strepsiades as it were. Accord-
ingly, he was led to admit that he always knew all things: when he was a child, when he was born, when he was conceived, before heaven and earth had come into being. Socrates was being taught a caricature of the doctrine of recollection; it is a caricature of that doctrine especially since it is silent on the soul as well as on learning. Euthydemus concluded his argument by asserting that Socrates will also know everything in the future, if this is Euthydemus’ pleasure. This is perfectly reasonable given his premises: only what he says (or thinks) is or will be, but since genuine wisdom is not possible, its place is taken by eristics so that only what is upheld by the master of that art is or will be.

Socrates next tried to entrap Euthydemus by asking him how he, Socrates, knows that the good men are unjust: if Euthydemus (we should remember the previous difficulty regarding justice) grants that Socrates knows it, he says something revolting; if he denies that Socrates knows it, he denies Socrates’ omniscience which he had been at such great pains to establish. Dionysodoros walked into the trap by preferring the alternative that is not shocking; he was openly rebuked for this by his brother, so much so that he blushed. When Socrates thereupon asked Euthydemus whether his omniscient brother had not made a mistake, Dionysodoros quickly asked whether he, Dionysodoros, is Euthydemos’ brother and thus forced him to answer this question and to forgo Euthydemos’ answer to his own question. The brothers finally forced him to admit that he is fatherless. This gave Ktesippos an occasion to intervene. He tried to turn the tables by bringing up the question of the brothers’ father. Yet Euthydemos gladly admitted that his father, being father, was a father of all men and all beasts while he himself as well as Ktesippos were the brothers of puppies and the like. Dionysodoros on his turn, proved to Ktesippos that by beating his dog who is a father and is his, he beats his father. (Socrates escaped the charge of father-beating only because he did not own a dog.) A somewhat insulting reply of Ktesippos led not to an intervention on the part of Socrates, but to Euthydemus telling Ktesippos that no human being needs many good things: the theme “father-beating” is followed by the theme “continence”. Ktesippos refuted Euthydemos’ first reasonable contention with the help of mythological examples. He defended the case for “having more” successfully also against Dionysodoros. The themes “father-beating” and “continence” remind us of the *Clouds* where Socrates is presented as a teacher of father-beating and as extremely continent. One is tempted to say that Socrates presents Euthydemos as a caricature of the Aristophanean Socrates. Socrates could not possibly have been the addressee of an argument in favor of continence, while Ktesippos was fitted for this role by his nature. Ktesippos was also successful in his ensuing argument with the brothers, so much so, that Kleinias was greatly pleased and laughed. As Socrates tells Kriton, he suspects that Ktesippos owed his success in the last argument to his having overheard the brothers discussing it among themselves, “for no other human being now living possesses such wisdom.”

When Socrates asked Kleinias why he laughed about such serious and beautiful things, Dionysodoros asked Socrates whether he had ever seen a
beautiful thing. He thus introduced the great theme of the relation of the beautiful things to beauty itself; according to Socrates things are beautiful by the fact that some beauty is present with each of them. Dionysodoros refuted this view by referring to the fact that Socrates does not become Dionysodoros by Dionysodoros’ being present with him and repeated his question in this more incisive manner: how can the different be different by the presence of the different with the different? While pretending to be surprised by Dionysodoros’ predicament which Dionysodoros himself traced to the non-being of the beautiful itself, Socrates was already trying to imitate the wisdom of the brothers since he longed for it. He imitated that wisdom to his satisfaction and thus and only thus defended “the doctrine of ideas” but admitted of course that otherwise the brothers are excellent craftsmen of the dialectical art which as every art finishes off its peculiar work. This gave Dionysodoros an occasion to perform another of his verbal somersaults which Socrates praises as the peak of wisdom: “will this wisdom ever become my own?” This question or exclamation induced Dionysodoros to ask Socrates what he understands by his own. Somewhat rashly Socrates agreed that only those living beings are his own which he may sell, give away, or sacrifice to any of the gods. But what then is the status of Socrates’ ancestral gods? Obviously Socrates may give them away, sell them, or sacrifice them to any of the gods he pleases. Socrates was knocked out and left speechless. Euthydemos had given him the knock out blow. The brothers acted like caricatures of Socrates’ accusers: they did not seriously accuse him. Ktesippus who had tried to come to Socrates’ help fell an easy victim to another of Dionysodoros’ clowneries; he gave up the struggle with the words “the two men are unbeatable.”

The whole show had ended with the complete victory of the brothers. This was the view not merely of Euthydemos’ lovers but of the group around Kleinias and, above all, of Socrates as well: Socrates had never seen so wise human beings. Overwhelmed by their wisdom he turned to praising them. He praised them in the first place for their indifference to the many as well as to the great men who are thought to be something; only the few who resemble them like the brothers’ speeches; all other men would be more ashamed to refute others with the help of speeches of this kind than to be refuted by them. This sense of shame has nothing to do with the awareness of unfair advantage, as appears from the second ground on which Socrates praises the brothers: their speeches are popular or populist and gentle; they reduce indeed everyone to silence by denying the obvious but they thus reduce themselves too to silence, so that their speeches cannot be resented. Finally, they have brought their art to such a perfection that anyone can learn it within a very short time. This fact, it is true, carries with it the inconvenience that a single public exhibition, which is meant to allure paying pupils, suffices for initiating people to their art; Socrates advised them therefore to abstain from public exhibitions. He concluded by asking the brothers to accept him and Kleinias as pupils.

Turning to Kriton, he encourages him to join him (and Kleinias) in going
On the Euthydemus

to school at the brothers': the only condition laid down by them is a payment of a fee, not natural gifts nor youth; and what is especially important for Kriton, the brothers' instruction does not in any way interfere with one's money-making.

VII. The epilogue: the final conversation between Socrates and Kriton

(304 b6-307 c4)

Kriton politely declines Socrates' suggestion: he belongs to those who would rather be refuted by Euthydemian speeches than refute other men with their help. Aware of the difference of rank between himself and Socrates, he regards it as improper or ridiculous to rebuke him for his strange likes but he cannot abstain from telling him what he was told by somebody else. Quite by accident he met a man who had heard the exchange of speeches - a man with a high opinion of his wisdom and who is clever in regard to forensic speeches. That man had nothing but contempt for the brothers. Kriton defended the brothers' doings against him with the words "but philosophy is something graceful", i.e. he took it for granted that the brothers' speeches are philosophic. His nameless informer also disapproved of Socrates' absurd conduct toward the brothers; Kriton would have been ashamed of him. Kriton repeats his disagreement with the unqualified disapproval of the brothers' speeches but he feels that Socrates is to be blamed for publicly disputing with them.

Socrates is unable to reply properly to this detractor of philosophy before he knows to what kind of man he belongs. He learns from Kriton that he composes speeches to be delivered by orators proper. Men of this kind belong according to Prodikos and according to Socrates to the borderland between the philosophers and the politicians and regard themselves as superior to either; in order to be recognized universally as such, they denigrate the philosophers: the greatest threats to their renown are the masters of Euthydemian speeches. Socrates agrees with Kriton in describing Euthydemos' art as philosophy. The men in question regard themselves as supremely wise because they partake in the proper measure partly in philosophy and partly in political matters. Socrates' judgment on them is based on this principle: everything that is between two things and participates in both is inferior to the better and superior to the worse, if one of the two things is good and the other bad; if the two things are good and directed toward different ends the thing participating in both is inferior to both in usefulness for the ends in question; if the two things are bad and directed toward different ends, the thing participating on both is superior to both. Hence if both philosophy and political action are good but directed toward different ends, as the borderland people cannot help admitting, they are inferior to both the philosophers and the politicians. Socrates presupposes here that philosophy and the political art have different ends and hence are different arts; he tacitly repeats the radical distinction between dialectics and the kingly art. He asks that one not be angry with the detractors of philosophy; after all, they take
hold of something reasonable: they are aware of the radical difference between philosophy and politics.

Socrates has successfully vindicated Euthydemos and what he stands for. Kriton neither denies nor admits this. Instead he turns to the subject of his greatest and constant predicament: his two sons, and especially his oldest son Kritoboulos. Whenever he meets Socrates, he becomes aware of the paramount importance of education but he cannot find an educator worthy of the name. As a consequence, he does not know how to urge on Kritoboulos toward philosophy: he does not dream of asking Socrates to apply his protreptic skill to Kritoboulos nor does Socrates offer it. One could say that Socrates had candidly exhibited the limitation of his protreptic art; yet he had at least tried to apply it to Kleinias. A more plausible reason is that Kritoboulos’ nature is less fit for the purpose than Kleinias’ or, in other words, Socrates’ daimonion holds him back in the case of Kritoboulos as distinguished from that of Kleinias.

Socrates reminds Kriton of a fact to be observed in regard to every pursuit, the fact that the good practitioners are rare; just as this is no reason for rejecting money-making or rhetoric, it is no reason for rejecting philosophy. One must carefully examine philosophy itself. If it seems to be a bad thing, Kriton must keep everyone, not only his sons, away from it; but in the opposite case the opposite course is to be taken.

We are still too much inclined to see the conflict between Socrates and “the sophists” in the light of the conflict between the thinkers of the Restoration and the thinkers who prepared the French Revolution or took its side. In the Euthydemus Socrates takes the side of the two brothers against Ktesippus and Kriton. Socrates was not the mortal enemy of the sophists nor were the sophists the mortal enemies of Socrates. According to Socrates, the greatest enemy of philosophy, the greatest sophist, is the political multitude (Republic 492a5-e6), i.e. the enactor of the Athenian laws.
HEGEL, MARX AND CHRISTIANITY*

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE

translated by Hilail Gildin**

An unwarned reader could be misled by the title of Mr. Niel’s book. In fact, what is involved is not an abstract analysis of the Hegelian category of Mediation (Vermittlung). It is the whole concrete content of Hegel’s philosophy that is set forth. And it must be said that the author has executed a real tour de force by summarizing in less than 400 pages almost the totality of the Hegelian writings.

Moreover, the title chosen by Mr. Niel is perfectly legitimate, and it bears witness to a profound understanding of the general structure of Hegel’s thought. Indeed, to say Mediation is to say Dialectic, for all that is mediated is dialectical, and all that is dialectical is mediated. Now in Hegel Dialectic is anything but a method of thought; it is not an artifice of philosophical exposition: Dialectic is the very structure of concrete reality itself, and it only penetrates into philosophical thought to the extent that philosophical thought correctly describes this concrete reality taken as a whole. To analyze Mediation (i.e., Dialectic) in Hegel’s philosophy is therefore to analyze that philosophy itself in its whole concrete content. And that is precisely what Mr. Niel does in his book.

One might, nevertheless, regret the fact that the author did not devote a chapter to a more or less formal analysis of the very notion of Mediation or Dialectic. And I must say that wherever he incidentally speaks of this notion in general terms what he says about it is not, in my opinion, absolutely correct (see especially p. 70, note 10; pp. 102-04 and p. 357).

The relative lack of understanding of Dialectic in Hegel does not prevent Mr. Niel from giving a perfectly correct summary of the dialectical philosophy which he sets forth. This lack of understanding is, however, very grave in the sense that it inspires commentaries which give a fundamentally false meaning to correctly summarized theories. This apparent paradox is explained by the fact that Hegelian dialectical texts are necessarily, and some-

*This long review essay of Henri Niel’s De la Médiation dans la philosophie de Hegel (Paris, 1945) originally appeared in Critique, 1 (1946), 339–366. The permission of Critique to publish an English translation of this essay is gratefully acknowledged.

** Translator’s note: Double brackets and double parentheses represent insertions by the translator. Other brackets and parentheses are reproduced from the original. In the places where “lutte” could not be translated by “fight” and “dépasser” by “surpass” the French words have been supplied between double parentheses or double brackets. James H. Nichols’ recent translation of Kojèvé (Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, ed. Allan Bloom [New York, 1969]) has furnished the translator with many useful suggestions. Jonathan Mandelbaum’s helpful advice is also gratefully acknowledged.
times intentionally, ambiguous (as Mr. Niel himself acknowledges, for example pp. 17, 214 and 332). The same text, whether it be directly quoted or correctly summarized, can mean very different things depending on the way in which it is read. For instance, Mr. Niel reads the texts and his own summaries in such a way as to give them, with many reservations, moreover (see pp. 214, 351 and 369), a theistic and even a theological meaning. Now in reality these summarized texts set forth a radically atheistic philosophy.

It must be said, however, that this essential misunderstanding, which has lasted for as long as Hegelianism exists, is only possible because Hegelian atheism has a very special character. Hegel is not atheistic in the usual sense of the word, for he does not reject the Christian notion of God and does not even deny its reality. And so, one often finds theological formulas in Hegelian philosophy. But, in the deepest sense, this philosophy is nevertheless radically atheistic and non-religious. For the only and the unique reality of the Christian notion of God for this philosophy is Man, taken in the totality of his historical evolution accomplished in the midst of nature, this totality being completed (= perfect) through the Wise Man (Hegel), who reveals it itself to itself in and through the absolute Knowledge which he has of it. And it is enough to correctly interpret the very notions of Mediation or of Dialectic (or, if you prefer, of Negativity, of Time, of History) to understand that it cannot be otherwise.

In what follows, I will try to recall the genuine meaning of the Hegelian Dialectic (= Mediation), in order to permit the reader who does not know it to understand correctly the excellent summary which Mr. Niel has made of the work of Hegel, in spite of the generally debatable commentaries which surround the expositions properly so called.

The vulgar sciences deal with abstractions. For they are concerned with particular entities which they isolate "by abstraction" from the whole real universe which these entities in reality form part of. Hegelian philosophy, on the other hand, or more accurately absolute Knowledge, is concerned with Being in its concrete reality. In other words, this Knowledge does not abstract from anything (not even from itself) and reveals (= describes) the totality of what is. One can therefore say that absolute Knowledge has Totality as its "object"; this Knowledge does nothing but analyze and reconstruct Totality out of its constitutive elements (Momente) which are isolated by analysis. But the totality of what is also implies the Knowledge which reveals this totality, to the extent that this Knowledge is itself real. One can therefore just as well say that Totality, real concrete Being, is at the same time revealed "object" and revealing "subject." And it is precisely for this reason that concrete Being is Totality; or, and this is the same thing, that it is the True (das Wahre), or Concept (Begriff), or absolute Idea.

However, in saying that real concrete Being is Totality, Concept, or Idea, Hegel is enunciating something other than this truism, which reminds us that the concrete real is constituted by all that exists. The term Totality has, in Hegel, a technical, or, if you please, a "dialectical" meaning. Totality is the
synthesis of Identity (= thesis) and of Negativity (= antithesis). And it is precisely because real concrete Being is not only Identity (with itself) but also Negativity (of itself) that this Being is at the same time “subject” and “object,” that is to say, *being* revealing itself to itself through (discursive) thought and *thought* which realizes itself in being (as truth) and thinks itself in speaking of its own concrete reality or of the totality of what *is*.

The totality of what is does not remain eternally identical to itself. To be sure, it always remains what it is, namely Totality (taken as Identity). But it also is always other than it is; it therefore negates what it is, it negates itself as it is and it is not Totality (taken as Negativity) except as the totality of its successive auto-negations. In other words, real concrete Being changes and is nothing other than *(is the same as)* the totality of its real changes. That is to say, Totality is neither pure identical Being (*Sein*), nor simple other than Being, that is to say, Nothingness (*Nichts*), but the synthesis of the two or Becoming (*Werden*). Or else, again, Totality is the *nihilation* of the Nothingness in Being through the annihilation of (identical) Being: it is the Temporality of the Spatiality which *is*. Totality is therefore time which *is* as space, or space which only *is* to the extent that it is *annihilated* as time by *becoming* past.

One can also say that the temporalization of Being subtracts the being from Being. For past being does not differ from present being except for the fact that it *is* not any longer, just as future being *is* not yet. But neither does the concept “Being” differ from Being itself except for the fact that it *is* not in the same way that Being *is*. One can therefore say that temporalization (= Negativity) transforms Being (= Identity) into the Concept of Being, so that Totality (= Identity + Negativity), since it is Concept-which-*is* or Being-which-is-conceived, *is*, in effect, at the same time “subject” and “object,” being and thought, in a word, absolute Idea or Knowledge.

Hegel expresses this “dialectical!” (= trinitarian) conception of real concrete Being also by saying that this Being is not only in itself (an sich; = Thesis or Identity), but also for itself (für sich; = Antithesis or Negativity); it is *in and for itself* (an und für sich; = Synthesis or Totality). Or else, he also says that real concrete Being is always dialectically-suppressed (aufgehoben): in and through the Antithesis, Being is suppressed or negated as Thesis or as given Being; but just as *A* is preserved in *non-A*, negated Being is preserved in its being, for the Antithesis also *is*; finally, just as *non-A* is determined not only by the *non* but also by the *A*, although it is other than *A*, that is to say *B*, – so too Being which is preserved in and through its negation is other than Being which is negated; and one can say that negated-preserved-Being is *sublimated* in its being, for having negated itself as given, it has transformed or formed (*gebildet = educated*) itself, so that it is no longer “brute matter” but “wrought product.” Or else, finally, Hegel summarizes all that precedes by saying that real concrete Being is mediated (vermittelt) in its being. Being ((*L’être*)) is Totality, i.e., Being-which-is-conceived or Idea-which-is-real, because the Identity of Being is mediated by Negativity. Being negates its given being, and by thus temporalizing itself through auto-negation, it creates itself through this Mediation as revealed or as thought of Being.
Such, in brief, is the “dialectic” of Being on the ontological plane. And one can already see on this plane that this “dialectic” is essentially atheistic. (One of the principal “dialectical” texts which prove this is, moreover, quoted by Mr. Niel, p. 80, note 28).

Indeed, Being is Totality, that is to say, thought or “subject” that one could be tempted to call “God,” only to the extent that it implies Negativity. Now this Negativity is pure nothingness (reines Nichts) apart from “brute” given Being (Being which only a “pagan” could have characterized as “divine”). The “subject” which Hegel has in view does not, therefore, create Being out of nothing. On the contrary, it can only be, or create itself, by negating given being which it therefore presupposes: it can only derive its own being from the being which is given to it and which is therefore independent of it. The being or the nihilation of the “Subject” is the temporaliing nihilation of the Being which must be before being annihilated: the being of the “Subject” therefore necessarily has a beginning. And since it is the (temporal) nihilation of the nothingness in Being, since it is a nothingness which nihilates (as Time), the “Subject” is essentially the negation of itself: it therefore necessarily has an end. Now if this is the case, it is quite evident that the “Subject” in question is certainly not “divine.” (In the text quoted on p. 80 [by Mr. Niel]], Hegel says: “The annihilating inquietude of the infinite is only by the being of what it annihilates.” And it is clear that the “infinite” which is only a negation of the finite, only a non-finite, is not autonomous in its being and therefore does not have the character of a “divine” infinite.)

All this becomes much clearer when one descends to the metaphysical plane. Here real-concrete-Being is objective-Reality (Wirklichkeit). And, of course, there is objective reality only where there are no abstractions effected by a “subject.” Objective-Reality is therefore, by definition, Totality. Now this objectively real totality is called “Spirit” (Geist) in Hegel. The whole metaphysical problem therefore reduces itself to the question of knowing what Spirit is “in truth,” or “objectively,” that is to say, as it reveals itself to itself.

It is evident, in the first place, that objective-Reality is not only Nature (and that is precisely why Hegel calls this Reality “Spirit”). For reality implies all that is objectively real, and therefore all that is realized for all here and now. However, now there are here not only “natural,” “brute” or given realities, such as wood for example, but also wood transformed into paper by work and words written on this paper, words having a meaning, and a meaning which reveals natural reality (for example, as not by itself exhausting objective Reality). In other words, the reality of what we call the “historical world” and the “universe of discourse,” or – in brief – “man,” is just as objective as the reality of what we call the “natural world” or “nature.” Objective Reality or Spirit is therefore neither only Nature, or the non-human world independent of human reality, nor only Man, or human reality independent of the natural world. Spirit is natural-World-implying-man, or, and this is the same thing, Man-in-the-world. And just as natural objective reality is not such or such a thing taken in isolation, i.e., in abstraction from
the real ties that attach it to its spatial surroundings in the present and connect it to its past and to its future, but the indissoluble whole of the natural spatio-temporal world—so too objective human reality is not such or such an “individual” taken in fictitious isolation, but the whole historical evolution of humanity, which is accomplished in the midst of the natural world.

Objective-Reality is not Nature but Spirit because the universe in fact implies man and because man is essentially something other than an animal, a plant or an inanimate thing. While living in the midst of nature, man leads a life there which is “contra-natural,” which only becomes possible to the extent that he creates a non-natural, technical or “historical” world. This world can only be created by man through a trans-formation or “formation” of the natural given (= raw materials), i.e. by an objectively real negation of natural objective reality, this negation being Action (Tun) in the proper and strong sense of the word. Objective human reality is therefore a negating “antithesis” of identical or “thetic” Nature. And that is why objective-Reality is in fact “synthetic” or “mediated,” viz., “dialectically suppressed,” that is to say, “spiritual”: it is objectively real Spirit.

Man in his objective reality is Action. That is to say, he is only real to the extent that he really or “objectively” negates natural reality. And this means that he is transcendent with respect to nature. On the one hand, he is free as regards it, for he can negate nature in its given reality and is not, therefore, determined by it; and he can even negate himself as given or as “natural.” On the other hand, in realizing himself through negation, man does not arise out of nature as a result of a “natural” evolution: he creates himself freely in creating the historical world. Finally, in negating given nature, he sets himself in opposition to it and opposes to it what is not yet objectively real, while bringing this un-real into relation with reality: he opposes to the natural given projects (= ideas) which he realizes by Action that negates the given. He therefore opposes himself to nature in the way the “subject” opposes itself to the “object.” Being Action, he is also Discourse having a meaning, discourse which reveals through its meaning the real which is opposed to man as well as the real which creates itself as human reality. Thus, being Man-in-the-world, Spirit is “flesh” become “Logos.” It is an objective reality which has a meaning and which therefore is a value. It is a free creative reality which reveals the real (= Totality) and reveals itself as real. And it is, if you please, infinite, at least in the sense that it is non-finite; for in being able to negate the finitude of the given, whatever it be, it is not limited by this finitude, limitation or “determination” (Bestimmtheit).

The metaphysical anthropology of Hegel therefore preserves the fundamental categories of Christian theology. But can one say that the Hegelian transcendence of the Spirit is anything other than the transcendence of man with respect to nature? Can one say that, for Hegel, objective-Reality is anything other than natural and human? Can one say that the Spirit of which he speaks is God?

Many perfectly univocal texts compel one to reply in the negative. One of them, which is late, moreover, is quoted by Mr. Niél (p. 368, note 15) without
his drawing the inevitable conclusion from it. “It seems,” Hegel says there, “that the Weltgeist has succeeded now [i.e., at the moment at which universal history is completed by the advent of the Wise Man or of Hegelian absolute Knowledge] in grasping itself as absolute Spirit . . . . The struggle ([lutt]) of the finite consciousness with the absolute consciousness which seems external to it has ceased. The absolute consciousness has received the reality of which it was deprived earlier.” [Italics mine.]

This text is very clear. The Weltgeist is humanity in its historical evolution in the midst of the natural world. At the end of this evolution, in the person of Hegel, man “grasps himself as ((the)) absolute Spirit” which was earlier called “God”: Hegel understands and proclaims that what was called “God” is, in reality, humanity, taken in the completed totality of its historical evolution. Before the advent of Hegelian knowledge, “absolute consciousness seems to be external” to man. And that is precisely why pre-Hegelian man calls it “God.” But that was only an illusion. In fact, theology always was an unconscious anthropology; man projected into the beyond, without realizing it, the idea that he had of himself, or the ideal of his own perfection that he pursued. Now, at the end of history (and it is precisely because of this that it is completed) the most sublime ideal implied in Christian theology is realized by man. Man therefore no longer surpasses himself, and his given reality (which he created earlier) is now no longer a limit or a “determination” for him. One can therefore say that “the finite consciousness has ceased to be finite.” Now, it is “in that way” that God “has received” the objective reality of which he “was deprived earlier.” Before the completion of history, i.e., before the perfection of man, the “absolute consciousness” was only an (unconsciously anthropological) externalized “representation” (Vorstellung) projected into the beyond and named “God.” The absolute Spirit is only objectively real as finite or human consciousness which has ceased to be finite by enclosing itself upon itself in the cyclical movement of absolute Knowledge, that is to say, the complete auto-comprehension of its completed or perfect realization. The Absolute Spirit is therefore “infinite” only in the sense that it is non-finite: it is infinite through the completed active negation of the finitude of the identical or natural given which it presupposes. And this is why the Spirit is not God, but simply the spatio-temporal totality of objective natural and human reality or Man-in-the-world.

But isolated texts matter little. It is the whole dialectical philosophy of Hegel that is incompatible with theism of any kind whatever.

On the one hand, the spiritual which is “dialectical” is a negation of the natural; it is therefore pure nothingness “before” the existence of nature and it would be pure nothingness if nature did not exist or if it ceased to exist; there is no trans-mundane, that is to say “transcendent,” Spirit in the theistic sense of the term. On the other hand, “dialectical” man creates himself as human by negating himself as natural, or, generally, as “given”; it is in this way that he becomes, that he is “historical,” by becoming in time other than he is at any given moment; but he remains man while surpassing himself; and that is why the spiritual realizes itself by transcending natural reality
without ever being able to transcend human reality: all that is spiritual is non-natural, but all that is non-natural is human and human only.

An attempt has been made to interpret Hegel’s dialectical metaphysics by saying that it is the description of the “becoming of God” (“pantheism”). But even if one admits, per impossibile, that the notion of the “becoming of God” has a meaning, it must be said that one cannot, without abusing language, characterize as “divine” the becoming which Hegel has in mind. For, since it has a beginning and an end, that historical becoming is essentially finite in the proper sense of the term. History necessarily has a beginning, for if man is the negation of nature, a world without men must exist before there are men in the world. And history also necessarily has an end. Or, more precisely, one cannot say anything whatever that is conclusive or true unless history has an end or is even in effect completed. Indeed, if there is Totality and not only Identity, that is to say, if Being is Becoming, the becoming (= change) of being will perpetually transform into relative error the (relative) truth of the discourse which correctly reveals being such as it was at a given moment (in its identity with itself). In order for there to be (absolute) truth in what becomes, becoming must be completed. Now it is human reality which negates, changes or changes itself in being. It is therefore history which has to be completed in order for there to be a truth of which one can say that is universally and eternally (= necessarily) valid, that is to say, a truth in the proper sense of the word. Thus, either there is no Truth, no Knowledge (Wissen) properly so called, and the only possible attitude is that of Skepticism (with its counterpart, irrational [= in-coherent] Faith [Glau- ben] which never succeeds in “looping the loop” of its discourse or reasoning, the “gap” in the reasoning being precisely the “revealed” notion of the divine), or else history has an end and the Spirit is finite in its objective manifestations, being the human Spirit. In any case, there is therefore no possible theology, there is no science (Wissenschaft) of God.

To be sure, the end of history is not a limit imposed on man from without: history is, if you please, unlimited. For man can negate all that he wants ((to negate)), and he only ceases to negate and to vary if he no longer wants to do so. He therefore does not complete his becoming unless he is perfectly satisfied (Befriedigt = sated; see above: “the struggle [[lutte]] of the finite consciousness with the absolute consciousness . . . has ceased”) by what he is; or, more precisely, by what he has done, – since he has created himself (through the negation of what did not satisfy him outside of him and within himself). And since man is alone in being able to negate and to negate himself, that which satisfies him perfectly is perfect in the strong sense of the term: it is something which cannot be surpassed any more. Thus, Hegel preserves the notions of (satisfied) perfection and of (perfect) satisfaction which, up to him, had been the exclusive possession of theistic thought. But in him these notions have an atheistic meaning, for the Being which is perfect in and through its satisfaction and satisfied in and through its perfection is not God but a man in the world: – the Wise Man possessing absolute Knowledge and in this way being the Truth (= Logos).
The atheism of the ontological and metaphysical “dialectic,” which I have just analyzed briefly, is in perfect accord with the phenomenological “dialectic” of Hegel.

When one descends from the metaphysical plane to the phenomenological plane, objective-Reality becomes empirical-Existence (Dasein). The real becomes “phenomenon”: i.e., the real “reveals” itself as a whole (consisting) of “objects” opposed to a multiplicity of “subjects” endowed with the capacity for speech; or else, again, the real “appears” (erscheint) as the speaking existence of men who speak of themselves and of other men, as well as of all that is not themselves. Now, according to Hegel, this existence is essentially finite or mortal and it is exclusively because it is mortal that it is revelatory and revealed. There is “revelation” only where there is finitude and death. And so “God” must die in order to “reveal” himself completely and definitively (e.g., Christ); i.e., he must become “man” and therefore cease to be “God” (the only – theistic – error of Christianity is the Resurrection); as long as he remains “God” he is necessarily hidden (abscons) (precisely because God is not, because there is no God). If there are “phenomena,” that is to say, if there are revealed and revelatory existences, this is uniquely, says Hegel, because there are on earth men who are mortal in the strong sense of the term, i.e., able, on the one hand, to voluntarily perish, without any “biological necessity” (risk of life in a fight for pure prestige) and, on the other hand, (in absolute Knowledge) able to become fully conscious of their essential finitude (while being fully satisfied by this very (“experience” of) becoming conscious). Now if man is truly mortal, if he is annihilated in and through death, there is no God.1 For the “divine,” or the “transcendent” in the sense of the trans-mundane, is, in the final analysis, nothing but the “natural place” (or Aristotelian “topos,” imaginary to boot) of men “after their death”: the existence of God can only be the afterlife or the resurrection of man (cf. the evangelistic “good tidings”).

This implicitly atheistic finitude of the phenomenological dialectic appears at the very moment at which the young Hegel discovers the fact of dialecticity for the first time. This discovery was made, moreover, on the phenomenological plane. And Mr. Niel is right to stress that the first dialectical human phenomenon which presented itself to Hegel was the phenomenon of Love (Liebe). Now it is the love between essentially mortal beings which is at issue.

Love is dialectical because it is Totality and not Identity pure and simple. The Lovers (Liebende) are united and one. But their absolute unity is a union of two beings who are “separate,” essentially autonomous or different (difference = negation; Negativity). This is why the “totality” of both lovers is something other than each of these lovers considered in his “identity” with

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1 Suicide à la Kirilov, i.e., a death which is voluntarily and consciously self-inflicted without any external cause, limits the omnipotence of all those who are not the one who commits suicide; and therefore also the omnipotence of “God,” who thus ceases to be “divine.” For that only is “divine” which can act on me without my being able to act on it or against it in such a way that the action would be equal to the reaction.
himself: their “totality” is the child. And it is because the child is totality (“re-unification” of the lovers) and not only identity that he is an educable and educated human being. Now the child is totality because the parents are “separated” in spite of their amorous union, since they are free and autonomous individuals. And they are that only because they are mortal (each having to die for himself, in spite of the amorous tie which attaches him to the other). Thus it is because the parents are mortal that the child is human. And he is also the death (= Negativity) of his parents not only on the biological plane but also on the human plane. For he is himself human only because his parents educate him. But in educating him, they prepare a “new generation” which will relegate them and the ideas they have of themselves and of the world to the nothingness of the historical past, which will only live in the memory (Erinnerung) of the child. Love, death and historicity, that is to say, the humanity of man, are therefore interdependent from the beginning of Hegel’s dialectical analyses.

However, this first sketch of dialectical phenomenology did not satisfy Hegel. He does not tell us why. But one can assume, with Mr. Niel, that he abandoned (or, more precisely, transformed) the dialectic of love because it did not account for the phenomenon of history. To be sure, the dialectical conception of love enabled one to understand the historicity of man. But starting from it, one could not succeed in “deducing” (= reconstructing a posteriori, i.e. “understanding”) the concrete content of universal history. And so, between 1800 and 1806, one sees a new phenomenological dialectic with a distinctly historical orientation appear in the various writings of Hegel. In the writings we possess, the new dialectic is without explicit ties to the dialectic of love. But one could, it seems, restore the connection as follows.

What is human about love is the fact that desire is not related directly (= “immediately”; unmittelbar) to a natural empirical entity. The desire for this entity (the body) is “mediated” (vermittelt) by the very desire of the one whom one desires: an animal desires the female (sexuality), a man desires the desire of the woman (eroticism). At the limit, amorous desire is a desire for love itself, the one who loves wants to be loved, and he can be “satisfied” by this reciprocal love alone, without any “materialization.” Now it is characteristic of love to attribute an absolute (= universal) value to the exclusive uniqueness (= “particularity”) of the one whom one loves (“there is no one but you on earth and in heaven”). To love is therefore to realize a synthesis of the particular (= Identity) and the universal (= Negativity, since universality is a negation of particularity); and it is to constitute oneself as such a synthesis, that is to say, as a “totality.”

But in fact the amorous “totality” is essentially limited. That is why, in the opinion of all, the existence of a man truly worthy of the name cannot be exhausted by amorous satisfactions. And that is why, in the opinion of Christians themselves, love is not, even in the universalized form of “charity,” the true mover of universal history. Love is essentially limited because it attributes an absolute value not to the action (Tun) but to the given-being (Sein) of the beloved: one loves someone “without any reason,” that is to
say, simply because he is, and not because of what he does. Now given-being is limited by the very fact that it is given, that is to say, identical to itself and therefore different from all that is not it. Only negating action can surpass the limits which are opposed to it, and in this way universalize the very being of the one who acts and who creates himself through the active negation of the given-being which he himself is. Love, which is related to given-being, does not presuppose action and does not engender truly active (= negating) behavior. It therefore remains essentially passive, or better, ineff ectual or inoperative. And it remains eternally limited by the static limits of the being to which it is related. This is why love can at the very most found a human Family with a limited natural foundation (barely enlarged by a “circle of friends”) which, in the course of history, narrows as it evolves. It has never created a State in which citizens act with a view to its universal expansion.

In order to account for the phenomenon of history and of historical man, it is therefore necessary to replace the limited and passive dialectic of love by a universal dialectic of action. And that is what Hegel does by universalizing his first amorous dialectic. The “lover” wants to be recognized as an absolute value by the beloved ((par l'être aimé)) (or, at the very most, by the necessarily restricted group of his “relatives” and “friends”). Historical man aspires to the universal recognition of the absolute value of his particularity: he wants to be “the only one of his kind” and nevertheless “universally valid.” And since the limits of his given-being, as well as the given structure of the natural and human world which surrounds him, oppose themselves to that universal recognition of his particularity, he transforms that world and transforms himself through a sequence of negating actions. These are the actions which gain him recognition and it is as agent that he is recognized.

It is the whole (consisting) of the negating actions of particulars accomplished with a view to universal recognition which constitutes the concrete content of universal history. And the true being of man is this historical action, which “mediates” his natural given-being through the universalizing negation of his particularity.

Mr. Niel is wrong when he says (see for example pp. 16 and 255) that the idea of this “mediation” through history, that is to say through the historical action of particulars for their universal recognition, only appears belatedly in Hegel’s thought. According to Mr. Niel (see pp. 16ff.), mediation through love is first replaced by “psychological mediation” (Phenomenology of Spirit), then by mediation through “speculative reflection” (Logic and Encyclopedia), whereas the “identity between logic and history” was only recognized by Hegel “at the end.” Generally speaking, Mr. Niel presents the chronological sequence of the writings which he summarizes as so many stages in the evolution of Hegelian thought. Now, in fact, this is not at all the case. The evolution of Hegel’s thought is completed at the very moment at which he discovers (1800) the dialectic of Recognition (Anerkennen) or of Action (Tät), which he immediately substitutes for the dialectic of love. From that day on, during the 32 years which there remained for him to live, Hegel did nothing but set forth the diverse complementary aspects of the dialectic the general
schema of which he discovered at the end of his juvenile period. He begins by describing the totality of the phenomenological aspect in his *Phenomenology*. Then, in the *Logic*, he completely analyzes the ontological aspect. Finally, the whole metaphysical aspect is given to us in the *Encyclopedia*. As for later publications, Hegel simultaneously describes in them the phenomenological, metaphysical and ontological aspects of the various "constitutive elements" (*Momente*) of this same total dialectic which realizes itself and reveals itself as universal history; elements that are political, legal, aesthetic, religious and, finally, philosophical.

Having discovered the notion of Recognition, Hegel finds himself in possession of the key notion of his whole philosophy. Therefore it is through the analysis of this fundamental notion that one understands the arrangement of the different aspects and elements of the Hegelian dialectic, as well as the mutual relations between Hegel's philosophical writings.

The desire for recognition is in the final analysis the desire for a desire. For to want to be recognized as a value is to want to be "desired" in the broad sense of the word ("admired," for example). Now every desire (hunger, for example) is not an empirical reality, but the presence of the absence of such a reality (of food, for example). If one acts on the basis of a desire for a desire, one therefore acts on the basis of what does not (yet) exist in the natural or given world. Thus, the being which creates itself in and through an action of this kind (or, better yet, as such an action) is itself a being which is non-natural, that is to say, which is "spiritual" or human in the strong sense of the word. But the spiritual is only objectively real to the extent that it enters into inter-action with natural objective reality and can surpass (negate) it, should the occasion arise. Man is therefore real as human only to the extent that he negates himself as given, i.e., as "natural" or animal, on the basis of the desire for recognition alone. In other words, man only realizes himself in and through the risk of his animal life incurred in the course of a fight for pure prestige. Now such a fight to the death (*Kampf auf Leben und Tod*) becomes necessary as soon as two desires for recognition meet each other. For if, in fact, one can only be satisfied if one is "recognized" by someone whom one oneself "recognizes," man does not know this at the beginning. At the beginning, one wants to be "recognized" by all, without "recognizing" anyone in return. And since, by definition, the desire for recognition is stronger than the animal instinct for self-preservation, both men, animated by the desire for one-sided recognition, will fight until one of them dies.

But the dead man no longer is, and one obviously cannot be recognized by what does not exist. In order for there to be actual recognition and therefore

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2 Apart from the *Philosophy of Right*, they consist mainly of lecture notes edited by Hegel's students and published after his death. One therefore cannot consider these writings as strictly genuine. It is therefore inadmissible, as has been done only too often, to found an interpretation of the whole of Hegelian thought on them. This remark, moreover, does not apply to Mr. Niel.
**objective reality** which is human (for man is only human, and at the same time "objective," as "recognized"), it is necessary that one of the adversaries consent to recognize the other without being recognized by him: one must submit to the other. This decision to interrupt the fight by submitting, although it takes place on the basis of the fear (*Furcht*) of death, is just as "free" (= unpredictable) or "non-natural" as the decision to start the fight and to fight it to the finish. Nothing predisposes the future victor to victory, just as nothing predisposes the future vanquished to his defeat. It is through an act of absolute freedom that the adversaries are created as vanquished and victor, in and through a fight for prestige that is freely begun. And that is why the vanquished is just as human, though in a different way, as the victor himself: if one is the Master, the other is the Slave, and it is evident that there is neither Mastery (*Herrschaft*) nor Slavery (*Knechtschaft*) in the natural or animal world.

Man therefore does not constitute his humanity in isolation. By creating himself in and through a fight to the death for recognition, he necessarily comes out of it as the Master of a slave, or as the Slave of a master. And this means that this struggle creates human reality as an essentially **social reality**, in the precise sense of the word. But it also creates it as a political reality, for the man who is recognized by others in his human reality and dignity is by this very fact recognized politically: he is the Citizen (*Bürger*) of the State formed by those who recognize him and whom he recognizes in turn.3

Finally, the reality constituted by the struggle for recognition is also a **legal** reality. For if this fight is started over a thing or a woman, it is not for the pure and simple possession of the thing or the woman that it is carried on (otherwise it would be a purely animal fight). The one fights against the other in order to make this other "recognize" his "exclusive right" to the thing or to the woman: man therefore fights in the final analysis for right (*pour le droit*). And that is why, at the end of the fight for recognition, the thing as legal **property** (legitimate wife) as well as man as owner (husband) or as "legal person" (*sujet juridique*) in general are created.

The analysis of the notion of Recognition therefore reveals to us the origin and the nature of the legal, political and social constitutive elements of human or historical existence. But this analysis makes us see and understand many other things as well.

In order to realize or "objectify" one-sided recognition by the slave, the

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3 In truth, Hegel does not explain how a Master can be recognized by another Master. In other words, he does not explain the genesis of the State. And that is the most important gap in his phenomenology. One could, however, allow that the state is born from the mutual recognition of the victors of a collective fight for recognition. If several men fight together against common adversaries whom they end by enslaving, they can mutually recognize each other as Masters without having fought among themselves. "Fellow citizen" would therefore be at the beginning identical to "brother-in-arms." But there is also the phenomenon of the political "leader" (*chef*) which Hegel does not analyze in his writings: the superiority (= authority) of one of the Masters can be recognized by the others without their becoming his slaves as a result of this.
master compels the slave to work for him. This forced work for the exclusive profit of the master is accomplished against the natural instincts of the slave. This is therefore one more action which is "against nature," that is to say, which is a "spiritual" or specifically human action. And it is this essentially human Work (Arbeit) which trans-forms the very essence of the natural world by creating in the midst of nature the technical world within which universal history unfolds.

By working, man opposes himself to nature, because he trans-forms it, that is to say, negates it as given. And one can say that by working man opposes himself to nature in the way that the "subject" opposes itself to the "object" while standing in a relation to it. For the slave works at the command of the master. Now, what is natural desire in the master (desire to eat, for example) is only an "abstract idea" in the slave, who acts in order to satisfy a desire without feeling it himself. He therefore works as a consequence of something unreal, of an idea which is a project to be realized. And that is why his work essentially transforms the natural given. Consequently, wherever there is work properly so called, there is necessarily Understanding (Verstand) also, i.e., the capacity for abstract notions, or if you prefer, for discursive Thought (Denken, Sprache). Man speaks while working. He speaks about his work and with a view to his work, and the whole (consisting) of these laborious discourses constitutes the vulgar (non-philosophical) sciences of the world and of man, sciences which are all more or less "technical": they issue from work and finally end in work.

But, in speaking, the slave does not limit himself to describing the given world for the sake of transforming it through work. Not being recognized, not being, therefore, satisfied by and in the world, he criticizes it in his discourses or "negates" it verbally. And he constructs an imaginary world in its place, which is in conformity with his ideal of as yet unrealized satisfaction. It is in this way that the man who works in slavery necessarily forges the fictitious ideal universe of Art and of Religion. And that world evolves parallel to the real world in which the ideal is realized. Thus universal history, which is born from the "first" fight for recognition and which continues for as long as the desire for recognition is not fully satisfied, is not only a history of work, but also one of scientific and critical thought, as well as of art in all its forms and of religions.

But, basically, History is the history of bloody fights for pure prestige carried on with a view to universal recognition. On the one hand, each master seeks to be recognized by all men. And so the "State" of which he is a citizen is essentially warlike and aspires to universal empire. On the other hand, the slave does not content himself endlessly with the imaginary satisfactions that art and the religious beyond give him. He tries to make his masters recognize him. He therefore seeks to suppress them as masters. And that is why States in which there are slaves of any kind whatever (that is to say, "classes") are the arena of bloody fights which have as their goal the establishment of social homogeneity. History is therefore a more or less uninterrupted sequence of foreign wars and bloody revolutions. But this sequence has an aim, and
consequently an end. For being born from the desire for recognition, history will necessarily stop at the moment at which this desire will be fully satisfied. Now this desire will be satisfied when each will be recognized in his reality and in his human dignity by all the others, these others being recognized by each in their reality and dignity ((a reality and dignity which are recognized as being)) equal to his own. In other words, history will stop when man will be perfectly satisfied by the fact of being a recognized citizen of a universal and homogeneous State, or, if you prefer, of a classless society comprising the whole of humanity.

The history which Hegel has in view is therefore "history" in the common sense of the term: political, social, economic history. And the history of the sciences, the arts and the religions is only, for Hegel, the history of "ideologies" which are born from the real historical process: they are a sort of ideal "superstructure" which only has a meaning and a possibility of being on the basis of a real "infrastructure," formed by the whole ((consisting)) of the political and social fights and works accomplished by man. But while stressing this, if you please, "materialistic" aspect of the Hegelian dialectic (which determined the whole thought of Marx), it should not be forgotten that this historical dialectic is, for Hegel, something essentially other than fight and work, than science, art and religion.

It is evident that the reality which is born from the desire for recognition and which realizes itself and objectifies itself through the fight for recognition can only be a reality conscious of itself. For it is evident that one can be truly "recognized" only if one oneself knows that one is recognized. (One never "recognizes" an animal or a thing, although one can very well love them.) That is why, by saying that man is Recognition, Hegel is also saying that he is Self-consciousness (Selbstbewusstsein, which, of course, implies and presupposes the consciousness of the external world, Bewusstsein). In other words, the satisfaction which the citizen of the universal and homogenous State derives from his recognized perfection is not "immediate" but "mediated" by the fullness of self-consciousness (and that is precisely why this satisfaction is truly human): man can only be perfectly satisfied if he is fully conscious of his satisfaction. Now, just as the real perfection of the citizen is the result of the whole historical evolution previous to his advent, so too the fullness of his self-consciousness is nothing but the integration of the ("experiences" of)) becoming conscious previously accomplished in the course of history. Universal history is therefore, in the final analysis, the history of self-Consciousness. Man fights and works to realize himself, but he only realizes himself in order to become conscious of himself by revealing himself to himself and to others through a coherent discourse having a meaning. Thus, history will stop at the very moment at which man becomes fully self-conscious.

To be sure, the fullness of self-consciousness can only be attained at the moment at which man is fully satisfied by his real existence. For as long as he is not ((satisfied)) he negates himself, trans-forms himself, becomes other than he is, and therefore other than the one of whom he had become conscious. His objective (historical) reality will surpass his self-consciousness and the
latter will not be truly complete or total, that is to say, enclosed upon itself, as long as there will be a possibility of negation or of action, there will always be something unconscious in man. But it is nevertheless true that the final aim, and consequently the prime mover, of historical (= dialectical) motion is satisfaction conscious of itself. Man seeks to be perfect only in order to be satisfied in the full consciousness of his perfection. He changes and moves only in order to go towards the fullness of consciousness.

Now the fullness of consciousness is called Wisdom and the motion which leads to it through the progressive extension of self-consciousness is called Philosophy. One can therefore say that, in the final analysis, universal history is the history of philosophy, which leads to the absolute Knowledge (absolutes Wissen) of the Wise Man. If perfection that cannot be surpassed is synonymous with self-conscious Satisfaction, and if the latter is synonymous with omniscient Wisdom, one can say that history, once it is completed as a whole, is only there so that the Wise Man (named Hegel in this case) can objectify absolute Knowledge in the form of a book entitled System of Science.

This System is divided into two parts. In the first, which is at the same time an Introduction to the System, the Wise Man becomes fully self-conscious by rethinking the whole historical process which has given birth to him and which he integrates (by rethinking it); or, if you prefer, by describing the phenomenological aspect of the total dialectic. This first part is the Phenomenology of Spirit. And the second part is the exposition of the Science itself, that is to say the description of the ontological aspects (in the Logic) and metaphysical aspects (in the Realphilosophie, subdivided into the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophie des Geistes) of the same dialectic that had been described, as "appearing" or revealed through the self-consciousness of the Wise Man, in the first part.

Thus, contrary to what Mr. Niel thinks (see pp. 16ff.), the "mediation" through the "speculative reflection" of the Logic and the Encyclopedia does not differ essentially from the "psychological mediation" through the Phenomenology. These are three aspects of one and the same thing, namely of the "mediation" of given-being through thought fully conscious of itself, which is born, in the final analysis, from the desire for recognition, when this desire is fully and definitively satisfied by the whole ((consisting)) of the works and fights which constitute universal political history, the latter being also the history of art, of religion and of philosophy.

In this last "mediation" through Hegelian Science, human reality becomes fully self-conscious. It therefore understands itself and reveals itself as it is in reality, that is to say, as essentially finite and mortal, since it was created, in the beginning, in and through an actual risk of life at the time of the "first" fight for recognition. In knowing itself to be mortal, it knows itself to live in a world without a beyond (Jenseits) or without God.

And so, what is most curious of all, man completes himself and perfects himself, that is to say, attains supreme satisfaction, through the (("experience" of)) becoming conscious, in the person of the Wise Man, of his essential
finitude. For it is by knowing himself to be mortal, it is by accepting the idea of his death that the man who has become a Wise Man knows himself to be the absolute Spirit which has nothing beyond itself. And it is precisely this absolute or "universal" value which the "particularity" of the Wise Man possesses, (a particularity that is) objective in its Science which is the Truth, that constitutes the final "justification" of man, by revealing the profound meaning of all the "apparent absurdities of his historical past (which has) vanished forever."

Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht. Universal history, which is at the same time the supreme Tribunal, acquires in its final judgment, which is the only valid (judgment) because it is the only (judgment that is) possible and real. Now it is man who sits in this Tribunal, and he is the same as the one who is acquitted. And the man who succeeds in fully justifying himself to himself is perfectly satisfied by what he is. He will therefore not have any reason to change any more or to gainsay himself, so that all that he has said about himself, and therefore about man in general, in the fullness of his consciousness, will remain true forever. And that is why he is the Truth.

Mr. Niel does not acknowledge the essentially atheistic character of Hegel's dialectical philosophy. He does not see that this philosophy excludes by its very nature every kind of "transmundane" transcendence. And this is why, in his interpretation, he cannot bring himself to ascribe to history all the importance that is has in genuine Hegelian thought.

To be sure, Mr. Niel admits that for Hegel "history alone is the place of Spirit" (p. 299). He also acknowledges that, in the Hegelian (= dialectical) conception, history must necessarily have an end (p. 300). Finally, he knows that it is precisely the advent of Hegel's (dialectical) philosophy that marks the end of the historical process, "because through it becoming thinks itself as becoming" (p. 368). But Mr. Niel nevertheless speaks of a "divine" or "eternal" Spirit which is real outside of time and which only "incarnates" itself in history (see for example pp. 252 and 357). He distinguishes "temporal becoming" from "eternal becoming" (p. 181), the "essentially historical domain of activity" of the Spirit from its "supra-historical" activity (p. 180). He thinks he finds, in the Phenomenology, not an end properly so called of history, but a kind of "eternal return," man being condemned "to endlessly repeat the series of forms through which he manifested himself" (p. 181). And Hegelian philosophy for him is not only the integration of the historical process but also "a transcendence ((dépassement)) of history" (p. 114).

Now, in fact, there can be no question in Hegel of a "transcendence" ((dépassement)) properly so called. Hegelian philosophy is, if you please, "beyond" history in the sense that it does not mark the beginning of a new historical period. Being an adequate description of the real, it negates nothing and therefore creates nothing real: it does not have a real or historical future before it. But it nevertheless forms part of the historical process, as its final point. Not only because it constitutes itself in time at an historical moment which it describes: it is nothing but "history conceptually understood"
Hegel, Marx and Christianity

(begriffene Geschichte), that is to say, ((history)) described in its aspects: phenomenological, metaphysical, and ontological. And it is exclusively this (phenomenological) description which constitutes the "eternal return" that Mr. Niel has in mind: after the end of history, man can do nothing but perpetually rethink the historical process which has been completed and "understood" by the Wise Man (= Hegel).

As to notions such as "divine" or "eternal" Spirit, "eternal becoming," "supra-historical activity," etc. — they simply do not exist in Hegel. For Hegel "Spirit is Time" (Geist ist Zeit), and time is "the concept which empirically exists" (der daseiende Begriff selbst). There is therefore neither creative activity (= negation) nor conceptual thought outside of time. What is "outside" of time is at the very most space, i.e., the purely natural world, or static Being (Sein). Now static Being, since it is pure identity, does not differ from anything ((ne diffère de rien)). It also, therefore, is not different from "nothing" itself ((Il n'est donc pas non plus différent du "rien" lui-même)) or from Nothingness (Nichts). And that is why one can say that there is nothing outside of time, the "nothing" or Nothingness only being "something" in the form of time which realizes itself in the midst of space, of Nature, or of Being — as real or historical, viz., human, time.

Now if this is the case, the very criterion of truth has, in Hegel, an historical character. If history has an end, it is not because this end is affirmed or "demonstrated" by Hegelian philosophy, which is true "in itself" (or with respect to an eternal or divine truth). On the contrary, if this philosophy is true, it is exclusively because history has come to an end, it is because man no longer negates, no longer trans-forms the real revealed by the final philosophy, which, by this very fact, is no longer philosophy or quest for truth, but truth itself or Wisdom (absolute Knowledge).

Not seeing this "temporal" or historical character of Hegelian truth, which is absolute truth only because it is the final truth, Mr. Niel does not see the decisive importance which the fact of the end of history and of the man who, according to him, was the incarnation of this end, i.e. Napoleon, had for Hegel.

To be sure, Mr. Niel knows that Hegel was a fervent admirer of Napoleon and that he was "grief-stricken by his fall" (p. 268); but he says only in passing, and in a hesitating manner, that Napoleon is the result, the completion and the realization of the French Revolution (p. 165, note 84); and that the "kingdom of God on earth" that Hegel has in mind is nothing but the Napoleoniac empire (p. 182). And, above all, he does not understand the true meaning of the last section of Chapter VI of the Phenomenology, which is of decisive importance.

As Mr. Niel sees very well, Chapter VI is devoted to a (phenomenological) description of the whole historical process from the Greek City to 1806. The second section (B) ends with an analysis of the Revolution of 1789 and announces — which Mr. Niel does not clearly see — the advent of the Napoleoniac empire, that is to say, of the "universal and homogeneous" State. As for the last section (C) it is indeed devoted, as Mr. Niel says, to an analysis of
Kantian and post-Kantian German philosophy. But Mr. Niel does not notice
that this philosophy is presented as a process which prepares for the advent
of the philosophy of Hegel himself, and that the latter has as its essential aim
to “explain” Napoleon, or to “justify” his Empire, by presenting it as the
completion of universal history.

It is in the last paragraph of Chapter VI that Hegel speaks of his own
philosophy (as resulting from the evolution of post-Kantian philosophy), in
the paragraph which one could entitle (with Mr. Niel and following Lasson)
Evil and its Pardon. Mr. Niel tells us that in this paragraph Hegel “abandons
history properly so called in order to seek the metaphysical meaning [?] of
crude attitudes which belong to all times” (p. 174). Now, in fact, this is not
at all the case. Hegel speaks there of himself as speaking of Napoleon. The
“evil” in question is the supposed political “crime” of Napoleon, and the
“pardon” is the justification of Napoleon’s achievement (l’oeuvre napoléon-
ienne) by Hegel’s philosophy, or, more precisely, by his Phenomenology.
The “acting consciousness” (see p. 175) is Napoleon as the “result” of uni-
versal history, and the “judging consciousness” is Hegel, the “judge” of
Napoleon and of history, as the “result” of German philosophy, and, there-
fore, of the whole history of philosophy.

As long as one does not know that the unique theme of the paragraph is
Napoleon and his critics, its content remains strictly unintelligible. Thus
Mr. Niel’s summary of it (pp. 174ff.) is purely verbal and tolerably obscure,
not to say devoid of meaning. In any case, the true meaning of the passage,
which completes the paragraph and the chapter, and which is reproduced at
the end of Mr. Niel’s summary (p. 176), completely escapes the reader who
does not know the text and the context. Now this passage is the most remark-
able of all.

In this passage Hegel speaks of the existence of “both I” and he says this
about them: “The Yes of reconciliation in which both I desist from their
opposed empirical-existence (Dasein), is the empirical existence of the I
extended to duality, of the I which remains equal in itself there; and which, in
its complete alienation and in its contrary, has self-certainty; — this empirical
— existence is the God who manifests himself in the midst of those who know
themselves as pure knowledge.”

The “yes of reconciliation” is the very content of the paragraph, in which
Hegel “reconciles” Germany, and himself as a German, with Napoleon.
After this “reconciliation,” the I of Hegel is no longer really “opposed” to
the I of Napoleon. On the one hand, because in the universal and homoge-
neous State Hegel the citizen and Napoleon the emperor cease to be German
and French in order to become men plain and simple. On the other hand,

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4 The passages on the “wounds of the spirit” which “leave no scars,” and on the “king”
and the “valet de chambre” remain particularly unintelligible. The “wound” in question
is the defeat inflicted by Napoleon on Germany, which ((country)) Hegel advises to willingly
integrate itself into the universal empire that Napoleon is in the process of realizing;
the “valets” — they are the essentially “hypocritical” critics of Napoleon.
because the philosophy of Hegel is a becoming conscious of Napoleon. By understanding Napoleon as the completion of history, Hegel understands man as such and therefore the man he himself is: the consciousness of the external (Bewusstsein) thus coincides with self-consciousness (Selbstbewusstsein). It is in Napoleon that Hegel finds "self-certainty." He is sure of being a Wise Man possessing absolute Knowledge because, thanks to Napoleon, the reality which he describes is definitively completed. And since Napoleon (being originally, before the "reconciliation," a Frenchman who is an enemy of the German) is really other than Hegel, Hegelian thought, which accounts for Napoleon, is more than a "subjective certainty" (Gewissheit): it is the revelation of an "objective-reality" (Wirklichkeit), that is to say, a truth (Wahrheit). Now the (Napoleonic) reality which it reveals is completed in itself. It is therefore perfect or absolute and, at the same time (thanks to Hegel), perfectly conscious of itself. It therefore is the absolute Spirit, the Spirit which Christians call "God." And that is why one can say that Napoleon is the "appearing" or "revealed" "God" (der erscheinende Gott), "revealing" himself to or through Hegel and his disciples, that is to say, to and through those who know that they are henceforth only "pure knowledge", that is to say, the "absolute Knowledge" which negates nothing, and therefore creates nothing, but reveals perfectly the real which is fully completed in and through its finished historical becoming.  

Mr. Niel is therefore right when he says that, for Hegel, "Christ is the perfect" dialectical "mediator" (p. 109). But in order for his assertion to be really true, he should have added that the Christ whom Hegel has in mind is not Jesus. The Gospel account is only the myth of Christ, or, if you please, his project (= ideal to be realized). The Christ who empirically exists, the God who actually reveals himself to men, the Logos truly become flesh – is the dyad Napoleon-Hegel, is the man completing historical evolution through a bloody battle ((lutte)) coupled with the man revealing through his discourse the meaning of this evolution.

Now Mr. Niel does not say that (even though he mentions, p. 369, the analogy between Christ and Hegel). He cannot say that because, not having understood the essentially atheistic character of Hegelian (= dialectical) philosophy, he does not see the decisive role which the real completion (= Napoleon) of concrete history plays in it. Inversely, not seeing that "absolute

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5 In a famous letter quoted by Mr. Niel (p. 268), Hegel says that having finished the Phenomenology, he saw at dawn the "soul of the world" ride on horseback under his windows. This text is revealing. The victor of Jena is called in it the "soul of the world": he is Welt-seele, and not Volks-seele; he incorporates not the history of the French people, but that of the whole of humanity. But he is Welt-seele and not Weltgeist. He is not Spirit, because he is not fully self-conscious; through his actions he in fact completes history, but he does not know that he is doing this and that he realizes absolute Spirit by doing it. It is Hegel who knows this and who says it in the Phenomenology. Absolute Spirit or "God" is therefore neither Napoleon nor Hegel, but Napoleon-understood-by-Hegel or Hegel-understanding-Napoleon.
"Spirit" is nothing but the history of man completed by a man (or by two men), he can attempt to give a theistic interpretation of the Hegelian Spirit.

One might even assume that Mr. Niel, following most other interpreters of Hegel, refuses to acknowledge Hegelian atheism precisely because this "trans-Christian" atheism preserves the idea of Christ, by applying it to a man properly so called, "conceived in sin" and radically mortal. For it is very difficult even for an atheist to really take seriously this paradoxical and yet necessary consequence of Hegelianism (and probably of any "dialectical" philosophy, or even of any consistent or coherent atheism that does not want to founder in relativism). As for the believer, he must - unconsciously - recoil from the enormity of this blasphemy and try to deny its existence: even if the blasphemy is uttered by another; even if he knows or believes he knows that this other is grossly mistaken.

However that may be, Mr. Niel wants to hear nothing of Hegelian atheism, or of the Napoleonic "theandry." On the contrary, he believes that he finds the Christ of the Gospels again in Hegel, and he goes so far as to say (p. 329) that Hegel was less a philosopher than a theologian.

And yet, Mr. Niel is very suspicious of the alleged Hegelian theology. He senses an enemy in it, and a particularly formidable enemy. Thus, he ends the summaries of what he believes to be the "stages" of Hegelian thought by affirming the "failure" of the examined attempt at "mediation". And the entire book ends with a paragraph entitled: The Failure (p. 376).

Now, in my opinion, the alleged "failure" of Hegel is affirmed rather than demonstrated by Mr. Niel. One has the impression that he wanted to present the enemy as beaten before having even started the fight and perhaps precisely in order to avoid starting it. But the last critical paragraph of the book nevertheless does raise some questions which deserve to be considered.

Mr. Niel tells us that "the only possible refutation of Hegelianism" is of necessity historical. In this he is profoundly Hegelian (= "dialectical") and I would be the last to raise any objections whatsoever against him. But when he says that this refutation has already been made, because history did not stop with Hegel, I would like to put some objections to him.

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4 I do not dwell on the very significant modifications that Hegel had to make in his conception as a consequence of Napoleon's fall. That he thought at a given moment that he could substitute the Archduke of Austria for his "Napoleon," or that he ended by pretending to believe that the perfect and definitive State begun by Napoleon was realized by the kingdom of Prussia, which, however, was not "universal" and did not aspire to universality, matters little. What matters is that, according to him, Napoleon disappeared because he had (virtually) ended his work and that this work definitively completed history properly so called ((i.e., history as)) creative of new historical "worlds." In any case, it is therefore man plain and simple, and not the Man-God, who realizes perfection.

7 In a certain sense this is, moreover, true. But this sense can only be an ironic one. If Hegel did, indeed, concern himself with theology all his life, this was exclusively with a view to "surpressing" it definitively as theology or as the science of a God who is transcendent with respect to man.
Mr. Niel rightly does not follow those who want to “refute” Hegel by alleging the fact of Kierkegaard’s existence against him. For the existence of Kierkegaard does not, in fact, “refute” anything at all, given that he was duly described and “refuted” through the description of real historical overcoming ((dépassement)) in the Phenomenology. Mr. Niel, still a good Hegelian, alleges, in opposition to Hegel’s claim to have enunciated the absolute truth, the fact of the immediate appearance of a Hegelian “left” and of a Hegelian “right,” which continue to confront each other down to the present. And this “objection” is, indeed, valid, even from the Hegelian or “dialectical” point of view. But one would have to state precisely what merit this “objection” really has.

I would like to point out, in the first place (without knowing whether Mr. Niel shares my point of view), that if there has been from the beginning a Hegelian left and right, this is also all that there has been since Hegel. For if one abstracts from the remnants of the past which Hegel knew and described (“liberalism” included), and which, consequently, cannot be alleged in opposition to him as an historical or “dialectical” refutation, one observes that there has been strictly nothing outside of Hegelianism (whether conscious or not), whether on the plane of historical reality itself, or on that of such thought or discourse as has had historical repercussions. And so one cannot say, with Mr. Niel, that history has refuted Hegelianism. The most one can assert is that it has not decided between the “leftist” and the “rightist” interpretations of Hegelian philosophy. For today the discussion still continues.

Now, according to Hegel, a discussion can only be settled by reality, that is to say, by the realization of one of the theses that confront each other. Verbal polemics or “dialectics” only reflect the real dialectic, which is a dialectic of Action manifesting itself as Struggle ((Lutte)) and Work. And in effect it is as work (“economic system”), revolutions and wars that the polemic between “Hegelians” has been taking place for nearly 150 years. Recently the left has won a brilliant victory, and it would be absurd to conclude from it that it is the “right” that will finally win. But it would be just as false to say that the provisionally victorious interpretation has definitively proved itself to be true.

In our time, as in the time of Marx, Hegelian philosophy is not a truth in the proper sense of the term: it is less the adequate discursive revelation of a reality, than an idea or an ideal, that is to say, a “project” which is to be realized, and therefore proved true, through action. However, what is remarkable is that it is precisely because it is not yet true that this philosophy alone is capable of becoming true one day. For it alone says that truth is created in time out of error and that there are no “transcendent” criteria (whereas a theistic theory of necessity either has always been true, or is forever false). And that is why history will never refute Hegelianism, but will limit itself to choosing between its two opposed interpretations.

One can therefore say that, for the moment, every interpretation of Hegel, if it is more than idle talk, is nothing but a program of struggle ((lutte)) and one of work (and one of these “programs” is called Marxism). And this
means that the work of an interpreter of Hegel takes on the meaning of a work of political propaganda. Mr. Niel therefore quite rightly says, in concluding, that "Hegelianism is of more than purely literary interest." For it may be that, in fact, the future of the world, and therefore the meaning of the present and the significance of the past, depend, in the final analysis, on the way in which the Hegelian writings are interpreted today.

This last remark may perhaps justify the unusual length of the present review in the reader's eyes.
AN INTERPRETATION OF PLATO'S ION

ALLAN BLOOM

In Xenophon's *Banquet* Antisthenes asks, "Do you know any tribe more stupid [or simple] than the rhapsodes?" This question, obviously rhetorical, leads the reader of the *Ion* to the further question, "Why in the world does Socrates choose to speak to a man like Ion, a typical member of the tribe of rhapsodes?" Even though Socrates claims that he investigates men with respect to their knowledge and ignorance, it is hard to see why he should think it important to test Ion. Moreover, their conversation is private, so that it cannot be Socrates' intention to show Ion off, or up, to others. Socrates in the dialogues exposes the important kinds of human souls and their characteristic errors. To make this particular discussion a worthwhile enterprise for him, the empty reciter of Homer's poems must represent something beyond himself.

*(530a-b)* Socrates seems most anxious to have this conversation, since it is he who apparently stops Ion, who shows no particular interest in Socrates or desire to talk to him. Thus the first four exchanges occur entirely at Socrates' initiative, Ion responding in a way which would end the dialogue if Socrates did not return to the charge. Ion is a self-satisfied man who feels no need to render an account of himself or his activity; he knows who he is and what he does; and he knows both himself and his activity to be important. He is as far from the radical self-doubt of philosophy as a man can be. He is willing to talk about himself and accept praise; he has, however, little curiosity about others, for he does not sense a pressing need to learn from them. In order to engage Ion and induce him to reveal himself, Socrates must attract him and become respectable for him. Ion is vain, and he is first attracted by flattery and then captured when his self-esteem is threatened.

Socrates begins by expressing the greatest interest in Ion's achievements, making it clear that he is one of Ion's admirers. We learn from Socrates' first questions about Ion's recent doings that Ion is a man who travels from city to city and is admired in the cities he visits. He is not bound by the ordinary limits of citizenship: he is a cosmopolitan (or more properly a Hellenopolitan, for his universality will prove to be counterfeit, based on Greek convention rather than anything universally human). His rhapsody is his passport, and he finds proof for his worth in the prizes the peoples award him. He knows himself in relation to the unquestionable acclaim he evokes from others. Above all, Ion is needed to partake in the festivals dedicated to the gods whom all Greeks honor. He is a servitor of the Greeks, and his authority is somehow connected with the gods of the Greeks; this is the ground of his pious vanity.

*(530b-c)* Socrates, who apparently knows Ion's character, prevents him from breaking off the conversation by praising him. Once Ion has taken
Socrates' bait, he will soon be at his mercy — begging Socrates for a justification for his way of life. Socrates professes envy of the rhapsodes, and he goes on to specify what arouses that ugly but flattering passion in him. The rhapsodes are among the knowers; they possess an art — a skill or a kind of knowledge. That art is divided into two apparently unrelated parts of widely divergent dignity: its practitioners adorn their bodies so as to look most beautiful, and they occupy themselves with the thought of the good poets, especially the divine Homer, the teacher of the Greeks. Socrates has to explain what he means by the second part of the art, which is apparently not so clear as the first. To be a good rhapsode, one must understand what a given poet says, for the rhapsode is a spokesman or interpreter of the poet's thought to the listeners. Hence, the rhapsode must know what the poet means. Knowledge of what the poet thinks and fidelity in conveying his thought to an audience constitute the core of the rhapsode's art. He is an intermediary whose sole authority emanates from the poet.

(530c-d) Ion readily accepts this description of what he does, not considering its broad implications. He has not reflected on art in general nor on the particular requirements of an art of Homeric thought. He does not see that the conversation has really moved from a discussion of himself and of rhapsody to a testing of the interpreters of Homer. Ion's adequacy as an interpreter is about to be put to the test, and thus the received interpretation of Homer, the interpretation by the most popular and typical of his interpreters, is to be called into question.

In response to Socrates' assertions about Ion's art, Ion avows that Socrates has hit the nail on the head and that it is precisely to understanding the thought of Homer that he devotes the greatest energy. He is delighted to participate in the prestige generally accorded to Homer, but he also covertly tries to strike out on his own; he puts the accent on his contribution to Homer, on what is his own rather than Homer's. His speech, not Homer's, is particularly beautiful; he has more fair thoughts about Homer than anyone. He is not simply Homer's faithful servant. Socrates recognizes that Ion would like to give a display of his talents; this is Ion's work, and he counts on charming his auditors, charming them in such a way that they ask no further questions. Ion insists that he is really worth hearing; he reminds us of the forgotten first part of the rhapsode's art: he has adorned Homer and for that he deserves to be adorned with a golden crown by the devotees of Homer. He uses Homer to his profit. Socrates, however, does not permit Ion's disloyalty to Homer; he has no interest in an Ion independent of Homer. The ever idle Socrates says he has no leisure to listen to the performance of Greece's greatest rhapsode; he only wants the answer to one question.

(531a) That question is as follows: is Ion clever only about Homer or about Hesiod and Archilochus too? This apparently naive query leads to the heart of the matter, for Socrates knows that Ion will respond that Homer is sufficient for him. And the fact that Ion has no curiosity about the teachings of the other poets is symptomatic of what he is — the most conventional agent of what is most conventional. It is a thing to be wondered at — though far from
uncommon – that a man would be willing to live his life according to principles which are merely given to him, while he would not purchase so much as a cloak without investigating the alternatives. Socrates investigates such a man in this little conversation, one who accepts Homer's view of the gods, the heroes and men without any need to see whether what the other poets say about these things is in any way useful. Even more, Ion is the one who transmits the Homeric view. In a word, he represents tradition. He accepts the orthodox view, and he teaches it. He does not seek for reasons why this particular tradition should be accepted rather than any other. If there are a number of conflicting accounts of the world, men must make a choice between them. But Ion and his kind can give no reasons why their particular source should be preferred. They can merely assert the superiority of their text. In this respect, Homer’s book resembles the Bible. It has adherents who rely on it utterly but who can provide no argument in its favor when confronted with other books. And if the book cannot be defended neither can the way of life grounded in it. Ion relies on Homer, which would be sufficient if he had no competitors. But there are always other poets in addition to the official ones. The Greeks learn the poems of Hesiod and Archilochus as well as those of Homer, and any man who questions must wonder which of them he should follow, for his happiness depends on the right answer. For Ion, Homer is sufficient, but for the sole reason that it is for reciting Homer's poetry that golden crowns are awarded.

(531a-b) Socrates presses the question about Ion's competence with the other poets in a comprehensive fashion; he does not leave it at Ion's insistence that the rhapsode need know only Homer. Where Homer and Hesiod say the same thing, Ion must be an equally competent exegete of both. So Ion turns out to be an expert on a part of Hesiod as well as the whole of Homer. Now they must test Ion's expertise on the remainder -- the part of Hesiod which is not the same as Homer. It is not so easy to determine this part as the other, and a new step must be introduced into the argument. Socrates begins to forge the link between what Homer and Hesiod say differently by pointing to a subject matter about which they both speak: divining. Now, divining plays a great role in the Ion, but here it is brought in innocuously as an example of a common theme of the poets. When the poets say the same thing, the poets' words are enough; when they say different things, one must turn away from the words to the things the words are about. Both Hesiod and Homer mention divining, and their words about it take on meaning from the object to which these words relate. And it is the diviner who can comment on what both Hesiod and Homer say about divining, not because he is a student of the words of Hesiod and Homer, but because he knows divining.

Knowers draw their knowledge from the great book of the world, and the poet, whether he is a knower or not, is dependent on and speaks about that world. No written book is sufficient unto itself; every book is essentially related to something beyond itself which acts as a standard for it. Socrates has gradually narrowed the discussion and focused on the poet as a source of knowledge and on the rhapsode as a knower of that knowledge. Ion does not
notice that it is the diviner, not the rhapsode, who is the expert on Homer in this case. The consequences of that fact will become clear to him later. Now the argument has only established that a man can speak well about Homer because he knows the subject matter about which Homer speaks. It thus becomes necessary to determine what Homer speaks about, since Ion must be a knower of that in order to be a competent interpreter of Homer. If Homer speaks about the same things as Hesiod, Ion's claim to be incompetent about Hesiod will not be able to stand, whether or not Homer and Hesiod agree about those things.

(531c) What is it, then, that Homer speaks about and the knowledge of which Ion must be presumed to possess? The answer is, simply; everything—everything human and divine. Homer speaks about the whole, and, if he speaks truly, he reveals to men those things which they most want and need to know if they are to live well. It is at this point that Socrates reveals for the first time the reason for his choosing to speak to this slight man who is never himself aware of the import of the discussion. Homer presents the authoritative view of the whole according to which Greeks guide themselves: he is the primary source of knowledge or error about the most important things. Every group of men begins with some such view of the whole by which its members orient themselves and which acts as a framework for their experience. They are educated by and in it from earliest childhood. No one starts afresh, from nothing. In particular there is always an authoritative view belonging to the community, and it constitutes the deepest unity of that community. It purports to be the true view, and the man who accepts it is supposed to possess all the knowledge he needs for living rightly and well.

Socrates, then, is testing the Greek understanding of things, particularly of the gods. At least symbolically, he shows the beginning point of philosophic questioning. Every man starts from a more or less coherent view of the whole which has been instilled in him by a tradition. Somehow that rare individual who possesses a philosophic nature becomes aware that the tradition is not founded in authentic knowledge but is only an opinion, and he is compelled to seek beyond it. The philosophic quest implies a prior awareness of the inadequacy of traditional opinion, and the problems of philosophy come to light as a result of the investigation of that traditional opinion which appears unproblematic to most men. Socrates treats Ion as the purveyor of the Greek tradition which stems from Homer, and therefore he tries to ascertain whether what Ion says about Homer can be understood to have the authority of knowledge. If it does not, the man who seeks for knowledge must start all over again in the interpretation of Homer, unmoved by popular opinion. Ultimately, of course, the same question must be asked of Homer himself: is his speech about gods and men based on knowledge of them? And in the event that it is not, one would have to try to return to the beginnings and start a second time. In the Ion, Socrates confronts authority, the authority for the most decisive opinions. He does so with great delicacy, never stating the issue directly, for he knows that the community protects its sacred beliefs fanatically. In spite of his caution he was finally put to death by the
community for investigating the things in the heavens and under the earth rather than accepting Homer's account of them. In the failure of Ion to meet the test Socrates puts to him we see the reason why Socrates was forced to undertake a private study of the things in the heavens and under the earth.

As the exegete of Homer, Ion must be the knower of the things of which Homer speaks if he is to be taken seriously. He must, it has been made clear, possess the art of the whole. According to the most famous of Socratic professions, Socrates is ignorant, ignorant about the whole, and his awareness of his ignorance causes him to make a quest for knowledge. He knows what it means to possess knowledge, and in the Ion he shows the kinds of things that men must think they know and why they are unable to see the inadequacy of their opinions. As the spokesman of the tradition, Ion has answers to the most important questions, but he does not know that those answers are themselves questionable. Socrates' contribution is only that of questioning the traditional answers and thereby elaborating the essential structure of human alternatives.

Socrates is, therefore, deeply indebted to the tradition, which is the only basis for the ascent to a higher level of consciousness, but he is forced to break with it. In the Apology Socrates reports that he examined three kinds of men who were supposed to know: statesmen, poets and artisans. He chose the statesmen and the poets because they are men whose very activity implies knowledge of the whole. Thus the commands of statesmen imply that they know what the good life is, and the tales of poets tell of gods and men, death and life, peace and war. Socrates discovered that statesmen and poets knew nothing, but that the artisans did in fact know something. They could actually do things such as making shoes or training horses, and by their ability to teach their skills to others they proved they possessed knowledge. Nevertheless Socrates preferred to remain ignorant in his own way rather than to become knowledgeable in the way of artisans, for the latter's knowledge was of partial things and their pride of competence caused them to neglect the human situation as a whole. However, Socrates did learn from the artisans what knowledge is and hence was made aware that those who talk about the whole do not possess knowledge of it. The choice seems to be between men who talk about the whole but are both incompetent and unaware of their incompetence, and men who deal with insignificant parts of the whole competently but are as a consequence oblivious of the whole. Socrates adopts a moderate position; he is open to the whole but knows that he does not know the answers although he knows the questions. In the Ion, he applies the standard of knowledge drawn from the arts to the themes treated by poetry, thus showing wherein poetry and the tradition fail and what stands in the way of such knowledge.

(531d-532c) After determining what Homer talks about, Socrates asks whether all poets do not speak about the same things. Ion recognizes that an admission that they do would imply both that he is conversant with all the poets and that Homer is comparable to other poets. While agreeing that other poets do speak about the same things as Homer, Ion, therefore, adds that they
do not do so in the same way. He means that Homer cannot be judged by the same standard as other poets, that they do not, as it were, inhabit the same world. Ion does not really accept or understand the position which Socrates has been developing; he wants to interpret the world by the book rather than the book by the world. He is quickly disarmed, however, when Socrates asks whether the difference consists in the others being worse than Homer. Ion cannot resist affirming this suggestion; its corollary, that Homer is better, he reinforces with an oath by Zeus.

Better and worse, Socrates is quick to respond, are terms of relation and the things to which they apply are comparable. Turning to the standard provided by the arts, the expert — the man who knows an art — is equally competent to judge all speeches that concern the objects of his specialty. To determine that one speech is better, a man must know that another is worse. When someone speaks about numbers, the arithmetician judges whether he speaks well or badly; when someone speaks about healthy foods, the doctor judges whether he speaks well or badly. They are able to do so because they know numbers and health respectively. Who is it then who can judge of the better and worse speeches of poets because he knows the object about which the poet speaks? The difficulty of responding to this question reveals the problem of the dialogue. The premise of the discussion with Ion is that it is the rhapsode who is the competent judge of the poets’ speeches, but rhapsodes are not even aware of the questions, let alone the answers. The very existence of the rhapsodes — these shallow replacements for knowers of the art of the whole — serves to initiate us into a new dimension of the quest for knowledge of the highest things. In investigating Ion, Socrates studies a kind of popular substitute for philosophy. When we reflect on who judges whether Ion speaks well or badly, we recognize that it is not an expert but the people at large. The issue has to do with the relation of knowledge and public opinion in civil society.

The iron-clad necessity of the argument based on the arts thus constrains Socrates and Ion to accept the conclusion that, if Ion is clever about Homer, he is also clever about Hesiod and Archilochus. Socrates unceremoniously maintains the unquestioned hypothesis of the dialogue, that Ion does in fact know Homer, and concludes from it that Ion is an expert on all poets. This conclusion is excellent and ineluctable, except that it is not true. Ion recognizes that he is confronted by a mystery: reason forces him to be expert on all poets and he is not; he cannot give an account of himself. The tables are turned; his confidence is somewhat abated, and now he turns to Socrates, who has established some authority over him, for an explanation. With the poets other than Homer he dozes as do the people, according to Socrates’ description in the Apology, when they have no gadfly to arouse them. It is this miracle that needs clarification.

(532c–d) Socrates has no difficulty in supplying the answer: he responds that Ion is incapable of speaking about Homer by art and exact knowledge. Ion is not an expert as are other experts. Socrates pursues this result with further and more pointed comparisons to the other arts. At the same time, he
takes advantage of his new prestige to make it quite clear to Ion that the latter is now in tutelage. He poses a question in an obscure way and forces Ion to ask for an explanation; Ion who wanted to be heard now must hear instead, and Socrates, by engaging Ion’s passions, will be a far more compelling performer for Ion than Ion would have been for him. But Ion, whose vanity is now involved, is not without his own wiles for preserving his self-esteem and humiliating Socrates. He gives gay assent to his instruction with the remark that he enjoys hearing “you wise men.” For him, Socrates’ argument is to be a display, such as any of the currently popular sophists might give, of technical virtuosity at confuting common sense, a display more notable for form than substance. If one treats Socrates in this way, he need not be taken too seriously; one can observe him idly as one does any other performer. Socrates, however, does not grant Ion this protection for his vanity. He takes the offensive himself and accuses Ion of being wise along with actors and poets, whereas he, Socrates, speaks only the truth, as befits a private man. The opposition between what is here called wisdom and public men, on the one hand, and truth and private man, on the other, hints at the human situation which forces Ion to be ignorant without being aware of it and points to the precondition of the pursuit of the truth. In order to satisfy their public, the public men must pretend to wisdom, whereas only the private man, who appears to belong to a lower order of being, is free to doubt and free of the burden of public opinion. The private life seems to be essential to the philosophic state of mind. For example, the private man can think and speak of mean and contemptible things which are revealing but are beneath the exalted level expected of public men.

(532d-533c) After this skirmish for position, Socrates returns to tutoring his new pupil. Arts are wholes, Socrates argues; this means that the practitioners of an art are comparable; the man who can judge one practitioner of an art is in possession of the means to criticize all of its practitioners. He now provides Ion with examples of arts which are much more like rhapsody than either medicine or arithmetic are; he cites imitative painting, sculpture, and flute, harp and either playing. (He here covertly insults Ion by appearing to compare his grand art with the relatively trivial ones of flute, harp and either playing.) The ostensible purpose of this segment of the discussion is to prove to Ion that the grasp of an art implies competence to deal with all of it; Socrates succeeds in doing this and thus forces Ion to realize that he cannot pretend to the authority of art, as Socrates had first led him to believe he could. However, these examples implicitly raise a further problem that remains unexamined for the moment. What is it that constitutes the unity or wholeness of the arts of painting and sculpture? Two possible answers suggest themselves: their subject matters or their use of materials. Obviously, the things represented are primary in one sense, but the medium is a more distinguishing and clearly separable aspect. The entire thrust of Socrates’ argument is toward identifying poetry with its subject matter and not with its medium. He abstracts from the poetic in poetry, from what constitutes its characteristic charm, although in a hidden way he attempts to explain
that charm. The duality of style and content, or medium and subject matter, in poetry calls to mind the two aspects of Ion's art mentioned by Socrates at the beginning: the rhapsodes are adorned and they understand the thought of the poet. Socrates seems to forget the beautiful in poetry, just as he has neglected to discuss the rhapsodes' adornment. But while apparently paying attention only to the poets' teaching, he is actually studying the relationship of the true to the beautiful, or the relationship of philosophy to poetry, from the point of view of philosophy or truth. Socrates is perfectly aware of the uniqueness of poetry, and he is examining the role poetry plays in establishing the false but authoritative opinions of the community. The need for poetry is one of the most revealing facts about the human soul, and it is that need and its effect on the citizens that constitute a particular problem for Socrates' quest. Ion's total confusion about the difference between speaking finely and speaking well, between the charming and the true, is exemplary of the issue Socrates undertakes to clarify.

The examples of practitioners of arts used by Socrates, in the context of showing Ion that he must know all the poets, help to make an amusing, covert point. There is one painter, a contemporary; there are three sculptors, only one of whom is a contemporary, while the other two are mythical personages. Five rhapsodes are named; the only contemporary is Ion himself, and the others are all mythical. Of the mythical rhapsodes at least two of the first three met violent death as a result of their singing. The fourth, Phemius, served the mob of suitors running riot in Ithaca during the king's absence. He was saved from suffering death for it only by begging for mercy at the feet of the wise Odysseus. Perhaps there is a hidden threat in Socrates' speech; at least Ion asks for Socrates' succor, finally yielding completely. What does it mean that he who knows he speaks most finely or beautifully of all men about Homer and of whom all others assert that he speaks well, is unable to do so about other poets?

The dialogue has three major divisions. Ion's plea to Socrates ends the first which has concluded that a knower of Homer must be a knower of the whole art of poetry and, implicitly, of the whole.

The central section of the Ion has, in turn, three parts, two long speeches on divine possession surrounding an interlude of discussion. The explicit intention of this section is to find some source of Ion's power other than art. This attempt at first succeeds but is finally rejected by Ion and the final section of the dialogue is an effort to resuscitate his reputation as the possessor of an art. It is in this dramatic context that Socrates' teaching about divine possession must be interpreted. It is presented as the alternative for giving dignity to Ion's speech about Homer; it proves unsatisfactory, but, since the other alternative is no less unsatisfactory, it helps to reveal the nature of Ion's claim and appeal.

(533c-535a) Ion insists that Socrates try to explain why Ion is so good about Homer and not about the other poets. In response, Socrates provides Ion with a respectable and flattering answer—divine possession. Moreover, he takes the opportunity to do what Ion himself had for so long wished to do;
he offers a poetic display and gives a long speech, beautifully adorned, telling of gods and men and their relations. And the speech has the effect on Ion that poetry is supposed to have. "Yes, by Zeus . . . the speeches somehow lay hold of my soul . . ." Socrates plays the poet, not to say the god. It remains to be seen whether he himself is divinely possessed or whether he self-consciously and rationally constructs a tale designed to appeal to Ion's needs and wishes.

The tale Socrates tells does satisfy Ion's demands. It explains why he can only interpret Homer and at the same time gives his interpretations a dignity perhaps greater than those based on an art would have, for there is no dignity greater than that of the gods. Socrates seemingly succeeds where Ion has failed: he establishes a special place for Homer, one that transcends the limits of rational comparison; the comparison between Homer and others would be akin to the comparison between the Bible and another book made by a believer rather than the comparison between two technical treatises. There is a source of wisdom which does not depend on the rational study of nature (a word which does not occur in the Ion), so that art is not the only road to wisdom. It must be stressed that art and divine possession are not merely two ways to arrive at the same result, alternative ways of understanding the same thing. They are exclusive, each implying a different and contrary view of the whole. An art requires a subject matter which is permanent and governed by intelligible rules. Divine possession implies the existence of elusive and free gods who are not to be grasped by reason, who govern things and who can only be known if they choose to reveal themselves. In the latter case the highest and most decisive things are to be known only by the word, rather than the word being judged by the thing. Ion, as the spokesman of a god, and not the artisan, would be the one who would know the truth. Socrates not only describes the well-known and undeniable phenomenon of passionate, frenzied insight but backs up the description by asserting that the source of that insight is really a god and that, hence, it is of the highest status. Reason (noûs) is delusive and must be denigrated.

Socrates takes enthusiasm, literally the presence of a god within, as the archetype of the poetic experience. The unreasoning and unreasonable movement of the soul which expresses itself in the orgiastic dances of the Corybantes is an example of the kind of condition in which this revelation is likely to be found. This is the state of soul in which men foretell the future, become diviners and oracles. Religious excitement and fanaticism constitute the ambiance in which Ion and his poetry move. Socrates compares the god to a lodestone which both moves and lends its power to move to other things. Reason, perhaps a source of rest or of self-motion, must be out of a man for him to be affected fully by this source of motion. Poetry, as presented here, ministers particularly to that part of the soul which longs for worship of the sacred; and Ion, who sings at the festivals dedicated to the gods, finds himself at home in this atmosphere of man's longing for the divine. Socrates, however, suggests that the stone can be understood in two different ways. One interpretation comes from Euripides, a poet, who calls it the Magnet, implying it is only a stone; and the other comes from the vulgar, who call it
the Heraclean, implying that only the presence of the divine can account for its mysterious power. It might be suggested that in this speech Socrates adopts the account of the vulgar to explain Ion’s mysterious attractiveness, lending to that attractiveness a significance commensurate with his and his audiences’ wishes.

(535a–e) Upon Ion’s enthusiastic reception of his speech, Socrates questions him. He does so ostensibly to tighten the links of his argument but with the real effect of revealing finally the nature of Ion’s soul, this little Ion as opposed to the great interests he represents. At the same time Socrates elaborates the character of the religious experience which has been suggested. The poet is the spokesman of a god, and the rhapsode is the spokesman of a poet and hence the spokesman of a spokesman. As a part of this great chain, Ion is asked to tell frankly of his experiences on the stage. Is he not possessed when he tells the fearful tales of the avenging Odysseus and Achilles, or the piteous ones of the sufferings of Hecuba and Priam? When he recites is he not out of his mind and does he not suppose his soul transported to the place of these events? Ion confesses freely to this rapture, this total sympathy with his subject. When he tells of the piteous, his eyes fill with tears, and when he tells of the fearful, his hair stands on end and his heart jumps. Ion’s world is that of the passions connected with tragedy; he arouses pity and fear, and he purveys that most curious of pleasures, the pleasure experienced in the tears shed for the imaginary sufferings of others. Men desire and need the satisfaction found in contemplating the mutilation and death of noble men. This satisfaction is provided in beautiful poetry and is presided over by fair gods. Socrates points out how unreasonable Ion’s noble sentiments are in the real circumstances in which he finds himself – he, adorned with golden crowns, cries when he has not lost his crowns and is frightened when his friendly audience does not attack him. Ion’s tears, Socrates implies, would only be for his golden crown, and his terror only for his life and comfort. He may be the spokesman for the grandest beings and sentiments, but he is a very ordinary mortal. His tragedy would be the loss of the means of display and self-preservation. He is, in the deepest sense, an actor. Ion readily accepts Socrates’ characterization of his situation, without sensing his own vulgarity in doing so.

Finally, after establishing that the poet is possessed by a god, and Ion by the poet, Socrates completes his argument by asking Ion to confirm that the spectators are possessed by Ion. Thus the spectators would constitute the last link in a chain of attractions originating in the god. Ion asserts that the spectators do indeed share his experiences. He knows this because he is always looking at them and paying the closest attention to them. He reassures Socrates that this is so by explaining that he laughs when they cry, for he will get money, and he cries when they laugh, for he will lose money. This man possessed, living with the gods and the heroes, is at the same time counting the box-office receipts. He is at war with the spectators – when they cry, he laughs, and when they laugh, he cries – but there may be a deeper kinship in that Ion’s low interest in the money which preserves life is not totally alien to the fear of death which is at the root of the spectator’s interest in the tragic
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poems. At all events, we can see that the real magnet is the spectators and that Ion gives them what they want. He can best be understood by comparison to the Hollywood stars, who are nothing in themselves, are only fulfillments of the wishes of their fans, but who, in order to satisfy them, must appear to be independent, admirable, even "divine." The spectators must deceive themselves, absolutize their heroes, who exist only in terms of their tastes. It is a kind of self-praise; what the people love must be rooted in the best and highest; what appears to go from gods to men really goes in the other direction. Ion senses the vox dei in himself, but it is only the vox populi. He may think himself superior to the people, laugh at them, thinking he is duping them, but he is their flatterer and their creature; his self-esteem depends on their prizes; he does what he does at their bidding. The nature of the people and Ion's relation to them perhaps comes most clearly to light when we recognize that, if what the people most wanted were comedy, Ion would not have to deceive them and could be at one with them. He would laugh when they laugh. This may help to explain Socrates' earlier opposition between truth and public men and cast some light on his dictum that the city is the true tragedy.

(535e-536d) A second long speech is designed to complete the argument about divine possession and perfect the new view of Ion's calling designed for him by Socrates. But this speech, similar to the first one in its poetic qualities, is no longer successful, and Ion, far from being possessed, rejects it. The form is the same, so we must look elsewhere to account for the failure of this speech to persuade. The simple answer is that it no longer flatters Ion as did the first. Socrates gives with the first speech an example of successful poetry and with the second an example of unsuccessful poetry, slyly suggesting thereby that the essence of popular poetry is its capacity to flatter the aspiration of its audience. This second speech tells Ion that not only are the poet and the rhapsode possessed but the audience too is possessed. Everyone is possessed; possession is not a special honor or a title to wisdom; possession explains nothing. The story of divine possession is merely a description of the entire set of activities and attractions involved in poetry. Moreover, Socrates now stresses that the various poets are equally possessed, and Homer is no sense superior in this decisive respect. It just happens that some men are more attracted to Homer than any other poet. Divine possession provides no basis for believing what Homer says any more than what Orpheus or Musaeus says. And Ion's speeches about Homer suffer correspondingly. As a matter of fact, each of the various conflicting sayings of the poets has equal divine sanction. Ion is now a helpless instrument of a blind power. Finally, Socrates implies that it is not only the poets and their votaries who are at odds, but that there are different gods revealing contrary ways. There is no cosmos, only a chaos; and the truth of Ion's and Homer's speech, which was the original theme, becomes impossible to determine. Such are the consequences of the teaching about divine possession when further elaborated.

(536d) Ion, dimly aware of the unsatisfactory character of Socrates' explanation of his activity, refuses to admit that he is possessed and mad; he makes
a last attempt to possess Socrates by making a display. Socrates, however, again puts him off, asking for an answer to yet another question. Ion is to be forced to support his claim that he possesses an art. He will, of course, fail in this attempt. The conclusion of the first section was that Ion knew all the poets; the conclusion of this one will be that he does not even know Homer. The first section shows the universality of Ion’s proper concern, the third his incapacity to fulfill the requirements of that concern. Given the disproportion between the claim and the fulfilling of it, Ion will be forced back upon divine possession in order to salvage his reputation. But that divine possession will be nothing more than an idle, self-justificatory boast.

(536e-537c) Socrates begins by asking Ion about what particular thing in Homer he speaks well. Ion responds quite properly that there is nothing in Homer about which he does not speak well. But what about those things he does not know, that is, those arts of which Ion is not himself a practitioner? Without giving Ion time to respond, Socrates searches for a passage in Homer that is technical in character. Ion is caught up in the artifice and eagerly asks to recite the passage. At last he gets to perform, if only on a dull set of instructions for a chariot race. Socrates tells him what to recite and tells him when to stop. Socrates is now Ion’s master and gives a demonstration of how he should be used. The passage recited belongs more to the domain of a charioteer than to that of a doctor. It deals with the details of a chariot race, but one might wonder whether such a poetic presentation could be properly interpreted by a charioteer either. Socrates relentlessly pursues the issue of expertise. Between doctor and charioteer Ion sees no choice, although he probably thinks he himself could best comment on the verses. But Socrates did not ask that; his goal is to get Ion to admit that in this instance the charioteer is more competent than the rhapsode, but before he can compel Ion to do so, Socrates must come to a further agreement with him.

(537c-538a) This agreement concerns the relation of arts to their subject matters. There is a variety of different kinds of things in the world and to each of these kinds is assigned an art whose business it is to know that kind. One subject matter, one art, and what we know from one art we cannot know from another. The difference in names of arts comes from this difference in subject matter; there can only be one kind of expert for each kind of thing. Therefore, if the charioteer is expert on a passage in Homer, the rhapsode, as rhapsode, cannot be. Once this rule is accepted, Ion, who does not particularly care about this passage anyway, is prepared to admit that it is of the domain of the charioteer rather than the rhapsode. But this admission leads inevitably to the consequence that there is no passage in Homer about which Ion is competent, for the world is divided up among the well-known special arts. And even though there were some segment of Homer which dealt with rhapsody, Ion would be only one of many experts called in to interpret Homer; but, if rhapsody is anything at all, it must somehow be competent to deal with all of Homer. The helpless Ion, in order to be something, must look for some specific subject matter which he alone knows, and he finally emerges in the guise of a general.
This segment of the discussion is particularly offensive to anyone who loves poetry. Its consequence is not only that Ion is deprived of a claim to his profession, but also that Homer is reduced to a mere compendium of technical information drawn from the arts. Nothing could be more antipoetic. After all, a poem is a whole, one which may use material drawn from the arts but which puts them together in a unique way which cannot be derived from the arts.

Socrates knows what poetry is; the argument is intended to be defective. The very verses cited prove this. For example, the passage assigned to the fisherman could not be interpreted by a fisherman as such, for it is a simile, comparing a fisherman’s line falling through the water to the plunge of a goddess; the man who can understand this passage must know the gods as well as fishing tackle. Then, too, the verses about the healing of Machaon’s wounds are more appropriately judged by the statesman who knows what kind of medicine is good for the character of citizens than the doctor (cf. Rep. 408). Even the first example, which on the surface looks like a straightforward account of the way to handle a chariot, is not unambiguously technical. Examination of the context of the passage reveals that Nestor is actually telling his son how to use somewhat unsportsmanlike tactics in the race; the judgment of the propriety of such advice does not evidently fit too well into the charioteer’s sphere of competence. The insufficiency of this argument is clear; it does not do justice to the poem or to Ion. But Socrates wishes to compel us to see precisely wherein it fails and thereby to see a real and profound problem which Ion, and, for that matter, most men, do not sufficiently grasp. They, in their lives, are caught up in it unawares. This argument merely reflects a contradiction in the most common understanding of things.

The problem would be most immediately perceived by modern men as that of specialization. If one looks around a modern university, for example, one sees a variety of independent, seemingly self-sufficient disciplines. Physics, astronomy, literature and economics teach competences which are thought to be unquestionable. Now, where is the unity? They are parts of the university but there is no one who is expert about the knowledge present in the university as a whole. There is always a central administration, to be sure, but it does not have an intellectual discipline of its own; it merely provides the wherewithal of survival to the disciplines and accepts their intellectual authority. There are men who talk about the whole domain of knowledge and who are even applauded for doing so. But no one thinks of crediting them with knowledge of the same solidity or certitude as that of the specialists. One finds competent specialized speech or bloated, unconvincing general speech. It is this very problem that Socrates is approaching here, the problem alluded to in the Apology when Socrates tells of his examination of the artisans as well as of the poets and statesmen. He does not deny that Homer constitutes a unity, which is more than the result of the mere addition of parts. The question is the status of that unity. Does Homer’s general view have the character of knowledge, or is it an adorned deception which satisfies men’s longings and which they can dupe themselves into taking seriously by calling
“divinely inspired”? Men in Socrates’ time, as at present, believed that the arts are the only sources of simply persuasive knowledge. But if that is the case, then men’s general views can never be knowledge.

If one examines the principle of specialization posited by Socrates somewhat more carefully, one becomes aware that it is wrong. And Ion’s acceptance of that principle is the source of the dissolution of poetry’s unity. Socrates asserted that each subject matter is dealt with by one art and that no other art can speak precisely about that subject matter. But this is not so. What is forgotten is the master arts. The horseman, for example, speaks of the saddle maker’s art with great competence and precision. As a matter of fact, he may speak of it with even greater authority than the saddle maker himself, for he sets the latter in motion. He alone can judge the good and bad saddles, for he is their user, but he is surely not a saddle maker. The best model of the master artisan is the architect who rules the specialized artisans who build a house. Socrates’ argument forgets that each of the arts treats of a subject matter which is part of a whole which is itself the subject of a more sovereign art. None of the specialties is really independent, although it may seem to be.

This leads us back to the art of the whole, the necessity of which emerged early in the discussion. The subject matter of poetry turned out to be the whole, and if poetry is to be based on knowledge, or to be discussed knowledgeably, there must be knowledge, or an art, of the whole. But somehow men do not see this art and do not see the whole presupposed in each of its divisions. They have a view of the whole, but it seems to stem from altogether different sources than their view of the parts. The helmet maker’s art seems somehow altogether different from the statesman’s art which in war directs the wearers of the helmets. The parts seem rationally intelligible, but the whole of which they are parts does not seem to be so. The discovery of the possibility of a rationally intelligible whole may be called the discovery of nature, and that discovery is the origin of philosophy. It has already been remarked that the word nature does not occur in the Ion; it comes as no surprise, then, that the word philosophy is also nowhere to be found. In this dialogue Socrates examines the pre-philosophic soul which knows neither of nature nor of the master art which seeks the first principles of nature. This art is the quest for that universal and unifying knowledge which is neither special nor spurious, that knowledge of which Ion could not conceive and we can no longer conceive. Ion’s world knows of special arts which are highly developed and even awe-inspiring; such arts are almost coeval with man, and reflection on them leads to the notion of a permanent and comprehensible order which is the cause of the intelligibility of the parts. But that reflection is not a part of Ion’s world; instead there is a dazzling poetry telling of gods and heroes, a precursor of philosophy but its bitterest enemy. The Ion is a representation of the emergence of philosophy out of the world of myth.

(538e-539) It is not only ignorance that prevents the discovery of nature; man’s most powerful passion sides with poetry and is at war with his love of wisdom. Socrates reveals this in his final examples drawn from Homer. With great emphasis he recites passages from the Iliad and the Odyssey
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dealing with divining, presumably to show once again the kind of thing in Homer with which a specialist should deal. However, he has already amply made his point, and the peculiar solemnity of his presentation forces one to search further for his intention. It can be found in his desire to call particular attention to the art of divining. This art has been mentioned several times in the dialogue and has been connected with rhapsody throughout, suffering the same fate as it. In the first section, divining was treated as an art; indeed, it was the first example mentioned of an art. In the central section, it was one of the examples of divine possession, and now it has again become an art. Although not obviously similar to rhapsody or poetry, divining is used by Socrates to point up their character. By reflecting on divining we can penetrate what Socrates wishes to teach us about rhapsody and poetry.

Diviners exist because men wish to know the future, because they are worried about what will happen to them as individuals. There can be such knowledge only if there is providence; if the fate of individuals is but a matter of chance, this fond wish would have to remain unfulfilled. Providence implies the existence of gods who care for men. If divining is to be considered an art, it is strange in that it must profess to know the intentions of the gods; as an art, it would, in a sense, seem to presuppose that the free, elusive gods are shackled by the bonds of intelligible necessity. Divining partakes of the rational dignity of the arts while supposing a world ruled by divine beings who are beyond the grasp of the arts. It belongs somehow both to the realm of the arts and to the realm of divine possession. Moreover, divining is a most peculiar art in that it treats of the particular while other arts speak only of the general; the unique, the special, are the only concern of divining while the particular is taken account of by other arts only to the extent that it partakes in the general rules. And, finally, although divining is a pious art, the knowledge derived from it is to be used to avoid the bad things and gain the good ones. On the one hand, it presupposes a fixed providence; on the other hand, it ministers to man's desire to master his destiny rather than accept it.

Socrates' view of the proper use of divining has been preserved for us by Xenophon. In the context of defending Socrates' piety - he had been accused of impiety - Xenophon tells that Socrates:

...advised them [his companions] to do necessary things in the way they thought they would be best done. As for things the consequences of which are unclear, he sent them to inquire of diviners whether they should be done. He said that those who are going to manage households and cities in a fine way had need, in addition, of the art of divining. With respect to becoming a carpenter, a smith, a farmer, an investigator of such deeds, a calculator, a household manager or a general, he held that such studies can be acquired by human thought. However, he said that the gods reserved the most important parts of them for themselves and of these parts nothing is clear to human beings. For it is surely not clear to the man who plants a field in a fine way who will reap it; nor is it clear to the man who builds a house in a fine way who will live in it; nor is it clear to the general whether it is beneficial to exercise command; nor is it clear to the statesman whether presiding over the city is beneficial; nor is it clear to the man who marries a beautiful girl for his delight whether she will prove a misery
Art can tell a man how to sow, but whether he will reap what he sows is beyond the power of art to know, for chance is decisive in determining whether that man will live or die. But the man who sows only does so because he wants to reap. What he cares about most as a living, acting man is not guaranteed by art. Socrates reasonably prescribes that men should obey the rules of art where they apply, and, in what belongs to chance, consult the diviner. In other words, he urges men not to let what is out of their control affect their action. They should separate out their hopes and fears from their understanding and manfully follow the prescriptions of what true knowledge they possess. They must not let their passionate aspirations corrupt that knowledge.

But such a solution is not satisfactory to most men; they must see the world in such a way that their personal ambitions have a cosmic status. The fate of an individual man is no more significant to the knower of man than is the fate of a particular leaf to the botanist. The way of the knower is unacceptable for the life of men and cities. They must see a world governed by providence and the gods, a world in which art and science are inexplicable, a world which confuses general and particular, nature and chance. This is the world of poetry to which man clings so intensely, for it consoles and flatters him. As long as human wishes for the significance of particular existences dominate, it remains impossible to discover nature, the intelligible and permanent order, for nature cannot satisfy those wishes. Ion cannot imagine an art of the whole because, as rhapsode, he most of all serves the longing for individual immortality, and he uses his poetry to that end.

The effect of this longing for immortality on the soul is illuminated by Socrates' comparison of the enthusiastic diviners and rhapsodes with the Bacchic or Corybantic dancers (534a-b). In the Laws (790d-791b) the Athenian Stranger speaks of Corybantism as an illness resulting from excessive fear, which gets its relief and cure in the frantic dances. The hearts of the Corybantic dancers leap, just as does Ion's, and they dance wildly; carried away by powerful internal movements which they translate into frenzied external movements, they dedicate their dance, and themselves, to a protecting deity.
The fear of death, the most profound kind of fear and the most powerful of passions, moves them until they are out of their minds, and they can be healed only in the fanatic religious practice. In the Ion, Socrates points to the most important source of religious fanaticism and suggests that the function of that kind of poetry which is taken most seriously is to heal this fear and console man in his awareness of his threatened existence. This poetry irrationally soothes the madness in all of us. It is a useful remedy, but a dangerous one. Fanaticism is often its result. The man who most believes the poets’ stories is likely to be most intolerant of those who do not. Socrates, the philosopher who tests the stories as well as those who tell them, is a menace to the sense of security provided by them. It is precisely overcoming this concern with oneself, in all its subtle and pervasive forms, that is the pre-condition of philosophy and a rational account of one’s own life. Poetry, as Ion administers it to suffering man, gives a spurious sense of knowledge while really serving and watering the passions hostile to true knowledge.

(539d-540d) Socrates, who has taken over from Ion and has himself been reciting from Homer, showing his own rhapsodic gifts, now demands that Ion select the passages that belong to the rhapsode. Ion must look for some special segment which speaks about rhapsody. But, ox-like, he asserts that all of Homer belongs to him. He does not seem to have followed the argument. It is not only stupidity, however, but self-interest that makes him so dense. He loses his title to respect if he is not the interpreter of the whole, and, besides, he clearly recites all of the Iliad and Odyssey and not just individual passages. Socrates forbids him, however, to say that he is an expert on all of Homer. Their earlier agreements about the practitioners of arts who can judge parts of Homer bind Ion. Socrates chides Ion for being forgetful. It is not appropriate for a rhapsode, of all people, to be forgetful. Socrates implies that the rhapsode is really only a memory mindlessly repeating the ancestral things. Ion believes he can abide by the agreements and emerge relatively intact. As he sees it, the parts of Homer dedicated to these petty, uninteresting arts are of no real importance to the whole. Ion can be the expert on what really counts: the human things. In particular he knows what it is fitting for men and women, slave and free, ruled and ruler, to say; he knows the properties of civil, as opposed to technical, man.

Socrates does not allow Ion to leave it at this general statement of his competence in what men should say. Homer never presents man in general; his personnages are always particular kinds of men doing particular kinds of things. There is a free man who is a ruler of a ship; he is the pilot; what he would say in a particular difficult situation is known to the practitioner of the pilot’s art. The same is true of the man who is a doctor treating a sick patient. Ion must answer “no” when Socrates asks him whether he knows the proprieties of such speech. What about the things it is fitting for a slave to say? To this Ion answers “yes.” But Socrates will not even let him remain a slave or be a woman. Both must be artisans too. Then Socrates asks whether Ion would know what it is fitting for a man who is a general to say in exhorting his troops. In a last desperate attempt, Ion seizes on this alternative, his
final hope of salvaging his dignity. Socrates interprets Ion’s assertion that he knows what a general should say to mean Ion possesses the general’s art; he who knows the speech of a general must be a general. Socrates began by talking to a rhapsode and ends by commissioning him as a general. Socrates rejects the distinction between speech and deed which Ion suggests but cannot defend.

Now, there is clearly a possibility of discussing man in general without knowing all the particular activities which he can undertake. Similarly there is a capacity to speak about deeds, and to understand them, without performing them. Ion is caught in a sophistic argument. But Socrates does not do him an injustice, for if he were able to present a defense of the dignity of speech, if he had any justification for his own life which is devoted to speech alone, he could extricate himself from the difficulty. He makes a living from speech but does not really respect it or understand it. Ion, apparently following Homer, admires the heroes and their deeds; they are more important than the speeches which glorify them. Speech follows on deed, and the life of action is the best kind of life. Or, rather, there is no theoretical life; for only if there is a theoretical life can speech be regarded as anything more than a means. Thus Ion does not sing the poems for their own sake but for the sake of money.

Only in a world in which thought could be understood to be highest, in which there are universals – which means essentially intelligible beings – can there be significant general speech. Without such universals, only particulars exist. That is why Ion is unable to stop Socrates’ progressing from the man in general Ion said he knew about to slaves guarding sheep, pilots in a storm and so on. Only if he knew of human nature could he speak of man; but we have already seen why he cannot even conceive of nature. For him, all speeches are distillations of the deeds of doers, and the poets and rhapsodes are but incompetent imitators of the competent. The splendor and authority of poetry would seem to indicate that speech can be higher than deed, but the poets and rhapsodes do not explain how that can be. In order for that explanation to be given there would have to be a total revolution in their view, a revolution which can only be effected by philosophy. When poetry can celebrate the speeches of Socrates, the poet – in this case Plato – has found a ground for the life devoted to speech.

(540d-541b) All of this becomes clearer in the further elaboration of Ion’s generalship. Socrates permits Ion to masquerade in this comic garb, although he could have easily shown that this position cannot be defended either. This role for the actor is apparently too appropriate to be denied him. Ion now knows what he must do to defend himself, so he is willing to assert that there is no difference between the rhapsode’s and the general’s art, and that all rhapsodes are generals (although he cannot bring himself to go so far as to argue that all generals are rhapsodes). There is a hidden madness in all unself-conscious human lives, and Socrates, in dissecting this soul, brings its peculiar madness to light. Ion’s choice of the general’s art is appropriate for many reasons. It is a particular practical art, one which is pervasive in Homer, one
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which is needed and admired beyond most other arts.

But more profoundly one can see that the propriety of Ion's becoming a general has something to do with the whole view of the world peculiar to Ion and his understanding of Homer. In the beginning, when Socrates listed the things the poets talk about, the first item was war and it was the only one which stood alone, not coupled with an appropriate companion as were the others. The obvious complement to war, peace, is missing in the poets. Superficially this means that the great poems tell of warlike heroes and the struggles between and within cities. In a deeper sense it means that they tell of a world ruled by gods who also struggle and who refer back to an ultimate chaos. The only harmony is to be found in the rational cosmos which is grasped not by the practical man but by the theoretical man.

(541b-542b) Socrates pursues this theme by asking Ion why he goes around Greece being a rhapsosse instead of a general. Adopting Ion's own hidden prejudice, Socrates, who never does anything but talk, ridicules the notion that the Greeks need a man wearing a golden crown more than a general. Instead of arguing that the interpretation of poetry is a better and nobler thing than leading men in war, Ion offers an excuse for doing second best. He is a citizen of a subject city and would not be used as a general by either Athens or Sparta. Ion would apparently be willing to adapt himself to the service of either of these warring cities. Perhaps this is also just what he does with his poetry: he adapts what is apparently universal to the needs of opposing heres and nows. His poetry provides the gods which Athenians and Spartans invoke as guarantors of their causes when they march out to slay each other. Ion's cosmopolitanism is only a sham with roots in nothing beyond the needs of the cities, giving particular and passing interests a universal significance. He is a servant who must appear to be master in order to satisfy his masters. While a philosopher is truly a citizen of the world, in that his pursuit is essentially independent of the opinions or consent of any group of men, the political man needs a country and a people to serve. Ion has no satisfactions which are not dependent on the approval of his spectators. He needs the cities, as they need him. For political men the accident of where they are born is decisive in limiting their possibilities of fulfillment.

Socrates tries to act as though these limits of politics did not exist; he treats politics as though it were as cosmopolitan as any of the arts, for example, arithmetic. He abstracts from the peculiar atmosphere of chance and unreason surrounding political life, expressing astonishment at Ion's unwillingness to act like any other man of knowledge; he thereby provides a measure of the difference between the life of reason and that of cities. It is the city to which Ion belongs, and his irrationality only points to the city's. Socrates names a few obscure, not to say unknown, men, alleging that they were chosen as generals by Athens. On this rather dubious basis, he asserts that not being a citizen is no hindrance to political participation. Ion, Socrates concludes, must be insisting that it is a hindrance only in order to avoid giving that wondrous display which Socrates has been so eager to hear for so long. Ion, suggests Socrates, must be an unjust man since he does not fulfill his promise.
Or, as an alternative, perhaps he is really divinely possessed. Socrates gives Ion a choice: he can be either divine or unjust. Perhaps the two are ultimately the same.

Socrates compares Ion to the slippery Proteus, and thus implicitly compares himself to Menelaus, who sought for guidance about the gods from Proteus so he could save himself. But this Proteus cannot help the new Menelaus. So they part, Ion humiliated but wearing a new, divine crown; Socrates in search of more authoritative knowledge of the gods.
MACBETH’S LAST WORDS

JOSE A. BENARDETE

I.

Last words – one supposes – have always been felt to be especially poignant. At any rate, “they say the tongues of dying men / Enforce attention.” Although Macbeth is denied a death speech proper, he is given what comes as close as possible to being one, and it is only fitting that in his very last words he speaks expressly of damnation. That Macbeth is damned, cannot be doubted from almost any theological standpoint.

The reference to damnation is, however, so exiguous and indeed so oblique that we can understand why David Garrick should have wished to enlarge upon it. Playing Macbeth, Garrick chose to expire with the following lines composed by himself.

... my soul is clog’d with blood –
I cannot rise! I dare not ask for mercy –
It is too late, hell drags me down; I sink,
I sink, – my soul is lost forever! – Oh! – Oh!

Here is a death speech proper, in operatic style, in which Macbeth is seen to be writhing in the full consciousness of his own eternal damnation. Far be it from me to censure the great actor for wishing to milk the scene of all its dramatic potential. It is enough to observe that in the present instance it is the Elizabethan poet, and actor, Shakespeare who exercises the kind of cultivated self-restraint upon which the Augustans and post-Augustans were to pride themselves at his expense.

Shakespeare’s restraint here is not confined to mere diction. Although his Macbeth does speak explicitly of damnation, he speaks of it in a peculiar way. The peculiarity is all the more brought home to us when we contrast Shakespeare’s version with Garrick’s. Garrick caters to the stock response. He gives us what we have every right to expect. In the case of Shakespeare, if we take Macbeth’s last words au pied de la lettre we are forced to conclude that Macbeth at the end does not regard himself as damned. This is not to say that Macbeth simply ignores the question of damnation. He does not. He speaks of it. But the words he speaks presuppose that at least to his own mind he is not damned.

Macbeth’s last words presuppose only that he is not damned at the moment when he utters those last words. In the very utterance of the words he envisages the possibility that he may in fact incur damnation in the immediate sequel. How hebehaves in his combat with Macduff, will determine whether he will be damned – or saved.

Couched in the imperative mood, Macbeth's last words may be described as a curse. It is, however, a disjunctive curse, with divided reference applying equally, and indifferently, to himself and to Macduff. Hypothetical or conditional in its burden, the curse can only take effect if one or the other behaves in a certain way. Damnation is to be visited on Macbeth, or Macduff, on only one condition – if he plays the coward in the ensuing combat. Although we are not told how Macbeth conducts himself in that duel, we have taken the full measure of the man in the course of the play. "Blow, wind! come, wrack! / At least we'll die with harness on our back." According to his own lights Macbeth is not damned.

II

On learning that Macduff was not of woman born Macbeth says of the news that "it hath cowed my better part of man." Kittredge glosses the passage as follows: "my courage, which is a man's better part; the quality which, more than anything else, makes me a man."

Not courage but justice was always regarded by the Great Tradition, both biblical and classical, as the moral virtue par excellence. Macbeth replaces justice by courage, and it is for that reason that he can regard himself as saved in his last words. For if courage is the better part of man it is only the man who betrays that better part that deserves damnation. Momentarily cowed, Macbeth recovers his courage and fights to the end. With his final curse he affirms a deviant theology in which damnation and – by implication – salvation are made to depend the one on cowardice and the other on courage. Considerations of justice and injustice simply fall by the way as irrelevant to the main issue. The main issue is summed up at the beginning of the play: "Brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name)."

Of Macbeth it might almost be said what was said of the thane of Cawdor: "Nothing in his life / Became him like the leaving it." But there the resemblance ends. Cawdor "confessed his treasons" and died in state of "deep repentance." I mention that minor episode only to show that Shakespeare had available to him, within the immediate resources of the play, the kind of option – orthodox and traditional – which Garrick exploited and the poet eschewed.

Dr. Johnson's principal criticism of Shakespeare is that "he seems to write without any moral purpose." On the plus side he says, "this... is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life." Johnson failed to see that there might be an intimate connection between Shakespeare's "praise" and what he called his "first defect," that the "defect" might in fact be in part the source of the "praise." It is not easy to see how the "mirror of life" can have a "moral purpose."

III

Macbeth in his last words speaks only of damnation. He does not mention salvation. It is Macduff who in an important passage speaks of salvation. He
speaks of Macbeth's salvation. He specifies the precise conditions under which Macbeth may be saved.

Macduff is full of the news of Macbeth's most horrible atrocity, the killing of his wife and children, when he entertains the possibility of Macbeth's salvation.

But, gentle Heavens,
Cut short all intermission; front to front,
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;
Within my sword's length set him; if he scape,
Heaven forgive him too!

The words are extraordinary: "If I let him escape I will not only forgive him myself but I pray God to forgive him also" (Kittredge). Here indeed is Christian forgiveness but with a novel twist. God's mercy is being extended to the fiend of Scotland on one condition – that he succeed in outwitting or outfighting Macduff when they meet in mortal combat. The successful exercise of manly prowess can earn Macbeth full redemption for all his crimes. Here again it is courage or prowess that supersedes justice as the cardinal virtue. Macduff is found to share Macbeth's deviant theology.

Where the text has "if he 'scape" Kittredge provides the gloss "If I let him escape", but Macbeth may escape Macduff's vengeance without Macduff's letting him do so. Macbeth's escape may indeed occur through a failure of prowess on Macduff's part; it may equally occur simply through Macbeth's proving himself the stronger man.

Searching for Macbeth on the battlefield, Macduff exclaims, "Let me find him, Fortune! / And more I beg not." In particular, Macduff refuses to entreat Fortune, or God, or Heaven, to ensure his victory. According to the Great Tradition he would have every right to do so. Seeing that justice cries out for Macbeth's destruction, we might expect Macduff to invoke the formula of medieval chivalry, "By the grace of God and this mine arm/... as I truly fight defend me heaven!" Not so. Macduff will rely solely on his arm.

IV

Despite his cult of manhood Macbeth should not be taken as being indifferent to considerations of justice. Challenged by Macduff, he warns him off with the words, "But get thee back! My soul is too much charged / With blood of thine already ... / I bear a charmed life." From the moment that Macbeth kills Duncan he is never allowed to forget that his soul is too much charged with blood.

But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"
Stuck in my throat.

Justice, guilt, remorse, compassion: these comprise one moral syndrome; courage, prowess, manhood, resolution ("Be bloody, bold and resolute") comprise a second. Although Macbeth is powerfully susceptible to the first
it is the manly syndrome that is seen finally to prevail in his deepest nature. (With Lady Macbeth the reverse proves true: "the valor of [her] tongue" gives way to a "mind diseased.") Even as Macbeth regards his soul as too much charged with blood he remains convinced that his better part of man stands inviolate. The two are not the same. In the last analysis Macbeth prizes his manhood more than he prizes his soul ("mine eternal jewel").

The genius of Garrick lay in giving full value, and more than full value, to the moral syndrome – what Nietzsche called "slave morality" as opposed to "master morality" – in Macbeth's character. The account of P. Fitzgerald in his "Life of Garrick" is most instructive.

The expression of despair and agony and horror, as Garrick looked at his bloody hands, was long remembered. His face seemed to grow whiter at every instant . . . These were exquisite strokes altogether new to the audience . . . Instead of the daring and intrepidity, and perhaps cant and bluster, of the older conception . . . [he pursued] his idea of Macbeth being utterly oppressed and overcome by the sense of his guilt. But an anonymous critic pointed out to him that Macbeth was not a coward; and with that good sense and modesty which always distinguished him he adopted the advice.2

What advice? Garrick did not play Macbeth as a coward. He played him as overcome by the sense of guilt. Why should it be assumed that the latter entails the former? If a man having committed acts of grave injustice is utterly oppressed by guilt for what he has done there is pro tanto no cowardice in that. That Garrick and Garrick's critic and Garrick's biographer should all succumb to the fallacy of supposing a connection, proves the tremendous power of the cult of manhood; so that when Macbeth gives voice to his guilt, "I am afraid to think what I have done; / Look on't again I dare not," it is no wonder that he should be vulnerable to his wife's retort, "My hands are of your color; but I shame / To wear a heart so white."

Later, in the scene with Banquo's ghost, when she rallies him with, "Are you a man?" he will reply with testy pride, "Ay, and a bold one that dare look on that / Which might appal the Devil."

V

The key word of the play is the word "man". It is by ringing the changes on that word that the poet brings out much of the moral import – I do not say "moral purpose" – of the play.

Especially to be noticed are two exchanges featuring the word "man", one between Macbeth and his wife, the other between Macduff and Malcolm, that are strikingly akin. In the first we have: "I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none. / When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And, to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man. / 'Bring forth men-children only!' "

In the second exchange there is an almost uncanny rehearsal of the first: "'Dispute it like a man.' // 'But I must also feel it like a man.' // '... blunt not the heart; enrage it.' // 'O! I could play the woman with mine eyes / . . . Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape, / Heaven forgive him too!' // 'This tune goes manly.'"

Although in the one we have the forces of evil and in the other the forces of good, in each exchange considerations of manhood are taken by both parties to be overriding considerations. That is never in question. What is in question is simply how the overriding considerations of manhood are to be interpreted. Do they allow for the natural grief of a father and husband? "All my pretty ones? / Did you say all? O Hell-kite! – All?" Do they allow for natural fear under any circumstances whatever? "If we fail?"

Again, in both cases it is the moderate position that is overborne by the extreme one: Macduff and Macbeth are both brought to heel. And in each case it is the weaker who through the valor of her tongue succeeds in goading the stronger. Malcolm (if I may say so) is a woman when juxtaposed with Macduff – if only because, though nominally Macbeth's chief adversary, he cannot be allowed to detract from the decisive role assigned to Macduff. He can, however, be given the part of Lady Macbeth: "blunt not the heart, enrage it."

Pity and fear: in regard to both of those passions the cult of manhood takes a very hard line. Needless to say, the tragic poet – if only for professional reasons – can never quite identify himself with the cult, though he may perhaps place his art in its service. He may see himself as rousing those passions in his audience for the sole purpose of purging them.

VI

Hardly is Macbeth dead but that grand soldier of the old school, Siward, learns that his son has been slain in the battle.

Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt.
He only lived but till he was a man,
The which no sooner had his prowess confirmed
In the unshrinking station where he fought,
But like a man he died.

These words of praise might equally be applied, mutatis mutandis, to Macbeth himself. Coming hard upon his death they might well serve as his obituary notice, always remembering that in the long interim between confirming his prowess at the outset of the play – "Disdaining Fortune with his banded steel" – and his dying like a man at the end of the play – "Yet I will try the last" – all his terrible career of injustice lies between. But if de mortuis nil nisi bonum the epitaph is not unsuitable. Young Siward being denied the long interim we do not know how he would have filled it.

Old Siward has only one question to ask. Where did his son receive his
wounds—on his front or on his back? No such question need be asked in the case of Macbeth: we know the answer.

As for the father shedding tears for his son, that is simply unthinkable. When Malcolm protests, “He’s worth more sorrow,” the old soldier is adamant: “He’s worth no more; / They say he parted well and paid his score.”

On learning that his son’s wounds were on the front Siward says, “Why then, God’s soldier be he!” It is thanks to his son’s courage that the gates of Heaven will open to receive him. That his son exercised his courage in a just cause, is certainly important to Siward; but it is the courage that comes first, the justice second. Salvation itself consists in being God’s soldier.

If Siward refuses on principle to grieve for his son; if Macduff refuses equally “to play the woman with mine eyes” and weep for his wife and children; how can it be expected that Macbeth should submit to the “compunctious visitings of Nature” and spare the life of Duncan? Macbeth is by no means alone in resisting, even while feeling deeply, the claims of “Pity like a naked new-born babe.”

Macbeth, Macduff, Siward—these are hard men; they have been trained in a hard school; they are men of great moral seriousness who prize justice as well as courage; they are men of great heart who are open to the whole range of moral experience. But they are men by whom justice is largely taken for granted: it does not lie in the forefront of their moral concern. If only because they are soldiers by profession—“Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?”—they are peculiarly vulnerable to any imputation laid against their manhood.

Reflecting on those lines we are inevitably led to the conclusion that only some accident of fate, some unlucky turn of the wheel of fortune, can explain why it is that Macbeth and not Macduff or Siward or even Banquo (as I hope to show) should be singled out to become the fiend of Scotland. That accident of fate may be seen as bodied forth in those “instruments of darkness,” the Weird Sisters: in Holinshed it is suggested that they may be the “goddesses of destiny.”

Although Macbeth is morally responsible for his crimes, it is an accident of fate that those crimes should be committed by him and not by Macduff or Siward whom we have found to be his moral equivalents. There is thus some basis for Macbeth’s atheistic speech: life is a “tale told by an idiot.” Much of the babblings of the Witches are the babblings of an idiot, quite literally “signifying nothing.”

VII

In the manuals of moral philosophy the ethical question par excellence is taken to be “why ought I to be moral?” meaning “why be moral rather than simply hearken to the dictates of self-interest?” It may not be altogether self-evident that moral considerations should be allowed to override prudential ones.

When Macbeth shrinks from killing Duncan he is seen to be deterred by both moral and prudential considerations operating together, the one assum-
ing the form – principally – of pity, the other giving rise to fear. He does not doubt that the contemplated act is as much imprudent as it is immoral. Quite apart from the claims of justice to which he is highly sensitive, merely consulting his own self-interest in cold-blooded fashion would suffice to keep Macbeth innocent of the crime.

Seeing that the manuals of moral philosophy are of no help to us in understanding the present case, we may suspect that they provide only an impoverished account of moral experience. Besides morality and self-interest there is a third factor that is not inferior to either of the others. It is to that tertium quid that Lady Macbeth appeals. She knows her husband well; she knows how to release the mainspring of his character; she does not appeal to his self-interest; she does not even appeal to his ambition. Johnson's statement cannot be improved.

She urges the excellence and dignity of courage, a glittering idea which has dazzled mankind from age to age, and animated sometimes the housebreaker and sometimes the conqueror . . . This topic, which has been always employed with too much success, is used in this scene, with peculiar propriety, to a soldier by a woman. Courage is the distinguishing virtue of a soldier; and the reproach of cowardice cannot be borne by any man from a woman without great impatience.³

Although there is a "peculiar propriety" in having the theme enacted by a soldier and a woman who are also, we might add, husband and wife, Johnson sees that the theme is too universal to be confined to special conditions. Mankind taken in general, and perhaps the best men quite as much as the others, are liable to be so dazzled by the glittering idea of manhood that moral and prudential considerations, acting separately or acting together, are only too readily eclipsed. When cold warriors armed with atomic bombs engage in "brinkmanship", as in the Cuban missile crisis, they do not find it easy to back down from advanced positions, and it cannot be assumed that even the most elementary consideration of self-interest, sheer survival, will always restrain them; to save face they may jump the death to come.

When I contrast moral and manly considerations as diverse I am to be seen as yielding to contemporary usage. According to Aristotle courage and justice are both moral virtues – for the simple reason that a moral virtue is taken to be any praiseworthy trait of character, and it is not to be doubted that courage as well as justice is a praiseworthy trait of character. If we accept that account of moral virtue we may venture to say (doubtless with exaggeration) that Macbeth kills Duncan for the sake of virtue, for the sake – at any rate – of one of the virtues.

Hobbes breaks with Aristotle in denying that courage is a moral virtue; for him it is merely a passion. Again, the reason is simple. Hobbes understands the moral virtues as "means of peaceable, sociable and comfortable living," and courage as such is not directed to that end.⁴ If we accept this

⁴ Leviathan, part I, chapter 15 ad finem. Cf. chapter 6 on the passions.
account we will find nothing odd in the description of Macbeth given by Henry Irving. "Of Macbeth's bravery there can be no doubt whatever... Indeed Shakespeare insists throughout on this great manly quality... It is to his moral qualities which I refer when I dub him villain."

There is a pertinent passage in Machiavelli in which he equivocates beautifully in his use of the word "virtue." It is his description of Agathocles that is almost equally applicable to Macbeth, himself an equivocal case.

It cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow-citizens, betray one's friends, be without faith, without pity, and without religion; by these methods one may indeed gain power but not glory. For if the virtues of Agathocles in braving and overcoming perils, and his greatness of soul in supporting and surmounting obstacles be considered, one sees no reason for holding him inferior to any of the most renowned captains. Nevertheless his barbarous cruelty and inhumanity, together with his countless atrocities, do not permit of his being named among the most famous men. We cannot attribute to fortune or virtue that which he achieved without either.²

VIII

If "man" is the key word of the play it is "woman" with which it is essentially contrasted.

When Lady Macduff learns that the assassins are at her door her first thought is, "I have done no harm." If she has done no harm how can she be punished? And if she is to be punished must she not be guilty of some sin? To think thus is to trust the moral order of the world. Her first thought gives way to a second, "But I remember now / I am in this earthly world where to do harm / Is often laudable." She explains her first thought as owing to failure of memory. It is as if she were an angelic soul who suddenly remembers that, no longer in heaven, it has been cast adrift on earth. But this thought gives way to a third, "Why then, alas! / Do I put up that womanly defence, / To say, I have done no harm?" Even women are not allowed to be womanly.

To trust the moral order of the world, is to be womanly; to distrust it is to be manly. Carried to its extreme, that distrust issues in the conviction that life is a tale told by an idiot. Lady Macduff unsexes herself in a fashion reminiscent of Lady Macbeth. There is indeed this difference: the one takes the hard, manly line in suffering injustice, the other in inflicting it. We may admire the one even as we detest the other. The fact remains that the two women are alike in taking the hard, manly line and in rejecting their nature as women. If Macduff is the alter ego of Macbeth, Lady Macduff is in turn the alter ego of Lady Macbeth.

Although Lady Macduff herself takes the hard line, we in the audience are invited to take the soft. The scene as a whole is so piteable that it would be unbearable if it were not so mercifully brief. In a word, it is "womanly": we do not hesitate to "play the woman" with our eyes even if her husband refuses.

² *The Prince*, translated by L. Ricci and E. R. P. Vincent, (New York, 1940), chapter 8, "Of those who have attained the position of prince by villainy."
The scene is crucial to the play, whether it be dramatically or spectatorially or thematically considered. Dramatically, it presents the hard, manly line of Macbeth being carried to the *reductio ad absurdum* of wanton cruelty. Spectatorially (if I may coin a barbarism), it elicits to the highest degree the soft and womanly in us as observers of the action. Thematically, the hard and the soft, the manly and the womanly – which constitute together the theme of the play – are so intertwined in the very texture of the lines that we can scarcely disentangle them.

Macduff’s son has only one brief moment to live but thanks to the providence of the poet’s art a whole lifetime is telescoped into that one moment, as we see the child proceed in three stages, from tender innocence to knowing worldliness and ending in brave defiance. In the first stage Lady Macduff says to him, “Sirrah, your father’s dead: / And what will you do now? How will you live?” He replies, “As birds do, mother,” expressing thereby his trust and faith in the natural order.

The specific reference here to *Matthew 6:26* recalls the more general reference to the New Testament where Macbeth says to the embittered men whom he is hiring to kill Banquo, “Are you so gospelled / To pray for this good man . . . / Whose heavy hand hath bowed you to the grave?” They reply simply, and *sotto voce*, “We are men, my liege.” That is enough. They are men, not women. To be a man is to be ungospelled. To be gospelled is to be a woman. If the moral is contrasted with the manly, then to be moral is to be gospelled and womanly. The root of the distinction between the manly and the moral proves to be the natural difference between man and woman.

Macbeth himself is both manly and womanly, as his wife knows only too well. “Yet do I fear thy nature: / It is too full o’ the milk of human kindness.” Milk is the natural portion of women, and therefore when she unsexes herself she summons the Spirits with the words, “Come to my woman’s breasts / And take my milk for gall.” The root of the moral is to be found in human kindness, in being gospelled, in being womanly. Lady Macbeth’s object in unsexing herself, in transforming herself into a man, is to become “top-full / Of direst cruelty.” Manliness pushed to the extreme is cruelty.

If Lady Macbeth unsexes herself Macbeth may be said to dehumanize himself. I use the word advisedly. To be a human being is to share by nature in both the manly and the womanly. If the human being is a man the manly should indeed predominate but the womanly must not be suppressed. If the human being is a woman the womanly should predominate but the manly is there as well. The tragedy of Macbeth and his wife may be traced to the terrible violence which each inflicts on his own nature. The violence is the greater in the case of Lady Macbeth. He merely suppresses the subordinate element in his nature, whereas she affronts her central core. Even he is appalled: “Bring forth men-children only! / For thy undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males.” It is altogether unnatural in a woman. It is no wonder, then, that her self-violence should issue in her suicide.
No account of the play "Macbeth" can be adequate that fails to give full value to the Witches. It is not enough to dismiss them as mere stage properties that serve as an "objective correlative" for the interior drama within Macbeth's soul. The Witches enjoy an irreducible exteriority that we are enjoined to respect. At the same time they are inherently mysterious: their place in the cosmic order is so obscure that only some deviant theology - so we are moved to surmise - could be expected to accommodate them. Here, if anywhere, the critic must proceed with especial caution. It is not for him to render transparent that which by its very nature is opaque.

Although the Witches are "not to be commanded," Macbeth is seen at the very top of his form when he undertakes, in Act IV, scene 1, to master them: "I will be satisfied! . . . / . . . for now I am bent to know, / By the worst means, the worst." This heroic effort to master the "instruments of darkness" comes late in the play. It does not express Macbeth's characteristic attitude toward the Witches. That attitude may be summed up in one word: trust.

Macbeth trusts the Witches; he has faith in their predictions of the future and acts accordingly. At the outset of the play Macbeth is introduced to us as "Disdaining Fortune with his brandished steel." The man who trusts the Witches ceases to disdain Fortune: he becomes its anxious slave. For if the Witches are not the "goddesses of destiny," they are certainly related to Fortune in some important, albeit mysterious, way.

We have seen that Macbeth pursues the manly at the expense of the moral. Now we find him betraying the manly on its own ground. To be manly is to be self-reliant. To be manly is to disdain Fortune. By accepting the "metaphysical aid" of the Witches he surrenders his autonomy: "I bear a charmed life."

If Macduff is the alter ego of Macbeth there is yet one decisive point of difference between them. "Let me find him, Fortune! / And more I beg not." Macduff also asks something of Fortune but how little, how very little compared with Macbeth. The one asks only the opportunity to be self-reliant, the other wants everything. Macduff might even be said to strike a bargain with Heaven, and what a bargain! "Within my sword's length set him," that is all I ask, no more, and in exchange for that small favor, "gentle Heavens", let Macbeth receive divine absolution if I fail to kill him altogether on my own. The quid pro quo is so unequal that we may indeed say, with Malcolm, "this tune goes manly."

Why "gentle Heavens"? The Heavens have not been gentle to Macduff. But is he not, with the word, placating the Heavens, so eager is he to win the chance to fight Macbeth?

In the light of these considerations it is by no means accidental that Macduff defeats Macbeth.

I think that we can pinpoint the precise moment at which Macbeth ceases to disdain Fortune. The moment is instructive. "If Chance will have me King, why Chance may crown me, / Without my stir." The thought is
morally unobjectionable. That is to say, it is morally unobjectionable when viewed from the standpoint of “slave morality.” Judged by the standards of “master morality” it constitutes a serious lapse. For he is now prepared to welcome the highest rewards from Fortune without so much as exerting himself.

The subtle power of the Witches to demoralize is evidenced even in the case of Banquo, despite his “royalty of nature.” Although Banquo suspects that Duncan was murdered by Macbeth, that suspicion does not deter him from cherishing the thought that if the Witches can “shine” on Macbeth, “May they not be my oracles as well, / And set me up in hope?”

That Banquo initially turns a deaf ear on the blandishments of the Witches, is not surprising. The rewards they offer him seem at the time so remote that even Macbeth pays them no heed.

I submit that almost any man no matter how self-reliant would become promptly demoralized — as Banquo and Macbeth are demoralized — by the oracular unveiling of his own personal future (and that of his progeny). Credence being purchased by means of some “verities . . . made good,” it should not be difficult to unhinge a man through the further use of prophecies, good or bad, more riddlingly expressed. Here surely we may say, with Johnson, that Shakespeare “has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies but as it would be found in trials to which it cannot be exposed.”

Newton’s first law of motion describes how every body would act if it were free of all impressed forces. Owing to universal gravitation there is, and can be, no such body. Revealing the nature of every body “as it would be found in trials to which it cannot be exposed,” Newton’s first law is to be seen as a true contrary-to-fact conditional in the subjunctive mood. No mere “mirror of life,” it is in his subjunctive not indicative mood that the poet can best emulate the physicist. Although oracular witches are contrary to nature, the poet may invoke them in the antecedent of a contrary-to-fact conditional and thereby reveal, in the consequent, what no mirror of life could reveal.

Once the seductive power of the Witches to corrupt is acknowledged, it strikes me as an open question — which the critic would be wise to leave to moral casuists to debate — whether Macbeth is to be held fully accountable for his crimes. “Diminished responsibility” is a concept of recent British jurisprudence that might be held to fit the case.

X

Macbeth is a man who is ruled by women, not one woman but four. Without derogating from their preternatural dignity we may yet say of the Witches that they are, in their own way, women. Did not Machiavelli say that Fortune was a woman and that if you wish to master her you must conquer her by force? Macbeth does not master Fortune; it is Fortune that masters Macbeth.
Macbeth is "Valor's minion" in both senses of the word "minion": he is Valor's toady as well as Valor's darling. As he "struts and frets his hour upon the stage" his daring and intrepidity are almost always separated by a very thin line from mere cant and bluster. Having opted for "master morality," he is not even master in his own house. His wife does not hesitate to browbeat him with the characteristic words, "What! quite unmanned by folly?" when he is stricken with fear and trembling by Banquo's ghost. And though he insists (it is no more than the simple truth), "What man dares, I dare," he quite concedes her point when, the ghost having vanished, he says, "I am a man again." To be afraid is to cease to be a man. If we were to accept that article of "master morality" we would be forced to say – seeing that throughout the bulk of the play Macbeth is almost continuously in a state of fear – that he has relinquished his manhood: always excepting his last words where with everything against him he renews his lapsed disdain of Fortune.

Challenging the ghost to "be alive again", Macbeth is all bluster when he says, "If trembling I inhabit then, protest me / The baby of a girl." But Macbeth is in fact, as each of us is, the baby of a girl. To be the baby of a girl is simply to be of woman born. Macbeth aspires not to be of woman born. He aspires to be all man, and indeed he can only be defeated by one who is not of woman born. It is Macduff who is all man. He may be contrasted with Jesus who was, so to speak, only of woman born.

It is because the natural origin of each of us is to be found in the union of man and woman that we all share by nature in the womanly as well as the manly, in the soft as well as the hard. If these be "the most heterogeneous ideas" it is to be hoped that they can be reconciled without being "yoked by violence together." In Macbeth the manly and the womanly, the hard and the soft, master morality and slave morality, are indeed yoked by violence together.

After saying in one breath that Macduff is all man we do not hesitate to retract it in another; and if we cannot preserve a strict logical consistency, we do not despair of achieving a certain poetic consistency – suitable to the subject-matter – in our discourse. We have found heretofore that, like Macbeth himself, Macduff shares in the womanly. In fact if Macduff excels Macbeth in intrinsic manliness it might be argued that he is also more womanly than Macbeth. On his receiving the terrible news there is this remarkable utterance:

Did Heaven look on,
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff!
They were all struck for thee.

What is it – exactly – that Lady Macduff takes to be womanly? It is the conviction that moral blamelessness entails exemption from at least the worst misfortunes. Therefore it follows by what the logician calls modus tollens that if one is struck by a terrible misfortune he must be morally guilty. Macduff then must be morally guilty. How else explain the absence of divine intervention? Here we have the womanly trust in the moral order pushed to
its ultimate conclusion, in the face of evidence that might lead anyone to infer that life is a tale told by an idiot.

That Macduff should feel guilty, is very natural. It is true that all of Macbeth's previous crimes having been purely "political" he was not to know that Macbeth was capable of wanton cruelty. But though reason may exonerate Macduff I believe that any man placed in his position – the position as it were of deserting his wife and children in time of danger – could not but feel guilty in his heart.

Someone may wish to conclude that it is in Macduff that the manly and the womanly are reconciled, precisely through his carrying each to the last extreme. My own opinion is that for the reconciliation we must look elsewhere – to the poet himself. With Dryden I should say that "of all modern and perhaps ancient poets" it is Shakespeare who has "the largest and most comprehensive soul." It is the sheer largeness and comprehensiveness of Shakespeare's soul, even more than his art, that can encompass such polarities.

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CONSIDERING CRUSOE: PART I

THOMAS S. SCHROCK

This is the first half of a two part consideration of the life and thought of Robinson Crusoe, adventurer, narrator, and essayist. It is another payment of that scholarly respect due him for the prominent role he has played in the lore and consciousness of the last centuries.

The claim Crusoe has on our attention will not be exhausted until at the very least scholars dispel uncertainties and misconceptions they themselves have discovered or engendered about him. I have especially in mind the question of Crusoe's genealogy – of the blood in his doctrinal veins so to speak. The prevailing view, indeed the great theme of present day Crusoe studies, is that religion is his vital principle. Crusoe's egregious moralizing and Defoe's known Dissenter affiliations have convinced nearly all critics that Crusoe was meant to be a sincere, though of course sinful and materialistically inclined, Christian. If Robinson Crusoe is not regarded as a conscious inference from Puritan premises¹, then it is taken to be the production of an author caught in the grip of the "Protestant ethic," whose work can be subsumed under the categories of a sociology of religion.² I, on the other hand, shall be arguing in this first Part of my presentation, that there is a pronounced anti-religious drift to Crusoe's narrative³ and essays⁴, a drift that

¹ Maximillian E. Novak, Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe (1962), pp. 32–48; George A. Starr, Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography (1965), pp. 74–125, 185–197; J. Paul Hunter, The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and the Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe (1965). Novak here argues that Crusoe is Defoe's remonstrance, based upon Puritan social-religious doctrine, against capitalistic individualism. Starr and Hunter regard it as a variation on traditional Puritan literary forms – the spiritual autobiography and the pilgrim allegory. For the most part my differences with these authors are implied rather than stated, although I have occasionally elucidated my own thought by taking explicit issue with one or another of them, usually in a note. I am persuaded by Starr and Hunter that Defoe indeed availed himself of the genres to which they refer. My doubt pertains solely to the intention behind that employment.

² Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957), argues that Robinson Crusoe is the epic of the Puritan become capitalistic individualist (see pp. 60–92 of the edition of 1962). I differ from Watt not so much in my conclusions about what makes Crusoe run as in my reluctance to interpret the work in the light of the "Weber thesis" or under a hypothesis of "probably unconscious conflict in Defoe himself" (ibid., 81). See also Rudolph Stamm, "Daniel Defoe: An Artist in the Puritan Tradition," Philological Quarterly, XV (1936), 225, at 229.

³ Daniel Defoe, The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (1719), and The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (1719).

⁴ Daniel Defoe, Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (1720) in Romances and Narratives by Daniel Defoe, ed. George Aitken (1895). (Hereafter cited as Serious Reflections).

Published about a year after the Farther Adventures and fifteen months after the Adven-
 coincides with the tendency of early modern secular political philosophy.  

In an only slightly caricatured version, the generally accepted account of Crusoe’s progress goes something like this:

Robinson, the wayward, impious, prodigal, son, disobeys his father’s contrary injunction, and runs off to sea where he is buffeted by storms, which he momentarily interprets as warnings from God, soon forgotten however in calmer seas. After desultory adventures he is finally, and hopelessly, shipwrecked. On the island he performs those prodigies of resourcefulness, courage and industry that so thrill youthful readers and adult escapists. He manages to stay alive against all reasonable expectations and even to prosper. Toward the end of the first year he undergoes a spiritual crisis that leads to penitence for his sins, to true Christian resignation, and even to satisfaction with his island situation. The footprint renews the original terror, but his reliance on God pulls him through. He rescues Friday and converts him; they lead a happy, Christian, companionable life. God directs a lost ship to their shores and Crusoe is enabled by Providence and strategy to take command of her, and he and Friday escape from the Island, thereby symbolically accomplishing the deliverance from sin every penitent Puritan craves. We can characterize Crusoe’s island saga, then, by combining titles from two of the latest studies, and saying it is the spiritual autobiography of a reluctant pilgrim.

Comment on this synopsis will require some detailed parsing of the narrative. In anticipation of that presentation I shall merely assert that Crusoe’s fervor did not, as is said, level-off at a high pitch after his so-called conversion and remain there for the rest of his island experience. He never even confessed, let alone doing penance for, some of his most serious sins. He tells the reader that at best his religious feelings were spurious, and that after the footprint they vanished. All his talk about the blessings of religious deliverance has to be read in the light of his virtually ceaseless endeavor to deliver himself back into what he all along regarded as the only necessary and sufficient salvation – civil society. For him, the fear of God is as nothing next to the fear of man. He relied on his own fear and prudence – not on prayer or Providence – to free himself from the primary evil, which is the state of nature and not the state of sin.

tures, the Serious Reflections is a collection of essays that, as the author says, “is not merely the product of the two first volumes, but the two first volumes may rather be called the product of this. The fable is always made for the moral, not the moral for the fable.” (Serious Reflections, ix [“Robinson Crusoe’s Preface”]).

6 I am therefore in at least partial agreement with the one prominent truant from the prevailing school of Crusoe interpretation. In a second book, which I find hard to reconcile with his first, Professor Novak has shown more clearly than was known before that Defoe had a pronounced interest in the secular philosophy of the early modern centuries, and has argued that Robinson Crusoe is in part at least a display of that interest. (Maximillian E. Novak, Defoe and the Nature of Man (1963)). See note 34, infra.
The thesis that Crusoe extrapolated from his interpretation of the island experience can be stated as follows: Spiritual salvation presumably depends on Grace; but Grace is powerless before necessity. Yet, the state of nature or the natural condition of man is necessitous. Therefore, if man is to become amenable to saving Grace – if, for example, he is to be sufficiently composed to pray – the state of nature must be overcome. But the state of nature can be overcome only by human power: security or civil society is a strictly human achievement. Spiritual salvation depends on man’s doing: the heavenly is as it were based on the earthly city, and salvation on the sin of a single-minded self-dependence. In addition to the requirement that he avoid succumbing to God-dependence, the founder of civil society will be compelled to exploit his fellow man. That is, sin against men, in addition to the sin of ignoring God, is a necessary condition to civil society, which in turn is a prerequisite of salvation. These alleged necessities are presented in such a way as to argue for the justifiability (and not the mere excusability) of the sins in question, which would seem to amount to a contradiction. But sin made justifiable is no less intelligible than Grace made subordinate to necessity, or, than what Crusoe also seems to suggest, a Providence ruled by chance or necessity. In fact, Crusoe renders God superfluous and non-worshipful, if not non-existent.

With this anticipatory account of Crusoe as Christian⁶ in mind, we may

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⁶ *Robinson Crusoe* is usually interpreted in the light of what is thought to be known of Defoe’s religious position. This involves some circularity, since the Defoe corpus is the principal datum from which his views on religion can be inferred, and *Crusoe* is a non-negligible part of that corpus. But, supposing Defoe’s religious persuasion can be and in fact is known from sources other than *Robinson Crusoe*, we are not justified in assuming his persuasion is expressed in *Crusoe*, or by Crusoe. For all we know, Defoe consciously decided to use “his protean gift” (Stamm, *op. cit.*, 239) to portray a person and/or a doctrine uncongenial to his own religious, if not to his artistic, sensibilities. Keeping an open mind to this possibility would seem to be a counsel of ordinary prudence and common courtesy. Question begging is as bad for the commentator as predisposing background studies are disrespectful of the artist. Accordingly, I have here reversed the usual procedure by beginning with and sticking to the *Crusoe* text.

It may not be ultimately irrelevant that Defoe elsewhere voiced sentiments similar (or dissimilar) to those found in *Robinson Crusoe*, if he did. Penultimately, however, the important consideration would seem to be the context in which any particular sentiment is voiced. And the context here relevant is the *Crusoe* trilogy, about which, since it has not always been regarded as an authentic trilogy, a word seems to be in order.

The *Farther Adventures* is sometimes regarded as sheer afterthought, written, it is said, in haste to cash-in on the popularity of the first volume. And the *Serious Reflections* has frequently been said to have even less to do with the great first volume, the supposition being that it is nothing but a collection of essays Defoe had lying about that, heaped together, made a pot-boiler to sell on the basis of a nominal relation to *Robinson Crusoe*. And even the last part of the first volume, relating Crusoe’s return to civilization, is sometimes regarded as superfluous – an artistic lapse that illustrates Defoe’s unfortunate incapacity to stop when he was ahead.

I take all these neglected writings seriously – though not with deadly seriousness, I hope – because I believe that, when an author presents a work of ostensibly connected parts, all
now present the argument in detail and with the necessary qualifications. One feasible place to start a study of Crusoe's thought about religion is at the beginning of his religious experience, i.e., at his conversion, in the ninth month of his exile.

A. The Supreme Blessing of Salvation

Before this event, Crusoe was "all that the most hardened, unthinking, wicked Creature among our common Sailors, can be supposed to be" (I, 101). In the confession that he interpolates into the narration of his conversion, he reproaches himself for his previous failure to experience "the Fear of God in Danger, . . . [and for his omission] of Thankfulness to God in Deliverances" (I, 101). Afterwards, although he was not noticeably more fearful of God, he entertained notions of being delivered by God.

Crusoe's conversion occurred during a bout of a seventeenth century version of the Hong Kong flu, in the course of which he suffered a terrifying dream. The fever ebbing, he picked up the Bible, and,

having opened the Book casually, the first Words that occurred to me were these, Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me.
The Words were very apt to my Case, . . . [though] as for being deliver'd, the Word had no Sound, as I may say to me; the Thing was so remote, so impossible in my Apprehension of Things . . . [I, 107-08].

Presently, however,

I did what I never had done in all my Life, I kneel'd down and pray'd to God to fulfil the Promise to me, that if I call'd upon him in the Day of Trouble, he would deliver me . . . [I, 108].

And, if God was to be his deliverance. Crusoe would open his mind to the varieties of deliverance. A few days after he had the thoughts reported above,

said to come from the mind and experience of the same protagonist-narrator, the presumption - rebuttable to be sure - is that he wants us to read them as connected, i.e., as parts of a whole which, as such, are likely to be more reliable guides to the interpretation of each other than are any extraneous documents. Prima facie, it is irrelevant whether Defoe wrote the parts at one stretch or at different times, or that he may have had motives in addition to the legitimate artistic or philosophical ones. If the presumption of interrelatedness is then defeated by lack of internal evidence to support it, that would not prove this respectful treatment of the author's possible intentions misguided. On the contrary, it would prove the efficacy of the only method that could give adequate proof of the spuriousness of the alleged connection. But in the case of Crusoe, sympathetic reading elicits enough real interdependence in the volumes to justify saying it would be as arbitrarily foolish to ignore the lesser known portions of the work as it would be to interpret the island narrative mechanically in the light of those portions.

7 Parenthetical citations in the text refer to the volumes and pages of the narrative parts of Robinson Crusoe as they appear in the Shakespeare Head Edition of the Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe (1927).
interpretation

I miss'd the Fit for good and all, . . . [and] while I was thus gathering Strength, my Thoughts run exceedingly upon this Scripture, I will deliver thee, and the Impossibility of my Deliverance lay much upon my Mind . . .: But as I was discouraging my self with such Thoughts, it occurr'd to my Mind, that I pored so much upon my Deliverance from the main Affliction, that I disregarded the Deliverance I had receiv'd; and I was, as it were, made to ask my self such Questions as these, viz. Have I not been deliver'd, and wonderfully too, from Sickness? . . . God had deliver'd me, but I had not glorify'd him; that is to say, I had not own'd and been thankful for that as a Deliverance, and how cou'd I expect greater Deliverance [I, 109–10]? After this Crusoe began serious study of the Bible.

It happen'd providentially . . . that reading the Scripture, I came to these Words, He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and to give Remission: I threw down the Book, and with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry'd out aloud, Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance! . . . Now I began to construe the Words mentioned above, Call on me, and I will deliver you, in a different Sense from what I had ever done before; for then I had no Notion of anything being call'd Deliverance, but my being deliver'd from the Captivity I was in; for tho' I was indeed at large in the Place, yet the Island was certainly a Prison to me, and that in the worst Sense in the World: but now I learn'd to take it in another Sense: Now I look'd back upon my past Life with such Horror, and my Sins appear'd so dreadful, that my Soul sought nothing of God, but Deliverance from the Load of Guilt that bore down all my Comfort . . . And I add this Part here, to hint to whoever shall read it, that whenever they come to a true Sense of things, they, will find Deliverance from Sin a much greater Blessing than Deliverance from Affliction [I, 110–11].

God had delivered Crusoe from the "ague," and could therefore deliver him from the island. But Crusoe no longer needed to escape the island because what had threatened to be a life-long imprisonment had become the occasion for a supremely rewarding freedom. Crusoe goes so far as to suggest that deliverance from the island and from sin were not compatible, since on the island "I was remov'd from all the Wickedness of the World . . . I had neither the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life. I had nothing to covet . . ." (I, 148); whereas, presumably, "the World" might be the scene of fresh transgressions and a fall from Grace. Crusoe's structuring of the contrast between the two forms of deliverance suggests he means to say that the authenticity of his conversion will be tested by the extent to which he craves deliverance from the island. But, in any case, Crusoe would no longer pine to leave it, for why should his place of abode or external circumstances matter to a man who has been given what Crusoe calls "the supreme Blessing of Salvation" (I, 181)? "As for my solitary Life it was nothing; I did not so much as pray to be deliver'd from it, or think of it; It was all of no Consideration in Comparison to this" (I, 111).

Nevertheless, Crusoe not only thought of leaving the island; he tried strenuously to leave it. The student of Robinson Crusoe must therefore try to understand why Crusoe did not live by the proposition that, as he said,
"Deliverance from Sin [is] a much greater Blessing than Deliverance from Affliction" (I, 111), or rather, why, if he had the "supreme Blessing of Salvation," Crusoe still regarded his isolation as an "Affliction." 8

8 Professor Starr suggests that [1] the island predicament is the culminating metaphorical expression of Crusoe's — of the individual's — self-isolation from God (Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography, pp. 55-57, 59, 80-81, 84-85, 99, 100); and that "Crusoe's arrival on the island marks yet another more drastic stage in God's efforts to reclaim him. It is at once [2] the most dramatic of his long series of deliverances, and [3] the most effective barrier to his persistent vagabondage" (p. 101). Finally, Starr notes that, after the conversion, [4] Crusoe's island situation — his isolation from human society — "frequently strikes him as a positive blessing," seeing as it is coupled with what for Crusoe is an unprecedented "sense of God's nearness and accessibility" (p. 117; but cf. p. 70). Starr has thus accurately described the shift in the significance of the island situation that Defoe could reasonably have expected attentive readers to detect. In brief, the shift is this: Whereas, at first, isolation from human society stands for Crusoe's isolation from God, later, isolation from human society becomes the occasion for, and something of a continuing prerequisite to, union with God. If at first the island situation stands for the summum malum, it later becomes the setting for realization of the summum bonum. This being the case, we wonder why Crusoe persisted so in his attempts to escape the island, and therewith, apparently to escape God.

Starr writes that "through... acquiescence, ... [Crusoe] learns to find both consolations for and positive benefits in his solitary state," and that "this aspect of his situation is expressed most forcibly in his series of annual thanksgivings" (p. 116). By way of partially bearing out Starr's point, we note Crusoe's second anniversary report that "it was now that I began sensibly to feel how much more happy this Life I now led was... and now I chang'd both my Sorrows and my Joys; my very Desires alter'd, my Affections chang'd their Gusts, and my Delights were perfectly new, from what they were at my first Coming, or indeed for the two Years past" (I, 129-30). Since Crusoe was converted in the ninth month, the words I have italicized tend to suggest a delay in the acquiescence alleged to stem from that conversion. And Crusoe's acquiescence seems to have been transient as well as dilatory. For, during the third year, "you may be sure my Thoughts run many times" to finding "some Means of Escape" (I, 143). This desire issued in a boat-building project, a project to which he devoted "infinite Labour," "hacking and hewing" "many a weary Stroke" of "inexpressible Labour," only to find that, after more "infinite Labour," he could not get the boat to water (I, 146-47). At one point Crusoe notes that a certain step in the "Folly" "cost me a prodigious deal of Pains; but who grutches Pains, that have their Deliverance in view?" (I, 147). He conceded failure; his report: "This grie'd me heartily, and now I saw,... the Folly of beginning a Work before we count the Cost..." (I, 147). The next sentence begins as follows: "In the middle of this Work, I finish'd my fourth Year in this Place, and kept my Anniversary with the same Devotion, and with as much Comfort as ever before..." (I, 148).

I will belabor the point a bit more by noting that Crusoe soon turned to building a second, smaller, boat and that he says that "though I was near two Years about it, yet I never grutch'd my Labour, in Hopes of having a Boat to go off to Sea at last" (I, 157). And, although at one place he tells us that he knew from the beginning that the new boat was too small to carry him from the island (I, 157), we hear somewhat later that he persisted in hoping it would be his vehicle of escape until the very hour in which it nearly drowned him (I, 163).

Deference to God is not necessarily incompatible with self-help (see citations to Starr,
Referring to his emotions when he found himself safe on shore in the wake of the shipwreck, Crusoe reports that “I was surpriz’d with a Kind of Extasie, and some Transports of Soul, which had the Grace of God assisted, might have come up to true Thankfulness; but it ended where it begun, in a meer common Flight of Joy . . .” (I, 102). Although the terrors of the sea are presumably God’s, on this occasion they were not assisted by God’s Grace. Yet at the time of his illness another terror apparently was assisted by, or perhaps assisted, Grace. This other terror was not the sickness itself, as dreadful as that undoubtedly was, but the “terrible Dream” Crusoe had during the illness.

I saw a Man descend from a great black Cloud, in a bright Flame of Fire, and light upon the Ground . . . . He was no sooner landed upon the Earth, but he moved forward

note 19, infra). But Crusoe has presented the island metaphor, and the modes of deliverance he contemplated while on the island, in such a way as to oppose boat-building self-help to an unmixed enjoyment of God’s presence. The lesser and insufficient deliverance (from the island) supersedes the greater and sufficient (from sinful self-centeredness): Crusoe’s hankering after the inferior blessing of human society poisons the allegedly supreme blessing of God’s society.

I have a similar difficulty with one of Professor Hunter’s principal suggestions. He says that critical “emphasis upon the ‘realistic’ nature of both Defoe’s choice of detail and his use of language has obscured the emblematic meaning of Crusoe’s physical activities, but Defoe’s ‘realism’ is like that of Bunyan and substantiates the metaphor, rather than weakening it. Defoe, like Bunyan, continually makes his hero express his spiritual condition by physical actions. The fusion of physical and spiritual concerns is implicit throughout Robinson Crusoe, and the general pattern of Crusoe’s action is emblematic of larger matters” (op. cit., p. 189). And again: “Defoe is able to use the physical to reflect the spiritual quite easily in Robinson Crusoe, for the novel’s plot follows the comprehensive metaphor which is basic to Puritan tradition and which had taken a fictional form in pilgrim allegory” (ibid., p. 199). Hunter has surely proved the foolishness of denying that Defoe trades on the expectations of those readers who are trained to look for the pilgrim allegory. However, he has not attended sufficiently to the possibility that Defoe or Crusoe might wish to let the metaphor get out of hand, as it were, allowing the “physical” not merely to “reflect the spiritual” but finally to overcome and supplant it.

* Other things being equal, enforced solitude is of course a severe deprivation. Calvin, to say nothing of some other Christian theologians and philosophers, believes that “man is by nature a social animal, . . . disposed, from natural instinct, to cherish and preserve society” (Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge, II, ii, 13. From the vast Calvinist theological and devotional literature in the light of which Robinson Crusoe can be read, I have decided to stick with the original because I think it takes one furtherest and fastest into the most significant problems. The Institutes are cited and quoted frequently in the notes that follow). And the same Calvin, in company with the vast majority of Christian thinkers, puts enormous stock in the visible Church as God’s chosen means of bringing people to life (ibid., IV, i, 4).

But, by hypothesis, at least one of those “other things” was not equal for Crusoe. In his case, the greatest need a man has for the ministry of the Church was met otherwise. He was saved! The Holy Spirit had reached out and touched him directly (a possibility Calvin
Considering Crusoe

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towards me, with a long Spear or Weapon in his Hand, to kill me; and when he came to a rising Ground, at some Distance, he spoke to me, or I heard a Voice so terrible, that it is impossible to express the Terror of it; all that I can say I understood, was this, Seeing all these Things have not brought thee to Repentance, now thou shalt die: At which Words, I thought he lifted up the Spear that was in his Hand, to kill me. No one, that shall ever read this Account, will expect that I should be able to describe the Horrors of my Soul at this terrible Vision, I mean, that even while it was a Dream, I even dreamed of those Horrors; nor is it any more possible to describe the Impression that remain'd upon my Mind when I awak'd and found it was but a Dream [I, 100].

This dream precipitated Crusoe's conversion and repentance. The fear of an impending violent death at the hands of "a Man" is the terror that cooperates with the Grace of God to work Crusoe's salvation. Not the fear of God, but the fear of a visionary man rendered Crusoe's soul amenable to redemption.10

happily acknowledges: concerning those who would infer a monopoly in salvation for the Church from the Apostle's saying that "hearing is the beginning of faith," Calvin says that Paul was there "describing the usual economy and dispensation which the Lord is wont to employ in calling his people, and not laying down an invariable rule, for which no other method can be substituted. Many he [the Lord] certainly has called and endued with the true knowledge of himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching" (IV, xvi, 19)). Calvin would surely say that only perverse obduracy entirely inconsistent with the mentality of the blessed would try "improving" on the earthly state of the soul to which every Christian aspires, by worrying after the comparatively paltry though legitimate matters of society and the external Church. It may of course be that Crusoe as saved needed the Church to help forestall lapses (see Hunter, op. cit., pp. 175–82, on post-conversion sin among the Puritans). But balanced against that need is the set of temptations Crusoe had said is such a draw-back to society. I still think Calvin would say, "Leave well-enough alone, Robinson, if everything is as you say between you and God." Perhaps some light will also be shed on the uses to which Crusoe thinks churchly communion should be put by our notice, in the second Part of this study, of his behavior upon returning to England from his exile, and of remarks on the possibility of communion he includes in the Serious Reflections.

10 Professor Starr suggests that Defoe had the story of Balaam (Numbers 22:12–35) in mind as he penned the episode of the dream (op. cit., pp. 60, 100–101). It is well to remember, however, that in Numbers the angel is called an angel, and not a man, and that, when Crusoe himself discusses Balaam explicitly, he too refers to "the angel with the flaming sword" (Serious Reflections ["A Vision of the Angelic World"], p. 290). See also Hunter, op. cit., pp. 155–64.

There are two ways (each admittedly somewhat tendencious) to interpret the dream: one may assume with Starr and Hunter that Defoe was employing anthropomorphic imagery, as the Bible sometimes does, to a higher purpose (e.g., Ezekiel 1:5); or one can do as I have done and, while acknowledging biblical parallels, dwell upon the literal elements of the dream. Either way the expositor must concede that his reading of the dream is decisively affected by what he takes to be the basic action and dominant passion of the whole story. Starr and Hunter believe that action to be Crusoe's evolving relationship with God and the relevant emotion to be the fear of God. I think the basic action is Crusoe's complicated relationship with nature and with other men, absent as well as present, and the relevant emotion his fear of man. If one chooses the Starr-Hunter approach, he must at
To see the bearing of this fact on Crusoe’s later religious experience, i.e., to see the crucial defect in Crusoe’s conversion, we will notice his response to the famous footprint in the sand. Crusoe is really quite candid that his reliance upon God’s protection collapsed under the consternation he felt upon sighting the print. “Fear banish’d all my religious Hope; all that former Confidence in God which was founded upon such wonderful Experience as I had of his Goodness, now vanished . . .” (I, 180).11 He seems to suggest that his “religious Hope” had been sustained by what he took to be God’s efforts to deliver his body. And after the appearance of a sign of man he utterly lost that sustenance. What did he “reproach” himself for then? For one thing, his “Easiness, that [he] would not sow any more Corn one Year than would just serve . . . [him] till next Season” (I, 180). He also began “sorely to repent” that he had made an opening in his fortification (I, 186). To remedy these blunders, he “took all the Measures humane Prudence could suggest for . . . [his] own Preservation,” “though . . . [he] foresaw nothing at that Time,12 more than . . . [his] meer Fear suggested to . . . [him]” (I, 187). He admits

I did not now take due Ways to compose my Mind, by crying to God in my Distress, and resting upon his Providence, as I had done before, for my Defence and Deliverance; which if I had done, I had, at least, been more cheerfully supported under this new Surprise, and perhaps carry’d through it with more Resolution [I, 184–85].

But, though he might “perhaps” have been more resolute through prayer, he could not pray:

The Dread and Terror of falling into the Hands of Savages and Cannibals, lay so upon my Spirits, that I seldom found my self in a due Temper for application to my Maker, . . . I must testify from my Experience, that a Temper of Peace, Thankfulness, Love and Affection, is much more the proper Frame for Prayer than that of Terror and Discomposure; and that under the Dread of Mischief impending, a Man is . . . [not] fit for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God . . . [I, 189].13

least consider the significance of the fact that, as Hunter himself notes (p. 155), storms and earthquakes did not “convert” Crusoe; the vision did. And the vision is a testimony to some kind of primacy for the fear of man in Crusoe’s mind. The fear of man is never expressed metaphorically; the fear of God is, in the figure of a man. A sense of the fear of God is expressed as derivative from or parasitic upon an underived, “aboriginal,” fear of man. Also, cf. note 80, infra.

11 And see Novak, Nature, pp. 34–36; but see I, 202 and 211.

12 The time in question would seem to have been about two years, for Crusoe writes in the same context that “all this Labour I was at the Expeence of, purely from my Apprehensions on the Account of the Print of a Man’s Foot which I had seen; for as yet I never saw any human Creature come near the Island, and I had now liv’d two Years under these Uneasinesses, which indeed made my Life much less comfortable than it was before; as may well be imagin’d by any who know what it is to live in the constant Snare of the Fear of Man” (I, 188–89; emphasis original).

13 Extended, and not elided, the passage reads, “that under the Dread of Mischief impending, a Man is no more fit for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God,
Crusoe's discussion of "necessity" in the *Serious Reflections* contains the following assertion:

Necessity is above the power of human nature, and for Providence to suffer a man to fall into that necessity is to suffer him to sin, because nature is not furnished with power to defend itself, nor is grace itself able to fortify the mind against it.  

It is written large in the trilogy that the most fearful and therefore the most necessitous circumstance that a man can face is that in which he thinks his life is threatened by other men.

Well does the Scripture say, The Fear of Man brings a Snare; it is a Life of Death, and the Mind is so entirely suppress'd by it, that it is capable of no Relief; the animal Spirits sink, and all the Vigour of nature, which usually supports Men under other Afflictions, and is present to them in the greatest Exigencies, fails them here [III, 139].

Is it peculiar that Crusoe should use the Scripture as his authority for the intensity of man's fear of man? Not at all, for this usage is in perfect accord with his almost total ignorance of the fear of God. Crusoe did not even mention the possibility of damnation in the long discourse on his repentance. And the vision that horrified Crusoe was not one of eternal torture, but of "a Man" who "moved forward towards me, with a long Spear or Weapon in his Hand, to kill me." The vision of this man is more real to Crusoe than the vision of God. This is the principal defect in Crusoe's conversion. It took the fear of a visionary man to drive Crusoe into religion, and yet the fear of "Mischief impending" at the hands of man renders him unfit "for a comforting Performance of the Duty of praying to God": were a man driven into Grace, "grace itself [would not]... fortify the mind against" a recurrence of the fear that drove him into it. And Crusoe was in the grip of his fear of man for a long time after he sighted the footprint.

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15 Proverbs 29 : 25 continues, "but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."
16 Elsewhere Crusoe relates that he expected to be "preserv'd to repent and be pardon'd"; the Devil, on the other hand, "is to be cast into the Bottomless-Pit, to dwell with everlasting Fire" (II, 4; italics original).
17 Cf. note 13, *supra*; see also I, 102: "and all the rest of my life was like it"
18 Professor Starr minimizes the post-conversion Crusoe's susceptibility to discomposure. He writes, for example, that after the conversion Crusoe "becomes better able to confront new hazards, and to dispel their terrors, for he gains security from the conviction that he is an object of Providential care. In other words, it is not that his belief shields him from further vicissitudes, but that such vicissitudes either fail to discompose him or else agitate him only when he forgets he is under divine protection" (*Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, p. 113). But the question is, of course, whether Crusoe does not tend to forget more often than he remembers. While conceding that confirmation of the "forgetful" hypothesis would require more discussion than will fit into this note, I will nevertheless
I have sketched Crusoe's religious life from his initial oblivion to God, through his apparent enthusiasm for God, to the point where fearful necessity forced him to sin against God by placing all his reliance on "humane Prudence." Crusoe took the whole thing into his own hands. We shall postpone to the second Part of this study our examination of some of the sins or crimes against men various forms of "necessity" compelled or induced Crusoe to commit. It must suffice here to give a short answer to the question posed at the end of Section A, viz., Why would an isolated man, possessed of the greatest spiritual riches, try so hard to augment his circumstances by endeavoring to end that isolation? The answer is that there is no reason to believe that a man thus hypothesized would do any such thing, but that Crusoe was not such a man. His spiritual deliverance was illusory, and his striving was all along for the only kind of deliverance that seemed real to him, i.e., from the "State of Nature" (I, 136) to the security of civil society.

suggest that, if Crusoe's attitude ever becomes "one of composure" (Starr, p. 116), it does not become so because of a confidence in Providence.

Now, Starr goes so far as to say the "evidence of . . . [the security Crusoe gains from the conviction that he is an object of Providential care] is to be found in Crusoe's discovery of the footprint in the sand" (p. 113-14). He quotes from the tributes to Providence that Crusoe incorporates into his narrative of the footprint episode—just as he quotes tributes from the early anniversary celebrations (see note 8, supra). In the case of the annual thanksgivings, Professor Starr failed to note that, during the four years in which Crusoe tells us he was perfectly resigned to the island and to Grace, he was actually undertaking "inexpressible Labour" to "deliver" himself from the island. In the case of the footprint, Starr neglects to observe that, while Crusoe tells us from time to time that he depended upon and got consolation from his belief in Providence, he also tells us that he relied entirely upon his own prudence and fear for a period of at least two years. See note 12, supra, and accompanying text.

19 I.e., Crusoe had returned, in a more sober mood to be sure, to the posture of his preconversion self: "thoughtless of a God, or a Providence" (I, 101). That thoughtlessness was the sin he confessed in the narration of his conversion. It should be considered in the light of a remark from the Serious Reflections, p. 191: "I take a general neglect of . . . [Providential cautions, warnings, and instructions] to be a kind of practical atheism, or at least a living in a kind of contempt of Heaven, regardless of all that share which His invisible hand has in the things that befall us." This from Calvin in also pertinent: "God has pronounced a curse upon all who, confiding in themselves or others, form plans and resolutions, [and] who, without regarding his will, or invoking his aid, either plan or attempt to execute (James iv. 14; Isaiah xxx. 1; xxxi. 1)" (Institutes, III, xx, 28). Consider also the verses he cites from James and Isaiah, and the ones he could have cited from Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord . . . Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (17: 5, 7). See also Starr, op. cit., pp. 65-66, 77-78, 187-93, for some extremely helpful remarks on the seventeenth and eighteenth century Puritan view of the proper blend of trust in Providence and self-help. I differ with Starr by thinking that Crusoe abandoned that view. See also Novak, Nature, p. 144.


21 Crusoe uses the term only once in the trilogy.
C. Grace and Necessity; Providence and Prudence

It has been truly said that "Crusoe is not a saint." But Crusoe does not rest with a description of himself as sinner: he says in effect that the sinless life is impossible for any man threatened as he was.

I am of the opinion that I could state a circumstance in which there is not one man in the world would be honest... For Providence to suffer a man to fall into... necessity is to suffer him to sin, because nature is not furnished with power to defend itself, nor is grace itself able to fortify the mind against it.

"Necessity", or at any rate the greatest necessity, will necessarily overcome religious hope, and therefore religious practice, for reasons that "any who know what it is to live in the constant Snare of the Fear of Man" (I, 189) will understand.

The assumption behind Crusoe's assertion seems to be that, whatever the "theoretical" power of God to save whomever He wishes, in practice only those souls that are at peace with their material environment are eligible for saving Grace. If Grace is potentially equal to necessity, this potential is never actualized, because Grace either does not appear or disappears in the face of necessity. Crusoe does not deny the joys of the converted; his point is only that composure is a prerequisite to the institution and maintenance of the state of salvation. His memoirs form a study of the sources from which man may expect to derive the security necessary to that composure. Crusoe's books are the record of an experiment: in this upsidedown Job, Crusoe is testing God, saying, "Can God deliver me?" and in a matter-of-fact way implying that if God cannot, then Crusoe, like any other man so situated, must look elsewhere for deliverance, not because Crusoe is fickle, but because, as is the case with all men, his body must be secured before his soul can be saved.

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23 Serious Reflections, p. 35; partially quoted in text accompanying note 14. We must acknowledge the massive conceptual difficulties involved in the terms "necessity" and "sin" as Crusoe uses them here. And perhaps allowances should also be made for hyperbole. Nevertheless, the drift of Crusoe's thought is clear enough. There is a species of "sin," not accounted for at all in the wrangling of the Augustinians and Pelagians, or of the Calvinists and Arminians, that is traceable to something other than the original transgression — to something other than predestined evil or gratuitous malice — and that is conquerable by neither the unaided nor the aided human spirit. "Necessity" as here used really means a "sufficiency" of conditions for "sin." A significant portion of man's "wrong-doing" — especially that occurring in "state of nature" conditions — is compelled by the harshness of those circumstances. Crusoe's proposition is at once an implicit excuse for brutish conduct in the war of all against all and an indictment of the natural state and of nature's God.

24 It would be impious of man, amalgam of body and soul that he is, to affect, contrary to his nature, angelic indifference to the care of his body. The questions are only the degree of emphasis to be given bodily safety, and the temporal order in which one should expect the two forms of deliverance to transpire. A similar question was asked by Socrates:
The question is this: Will "Providence... suffer a man to fall into... necessity[?]"? Will God provide a man with the bodily security necessary to that mental composure which in turn is requisite to a religious life? God might have justified the affirmative either by having designed His creation with a view to man's security, or, in lieu of this, by assuring each man that he is in the care of particular Providence. Concerning the first alternative, the reader does not have to consider Crusoe's view of the allegedly most hostile part of the environment—other men—to see that he did not consider himself beholden for composure to God's mere creation. Although Crusoe "could hardly have nam'd a Place in the unhitable Part of the World" where I could have been cast more to my Advantage" (I, 153); although indeed his island has aspects of Eden, still,

if the good Providence of God had not wonderfully order'd the Ship to be cast up nearer to the Shore, where I not only could come at her, but could bring what I got out of her to the Shore, for my Relief and Comfort;... I had wanted for Tools to work, Weapons for Defence, or Gun-powder and Shot for getting my Food.

I spent whole Hours, I may say whole Days, in representing to my self... how I must have acted, if I had got nothing out of the Ship... That I should have liv'd, if I had not perish'd, like a meer Savage. That if I had kill'd a Goat, or a Fowl, by any Contri-

"Then [Glaucow] you do not listen to Phocylides, when he says that as soon as a man has got a means of livelihood he ought to practice virtue. 'I think he should begin even before that,' he said." (Plato, Republic, 407 a-b [Lindsay, trans.]). The counterpart Christian view is that livelihood follows faith and not vice versa. See Calvin, Institutes, I, xvii, 9–11; III, ii, 37; viii, 2, 8; xiii, 3; xx, 2, 11–13, 16. Even when a Christian thinker seems to grant or urge the temporal priority of bodily security he will typically recognize God's Providence in the very passage, as Hooker here: "destitution in [food and rainment] is such an impediment, as till it be removed suffereth not the mind of man to admit any other care. For this cause, God assigned Adam maintenance of life, and then appointed him a law to observe" (Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, I, x, 2; emphasis added). Consider also ibid. V, xlviii, 6: "If we... have not... the promise of God to be evermore delivered from all adversity, what meaneth the sacred Scripture to speak in so large terms, 'Be obedient, and the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of the land for thy wealth.' Again, 'Keep his laws, and thou shalt be blest above all people, the Lord shall take from thee all infirmities.' 'The man whose delight is in the Law of God, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper.' 'For the ungodly there are great plagues remaining; but whosoever putteth his trust in the Lord mercy embraceth him on every side.' Not only that mercy which keepeth from being overlaid and oppressed, but mercy which saveth from being touched with grievous miseries, mercy which turneth away the course of 'the great waterfloods,' and permitted them not to 'come near'" (emphasis original). See also note 19, supra.

Quotation from Hooker may make the reader wonder just what orthodoxy I think Crusoe should be judged by. But on the subject of this note there is little if any difference between Hooker and Calvin, and that goes for many other points on which the great Anglican and the Genevan would be united in opposition to the attitudes and ideas with which Crusoe indulges himself.

25 Serious Reflections, p. 35.
26 Cf. Proverbs 8:31, "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth."
vance, I had no way to flea or open them, or part the Flesh from the Skin, and the Bowels, or to cut it up; but must gnaw it with my Teeth, and pull it with my Claws like a Beast [I, 150-51].

Crusoe credits the "particular Providences [that] had attended . . . [him] since . . . [his] coming into this Place" (I, 152), rather than the place itself, for his survival. In short, Crusoe gave "daily Thanks for that daily Bread, which nothing but a Croud of Wonders could have brought . . . [He] had been fed even by Miracle; even as great as that of feeding Elijah by Ravens; nay, by a long Series of Miracles . . ." (I, 152-53).

Crusoe's "Confidence in God . . . was founded upon such wonderful Experience as . . . [he] had had of his Goodness . . ." (I, 180). Second only to the ship's appearance, the chief miracle was God's introduction of barley into the inadequate island economy. Without "Corn" he claims he would have starved (I, 134). But Crusoe's narrative of his discovery of the grain helps us to understand why even his confidence in particular Providence deserved him at the crucial moment.

Crusoe tells us that it is impossible to express the Astonishment and Confusion of my Thoughts on this Occasion; . . . After I saw Barley grown there, in a Climate which I know was not proper for Corn, and especially that I knew not how it came there, it startl'd me strangely, and I began to suggest, that God had miraculously caus'd this Grain to grow without Help of Seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my Sustenance, on that wild miserable Place.

This touch'd my Heart a little, and brought Tears out of my Eyes, and I began to bless my self, that such a Prodigy of Nature should happen on my account . . . [I, 89].

But since this episode took place before his conversion, he began to reconsider.

At last it occur'd to my Thoughts, that I had shook a Bag of Chickens Meat [meal] out in that Place, and then the Wonder began to cease; and I must confess, my religious Thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate too upon the Discovering that all this was nothing but what was common . . . [I, 89-90].

Commenting on this behavior from the viewpoint of the converted, Crusoe writes as follows:

I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous; for it was really the Work of Providence as to me, that should order or appoint, that 10 or 12 Grains of Corn should remain unspoil'd, (when the Rats had destroy'd all the rest,) as if it had been dropt from Heaven . . . [I, 90].

"As if it had been miraculous," but not miraculous; rather, "nothing but

27 Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xiv, 22: "How impious were it to tremble in distrust, lest we should one day be abandoned in our necessity by that kindness which, antecedent to our existence, displayed itself in a complete supply of all good things!"

28 The non or at any rate less blasphemous New Testament parallels that come to mind here are the parables of the sower and of the mustard seed, and the miracle of the feeding of 5000. Consider also Matthew 1: 18-25 and Luke 1: 26-27.
what was common."

The suggestion has been made that "Defoe's Providence works entirely through nature and is often indistinguishable from nature," and that "if any of Defoe's fictional characters fall into difficulties, Defoe will present a variety of natural causes to explain the situation . . . ."\(^{29}\) Indeed, Crusoe scrupulously gives almost every event narrated in the trilogy a "natural" or "common" explanation, even if it is an uncommon event. Consider as examples the parentheses around his island experience: of the ship that wrecked and later sustained him there, he says "the good Providence of God . . . wonderfully order'd . . . [it] to be cast up nearer to the Shore . . . " (I, 150). He also asks, "What would have been my Case if it had not happen'd, Which was an Hundred Thousand to one;\(^{30}\) that the Ship floated from the Place where she first struck and was driven so near to the Shore . . . [?]" (I, 71). Twenty-eight years later, when Crusoe was preparing to embark for England, "[he] forgot not to lift up . . . [his] Heart in Thankfulness to Heaven; . . . from whom every Deliverance must always be acknowledged to proceed" [II, 68]. Earlier he had called the appearance of the ship that bore him away, "a strange and unforeseen Accident" (II, 39). In Robinson Crusoe providential acts are especially hard to distinguish from accidents.\(^{30a}\)

Nevertheless, the fact that an event looks to some people like an accident does not prove that it is an accident.\(^{31}\) Crusoe was justified in regarding events which had a "common" explanation as if they were "the Work of Providence as to me" – as "particular Providences" attending him, or, if we may say so, as friendly accidents. Yet the reader may wonder how much conviction he generated by looking at these events "as if" they were miraculous. In the grip of the terror inspired by the footprint he seems to have had no reservoir of faith to draw on, no clear recollection of an unmistakable intervention of God to sustain his spirit. Or, if he was confident that what he had previously experienced were more than mere accidents, after the footprint he was unsure that this would be his future experience; if we may say so, the thought of unfriendly accidents crossed his mind. He imagined now a "casual accidental Landing of Straggling People from the Main" (I, 185). And, "my Fear banish'd all my religious Hope; . . . I reproach'd my self with my Easiness, that would not sow any more Corn one Year than would just serve me till the next Season as if no Accident could intervene to prevent my enjoying the Crop that was upon the Ground . . . " (I, 80).

In the crucible of fear and imagined necessity Crusoe reverted to the explanation of events that had informed his understanding when he had "acted upon no religious Foundation at all" (I, 89): he now regarded the events that

\(^{29}\) Novak, Nature, p. 6, 7.

\(^{30}\) Italics original.

\(^{30a}\) Consider, for example, III, 86: "by mere Accident or Providence."

\(^{31}\) Calvin, for example, acknowledged that many events seem to be accidental (Institutes, I, xvi, 9); this being due in part to the fact that "the providence of God does not interpose simply; but, by employing means, assumes, as it were, a visible form" (ibid., I, xvii, 4).
beful him as, to use his earlier expression, nothing "otherwise than as a Chance" (I, 89). It is because he could not convince himself that God was in control that he ceased to rely on His Providence.

Thus I took all the Measures humane Prudence could suggest for my own Preservation; and it will be seen at length, that they were not altogether without just Reason; though I foresaw nothing at that Time, more than my meer Fear suggested to me [I, 187].

For the record, and partially in anticipation of the second Part of this study, Crusoe's formula of the relationship between bodily and spiritual deliverance is this. Bodily security must precede deliverance of the soul; but that security can be wrested from nature by and only by men who are willing both to rely entirely upon themselves, leaving God out of it, and to exploit other men: to the extent that there is such a thing as the state of Grace, it must rest on foundations laid in sin; proximately in the case of a founder (i.e., one who has himself like Crusoe experienced and triumphed over some manifestation of the natural condition of man) or remotely in the case of the beneficiaries of the founding act.32

Of course, it would be hard for anyone to take this formula seriously in its entirety. The Christian could not: he could only be seriously offended by the impiety of it;33 and Crusoe would not: as such the means to spiritual salvation were not of interest to him because of his profound disinterest in the state of Grace as an end. To be sure, Crusoe may have experienced some religious feelings during his illness. But his last word on sickbed conversions is that a man is not "fit... for Repentance on a Sick Bed" (I, 189). More to the point, salvation from sin was not again in the running as an object of Crusoe's desire after the full necessitousness of the state of nature had impinged on his sensibilities. Never mind that the formula by which he expressed his disaffection with God contains a non sequitur — that it is nonsense to allege that the Grace of the necessarily all-powerful God cannot overcome "necessity." What Crusoe means to communicate, in the clearest and crudest of terms, is that he had learned to his own satisfaction which side a man's bread is buttered on: he had learned to question and finally to deny the omnipotence of God. From the moment this doubt set in, he ceased to take the spiritual side seriously, reserving thenceforth his juxtaposition of the two forms of deliverance for merely polemical or satirical purposes.

We may now turn to Crusoe's out and out polemic. It is most intense in the Serious Reflections, which has been characterized by one commentator as "more orthodox" than the narrative volumes.34 The accuracy of that charac-

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32 Cf. Machiavelli, The Prince, vi, xvii, xviii, xix; and The Discourses, I, vi, ix, xviii, xxvi, xxxvii; II, viii.
33 Cf. notes 24 and 27 supra.
34 The commentator is Professor Novak (see note 5, supra). His argument for degrees of orthodoxy within the Crusoe trilogy (cf. note 6, supra) needs to be seen in the perspective of the larger thesis of his second book (Defoe and the Nature of Man). There, he refers the
terization can be conveniently tested by examining, as we shall here, Crusoe’s treatment in the *Serious Reflections* of God’s justice, of His power, and of a well-known New Testament miracle.

**D. God’s Justice**

Crusoe’s discussion of God’s justice centers on the divine dispensation for the heathen, especially the natives found in the New World by the Spanish conquistadores and by Crusoe himself. Concerning the fate of those peoples

reader to a passage in *A Collection of Miscellany Letters* for an indication of “Defoe’s knowledge of the ‘wise Machiavel’ and his doctrine of necessity” (Novak, *Nature*, p. 58, n. 2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58, and Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe*, pp. 10, 11, 34, 50); and he contends that “not only is Defoe’s position [on necessity] extreme, but it places him in company with such suspect thinkers as Hobbes, Spinoza, and Mandeville” (Novak, *Nature*, p. 67). Novak also thinks Defoe was with Hobbes, to say nothing of Spinoza and Mandeville, on a number of other issues — although of course he does not allege he was simply Hobbesian.

Like Locke, Defoe was strongly influenced by the two main streams of political thought in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century: the doctrines of Hobbes and his disciples and those of their opponents . . . [*ibid.*, p. 14].

As a child of his age, Defoe formulated his own scheme of natural law, and by borrowing, combining, and emphasizing various concepts in the writings of Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, and many other philosophers, he was able to achieve a certain eclectic originality [*ibid.*, p. 2].

Lest we be misled, however, into thinking that Defoe’s ideas and beliefs stem from only one source, Novak adds a rather decisive *caveat:* Whereas Defoe

kept abreast of all the new ideas of his day, . . . [he also] retained his faith in his conscience and the Bible. And while he defended the Bible against the attacks of the deists, he apparently felt free to use concepts like primitivism, a voyage to the moon, or even deism for special effects [*ibid.*, p. 8].

The heterodoxy in Defoe’s writing is a matter of “special effects.” Furthermore, one can distinguish between Defoe’s sincere utterances and his special effects simply by asking whether a particular statement is made on Defoe’s authority or on that of his narrator. At least Novak seems to proceed this way in his analysis of *Robinson Crusoe*. He risks his criterion in the course of a discussion of Defoe’s views of the heathen.

Crusoe . . . defends the cruelty of the Spaniards towards the natives of Mexico and Peru: “We have heard much of the cruelty of the Spaniards in destroying such multitudes of the inhabitants there, . . . but as I am for giving up all the actions of men to the government of Providence, it seems to me that Heaven had determined such an act of vengeance should be executed, and of which the Spaniards were instruments, to destroy those people, who were come up (by the influence of the devil, no doubt) to such a dreadful height, in that abhorred custom of human sacrifices, that the innocent blood cried for it . . . [*Serious Reflections*, p. 214].” [And, Novak continues,] This passage contradicts Crusoe’s attack on the cruelties of the Spaniards in the first volume and suggests that the closer Defoe’s name became associated with *Robinson Crusoe* the more orthodox he became in religious matters. The most bitter attacks on what might have been considered ideas favouring deism and primitivism occur in the
with whom the Spaniards met, Crusoe opines that "Heaven serves itself of men's worst designs, and the avarice, ambition, and rage of men have been made use of to bring to pass the glorious ends of Providence, without the least knowledge or design of the actors." And again:

we have heard much of the cruelty of the Spaniards in destroying such multitudes of the inhabitants [of America] . . . but as I am for giving up all the actions of men to the government of Providence, it seems to me that Heaven had determined such an act of

_Serious Reflections_, where the distance separating Crusoe from Defoe has been erased by the author's contention that the work was allegorical [Novak, _Nature_, pp. 45-46].

Novak's general proposition that the _Serious Reflections_ is "more orthodox" than the narrative volumes is disputed in the text. The passage just quoted is, however, open to the following additional objections:

1. In saying that "the distance separating Crusoe from Defoe has been erased by the author's contention that the work was allegorical," Novak presumably has in mind "Robinson Crusoe's Preface" to the _Serious Reflections_, where it is said that "the story, though allegorical, is also historical," and "that there is a man alive, and well known too, the actions of whose life are the just subject of these volumes, and to whom all or most part of the story most directly alludes; this may be depended upon for truth, and to this I set my name" (_Serious Reflections_, p. x). This language does not divorce the _Serious Reflections_ from the narrative volumes. There may indeed be such a "man alive" but the "allegory" of his life is contained in "these volumes." In any case, however, the identification of that man as Defoe is sheer conjecture (see Hunter, _op. cit._, pp. 120-21); and accordingly the passage does not afford the flimsiest of excuses for reading Defoe's supposed orthodoxy into any portion of the trilogy.

2. Crusoe does not here "defend the cruelty of the Spaniards." Nor does he "contradict" here his former characterization of the Spaniards as cruel. Neither did he formerly make a practice of denying, explicitly at any rate, what here he asserts, that the fate of the natives whom the Spaniards assaulted can be traced ultimately to God. (See e.g., I, 106 and 199). Accordingly, it is difficult to see the respect in which Novak thinks the Crusoe of the _Serious Reflections_ "contradicts" or is at odds with the narrator Crusoe, or why Novak thinks the passage he quotes is more "orthodox" than the corresponding passages in the first volume.

3. The passage quoted seems to suggest that it would be a piece of orthodox Puritanism to defend Spanish cruelty. I doubt, however, -- though I stand to be corrected -- that Novak can cite a single Puritan defense of cruelty _per se_, Spanish or otherwise. Severity, yes; cruelty, no. What he could plausibly argue is that some Puritan might have entertained the notion that the Spaniards were God's instruments of vengeance, as Crusoe suggests. And what he should have stated in addition is that God's employment of the Spaniards would in no way diminish their guilt for murder. As Calvin says, it will not do "in the case of theft or murder, . . . [to] palliate it under the pretext of Divine Providence, . . . [for] in the same crime . . . the justice of God and the iniquity of man is separately manifested" (_Institutes_ I, xvii, 9). The "defensibility," the guilt or innocence, of the Spaniards, depends not upon God's inscrutable choice for them, but upon the state of their minds and their motives. God's employment of homicide does not entail God's approval of murder. There are two distinct issues: one between God and the victim, the other between God and the executioner. God's having willed the death of the native Americans would not exonerate the Spaniards for breach of the Sixth Commandment (_ibid._, 5).

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35 _Serious Reflections_, p. 222. This proposition is in accord with Calvin's teaching. See, e.g., _Institutes_ I, xvii, 5; xviii.
vengeance should be executed, and of which the Spaniards were instruments, to de-
stroy those people, who were come up (by the influence of the devil, no doubt) to such a
dreadful height, in that abhorred custom of human sacrifices, that the innocent blood
cried for it....

Crusoe seems to imply here that the Spaniards would not be excused their
sins or crimes, even though God appointed and employed their acts to
punish the natives of Mexico and Peru. But, though consistent with the
pertinent orthodoxy, this resolution is difficult to uphold in argument.
Accordingly, one wonders why Crusoe voluntarily took it upon himself to
suggest that God was involved in the Spanish atrocities. One wonders, that is,
why Crusoe repeatedly drew attention to an issue that, as it taxes the best
theological minds, perhaps ought to be left to them, and passed over in si-
ence by other Christians. We may discover what Crusoe is driving at by
focusing on the native practice Crusoe thought especially aroused God's
wrath, i.e., "that abhorred custom of human sacrifices." Human sacrifice
being a Canaanite abomination, it may have been one of similarities be-
tween the American natives and the Canaanites that prompted Crusoe to the
following remark.

The cruelties of the Israelites, in destroying the nations of the land of Canaan, was
commanded from heaven, and therein Joshua was justified in what was done. The
cruelties of the Spaniards, however abhorred by us, was doubtless an appointment of
God for the destruction of the most wicked and abominable people upon earth.

But, it is one thing for the Holy Scripture to ascribe genocide to God, and quite another for Crusoe, with a facile "doubtless," to make the same
attribution — and to vouchsafe the divine reason therefore. Consider the
reason Crusoe assigns to God for loosing the Spaniards, as stated in a passage
as yet unquoted: "it seemed [to Heaven] to be time to put a stop to that
crime [i.e., human sacrifice], lest the very race of people should at last be
extinct by their own butcheries." By "the very race of people," does Crusoe
mean the whole human race? Does he think that God thought the custom of
human sacrifice would spread from Mexico to, e.g., Turkey and England, and that the Turks and English would allow themselves to be sacrificed?

36 Serious Reflections, p. 214.
37 Even in Calvin's presentation the argument is difficult to follow. Cf. note 34 (item 3), supra, where I state my understanding of Institutes, I, xvii, 5.
38 Deuteronomy 18:9-10.
39 See, e.g., Ibid., 7:1-5.
40 Serious Reflections, p. 216.
41 Calvin's doctrine that every event must be traced to God's active and immediate
willing does not entail that we may casually assume knowledge of God's reasons (see
Institutes, I, xvii, 1-2; III, ii, 39; xxi, 4; xxiii). This is not to assert, of course, that Calvin
always refrained from interpreting particular providences (see, e.g., Ibid., I, xvi, 9: David,
42 Serious Reflections, p. 214.
There is no biblical record of God thinking the physical survival of the human race was endangered by the peculiar custom of the Canaanite. But if, by “the very race of people,” we take Crusoe to mean the native American race, then the humor in the passage comes out when it is juxtaposed with other passages occurring in the same discussion. For example, we find Crusoe acknowledging that

it is hard to say whether the paganism is much abated [in America] except by the infinite ravages the Spaniards made where they came, who rooted out idolatry by destroying the idolaters, not by converting them; having cruelly cut off, as their own writers affirm above seventy millions of people and left the country naked of its inhabitants for many hundred miles together.49

In short,

this abomination [human sacrifice] God in His providence put an end to by destroying those nations from the face of the earth, bringing a race of bearded strangers upon them, cutting in pieces man, woman, and child . . . 44

Crusoe has God wielding the Spaniards to exterminate the Americans for the purpose of shielding the Americans from extinction. He has the Spaniards fulfilling the unfulfilled commission of the Israelites as they defeat the alleged purpose of their own commission.45

Consider also the reasoning that Crusoe attributes to God in part of a passage already quoted. Crusoe says “the innocent blood [of the victims] cried out for [vengeance].” But, first, the Spaniards killed innocent victims and sacrificers alike;46 and second, this argument from innocence has no analogue in the biblical account of the Israelites and the Canaanites – God seems to have considered all Canaanites and related peoples guilty.47 It is Crusoe’s argument, or one that he learned from some source other than the pertinent part of the Old Testament. But it is not necessarily his complete thought, since innocence of the victims does not necessarily imply guilt of the sacrificers. What does Crusoe think are the necessary conditions of guilt in the sacrificers?

He says relatively little about sacrifice, but of course he relished talking about cannibalism. What then does Crusoe say about the guilt of the cannibals? His constant major premise is, no guilt without scienter. Once, and in the

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. 215.
45 “And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them” (Deuteronomy 7:2). The Israelites did not slay all the inhabitants of Canaan. See, e.g., Joshua 9:14-15 and Judges 3:1,3.
46 “The poor wretches the Indians in America, . . . when they were talked to of the future state, the resurrection of the dead, eternal felicity in heaven, and the like, inquired where the Spaniards went after death, and if any of them went to heaven; and being answered in the affirmative, shook their heads and desired they might go to hell then . . .” (Serious Reflections, p. 231).
47 Deuteronomy 20:16-18.
supposedly less orthodox first (narrative) volume, he imputes knowledge of their turpitude to the cannibals.\textsuperscript{48} Elsewhere in the first volume, however, Crusoe quotes himself as having said to himself that

\begin{quote}

it is certain these People \ldots do not commit this as a Crime; it is not against their own Consciences reproving, or their Light reproaching them. They do not know it be an Offence, and then commit it in Defiance of Divine Justice, as we do in almost all the Sins we commit, they think it no more a Crime to kill a Captive taken in War, than we do to kill an Ox; nor to eat humane Flesh, than we do to eat Mutton [I, 198].
\end{quote}

And this proposition is ratified in the supposedly \textit{more} orthodox \textit{Serious Reflections}.

\begin{quote}

It is evident \ldots [that the cannibals] eat no human creatures but such as are taken prisoners in their battles, and, as I have observed in giving the account of those things \[i.e.,\] in the first narrative volume, they do not esteem it murder, no, nor so much as unlawful. I must confess, saving its being a practice in itself unnatural, especially to us, I say, saving that part, I see little difference between that and our way, which in the war is frequent in heat of action, viz., refusing quarter; for as to the difference between eating and killing those that offer to yield, it matters not much.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{48} This imputation is not unequivocal, however, inasmuch as it is made more in the service of saving the justice of God, or the apparent orthodoxy of Crusoe, than as a convincing proof of the essential minor premise. The italicized portion of the following passage is one of the quotations Novak uses to substantiate his contention that Crusoe condemned the cannibals: “I \ldots was led \ldots [to] arraign the Justice of so arbitrary a Disposition of Things, that should hide that Light from some, and reveal it to others, and yet expect a like Duty from both: But I shut it up, and check’d my Thoughts with this Conclusion, \ldots” That we did not know by what Light and Law these should be condemn’d; but that as God was necessarily, and by the Nature of his Being, infinitely Holy and Just, so it could not be, but that if these Creatures were all sentenc’d to Absence from himself, it was on account of sinning against that Light which, as the Scripture says, was a Law to themselves, and by such Rules as their Consciences would acknowledge to be just, tho’ the Foundation was not discover’d to us \ldots [I, 243–44]”

Calvin, for one, does not always condition divine justice on the “acknowledgment” of human conscience. “Where calamity takes precedence even of birth, our carnal sense murmurs as if God were unmerciful in thus afflicting those who have not offended. But Christ declares that, provided we had eyes clear enough, we should perceive that in this spectacle the glory of his Father is brightly displayed. We must use modesty, \textit{not as it were compelling God to render an account \ldots}” (\textit{Institutes}, I, xvii, 1 [emphasis supplied]). Nevertheless, Calvin adheres to Crusoe’s sometime scriptural authority (Romans 2 : 14–15) and insists that the Gentiles do know when they do wrong. See, in fact, \textit{Institutes}, II, ii, 22, where Calvin, while discussing Romans 2 : 14–15, concludes that conscience or natural law “served \ldots [the Gentiles] instead of the law, and was therefore sufficient for their righteous condemnation. The end of the natural law \ldots is to render man inexcusable, and may be not improperly defined – the judgment of conscience distinguishing sufficiently between just and unjust, and by convicting men on their own testimony, depriving them of all pretext for ignorance.”

And indeed, the Crusoe of the *Serious Reflections* is not content merely to deny the cannibals’ *mens rea*, thereby exonerating them. He also returns to the related theme, the theme he had introduced in the first volume, the justice of God’s dispensation for the Pagans:

If all those [pagan] nations are included under the sentence of eternal absence from God, which is hell in the abstract, then what becomes of all the sceptical doctrines of its being inconsistent with the mercy and goodness of an infinite and beneficent Being to condemn so great a part of the world, for not believing in Him of whom they never had any knowledge or instruction? But I desire not to be the promoter of unanswerable doubts in matters of religion; much less would I promote cavils at the foundations of religions, either as to its profession or practice, and therefore I only name things.50

Although God seems to have forsaken the heathen utterly, the *Serious Reflections* does contain a kind of suggestion for their redemption: as has been noted by another, Crusoe maintains that “only a Christian Crusade, ... can save these people from damnation.”51 Crusoe indeed visualizes such a project, but his vision is more in the spirit of *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*52 than in a mood of either charitable solicitude or truly pious severity. Yet, whatever might have been his opinion on salvation by the sword, Crusoe affects, again in the allegedly more orthodox *Serious Reflections*, to be uncertain about the good to be wrought by dissemination of Christian doctrine among the heathen, however it is spread.

What the Divine wisdom has determined concerning the souls of so many millions, it is hard to conclude, nor is it my present design to inquire; but this I may be allowed here, as a remark: if they are received to mercy in a future state, according to the opinion of some, as having not sinned against saving light, then their ignorance and pagan darkness is not a curse, but a felicity; and there are no unhappy people in the world, but those lost among Christians, for their sins against revealed light; nay, then being born in the regions of Christian light, and under the revelation of the Gospel doctrines, is not so much a mercy to be acknowledged as some teach us, and it may in a negative manner be true that the Christian religion is an efficient in the condemnation of sinners, and loses more than it saves, which is impious but to imagine.53

Indeed. But still, Crusoe does not “desire ... to be the promoter of unanswerable doubts in matters of religion.”

**E. God’s Power**

The subject of the previous discussion – God’s treatment of the pagans – involves a special class of events. In what follows, we shall discuss Crusoe’s

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50 *Serious Reflections*, p. 111. Needless to say, Calvin had rejected these “skeptical doctrines.” See, e.g., *Institutes*, II, viii, 20; III, xiv, 1–5; xxi, 1; xxii, 11; xxiii; xxiv, 15–17.


52 Available in the Shakespeare Head Edition of the *Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe* (1927).

53 *Serious Reflections*, pp. 110–11.
adversions, in the *Serious Reflections*, to God's disposition of *all* events. This subject comes up when Crusoe affirms his belief in particular Providence.

If it be true, as our Savior Himself says, that not a hair falls from our heads without the will of our heavenly Father, then not a hair ought to fall from our heads without our having our eyes up to our heavenly Father in it . . . . We ought to . . . be resigned to Him in the event, and subjected to Him in the means; and he that neglects this lives in contempt of Providence, and that in the most provoking manner possible.54

Nevertheless, our author feels constrained to enter a *caveat*.

I am not answerable for any extremes these things may lead weak people into; I know some are apt to entitle the hand of God to the common and most ridiculous trifles in Nature; as a religious creature I knew, seeing a bottle of beer being over ripe burst out, the cork fly up against the ceiling, and the froth follow like an engine, cried out, "O! the wonders of omnipotent Power!"55

This listening to the voice of Providence is a thing . . . hard to direct . . . . It is true, an ill use may be made of these things, and to tie people too strictly down to a rule, where their own observation is to be the judge, endangers the running into many foolish extremes, . . . and tacking the awful name of Providence to every fancy of their own.56

In some cases at least, a man's "own observation is to be the judge." Crusoe's model is the man who will "listen to the voice . . . [of Providence and] obey . . . [its] secret dictates, as far as reason directs, without any over-superstitious regard to them any more than a total neglect."57 In short, "it is not for me to dictate here to any man what particular things relating to him Providence is concerned in, or what not . . . ."58

But if Crusoe wavers in his estimation of the degree to which a man should consider the events affecting him as the work of a Providence particularly interested in him, he seems confident nevertheless that the Deity in some aspect determines or has determined the manner in which events will occur. He affirms the "unchangeableness of the Eternal decrees,"59 even though he is aware of their possible implications for human freedom.60 The immutability

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60 Providence decrees that events shall attend upon causes in a direct chain, and by an evident necessity, and has doubtless left many powers of good and evil seemingly to ourselves, and, as it were, in our hands, as the natural product of such causes and consequences, which we are not to limit and cannot expressly determine about, but which we are accountable for the good or evil application of; otherwise we were in vain exhorted and commanded to do any good thing, or to avoid any wicked one. Rewards and punishments would be incongruous with sovereign justice, and promises and threatenings be perfectly unmeaning, useless things – mankind being no free agent to himself, or intrusted with the necessary powers which those promises and threatenings imply [*Ibid*, p. 182].
he ascribes to the decrees cuts also in another direction – toward God Himself.

It would be an ill account we should give of the government of divine Providence in the world, if we should argue that its events are so unavoidable, and every circumstance so determined, that nothing can be altered... I think it would take from the sovereignty of Providence, and deny even God Himself the privilege of being a free agent...

People that tie up all to events and causes, strip the Providence of God which guides the world of all its superintendency, and leave it no room to act as a wise disposer of things.61

Crusoe avoids thus “stripping” God by the following expedient:

It seems to me that the immutable wisdom and power of the Creator, and the notion of it in the minds of men, is as dutifully preserved, and is as legible to our understanding, though there be a hand left at liberty to direct the course of natural causes and events. ’Tis sufficient to the honour of an immutable Deity, that, for the common incidents of life, they be left to the disposition of a daily agitator, namely, divine Providence, to order and direct them, as it shall see good, within the natural limits of cause and consequence.62

Now since Providence, viewed as “a daily agitator,” must work within “the natural limits of cause and consequence,” one would suppose that its works would be indistinguishable from natural cause and consequence, and that accordingly Crusoe would be tolerant of those men who confuse the two. But this expectation is unwarranted for two reasons: the tendency of men to equate the natural course of events with chance; and Crusoe’s apparent animus toward the very notion of chance.

Crusoe relates, in their own words, the story told him by two “wretches.”

They were riding from Huntingdon towards London, and in some lanes betwixt Huntingdon and Caxton, one happened, by a slip of his horse’s foot, which lamed him a little, to stay about half a mile behind the other, was set upon by some highwaymen, who robbed him, and abused him very much; the other went on to Caxton, not taking care of his companion, thinking he had stayed on some particular occasion, and escaped the thieves, they making off across the country towards Cambridge.63

Calvin rejects “a necessity consisting of a perpetual chain of causes” (Institutes, I, xvi, 8). And according to him, the only person to whom the necessity of “events” is “evident” is God, who makes each separate event necessary by willing, and not merely permitting, it so (Ibid., I, xvi, 8; xviii, 1). Calvin means that even human acts are decreed by God: “men... cannot even give utterance except in so far as God pleases...” (Ibid., I, xvi, 6). He denies that man is a free agent (e.g., Ibid., I, xvi, 4; xviii, 2; II, ii-v), and yet argues that God’s punishment for man’s divinely appointed acts is not “incongruous with sovereign justice” (e.g. Ibid., I, xvii, 3, 5). He denies that exhortation is in vain (e.g., Ibid., II, v; III, xxxi, 4).

61 Serious Reflections, p. 198.
62 Ibid., pp. 198-99. It will be observed that within this passage the role of Providence shifts from “direct[ing] the course of natural causes and events” to disposing of “the common incidents of life” “within the natural limits of cause and consequence.”
63 Ibid., P. 202. For the positing of a remarkably similar example, see Calvin, Institutes, I, xvi, 9.
When Crusoe interviewed them afterwards, he found that the first, he who escaped, had "not the least sense of the government of Providence in this affair."64 When asked "how came you to escape?" he replied by using such words as "happened" and "good luck."65 Crusoe is likewise provoked by the fellow who was robbed, for his remark that his "horse chanced to slip,"66 Crusoe calls chance an "empty idol of air, or rather an imaginary, nonsensical nothing . . . a mere phantasm, an idea, a nonentity," and a "mock-goddess."67 As for the victim's alternative explanation, that it was "as the devil would have it,"68 Crusoe thinks that

though it may be true that the highwaymen were, even by their employment, doing the devil's office of going to and fro, seeking whom they may plunder, yet 'twas a higher Hand than Satan's that delivered this poor blind fellow into their power.69

And Crusoe has authority for his assertion:

We have a plain guide for this in Scripture language, in the law of manslaughter, or death, as we call it foolishly enough, by misadventure; it is in Exod. xxii. 13, in the case of casual killing a man; it is expressed thus: "If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand." This was not to be accounted murder, but the slayer was to fly to the city of refuge.

Here it is evident that God takes all these misadventures into His own hand; and a man killed by accident is a man whom God has delivered up, for what end in His providence is known only to Himself.70

The Providence of God may be stripped of some superintendency, because kept within the "natural limits of cause and consequence" or within a "direct chain [of causes]," and yet have a place as a "daily agitator." For, "direct chains" contain links that, though forged by nature or chance, and looking like mere "misadventures" or "accidents", are nevertheless susceptible of being taken by God "into His own hand." Then, for all we know, it is true that "a man killed by accident, is a man whom God delivered up"; and we are left standing irresolutely somewhere between God and Fortuna, like the Philistine soothsayers who, according to Calvin, "attribute[d] the adverse event partly to God and partly to chance."71

Consider an atheist's experience as narrated by Crusoe in his Vision of the

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65 Ibid. He could also have said, "by being a negligent, if not faithless, companion."
66 Ibid., p. 203.
67 Ibid., pp. 202-03.
68 Ibid., p. 203.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., pp. 203-04.
71 Institutes, I, xvi, 9.
Angelic World, the coda to the Serious Reflections. When this atheist called at the house of a friend and fellow-atheist, the door was opened only wide enough and long enough for the main character to hear a voice within, which sounded like his friend’s, call out to him for “repentance.” Thinking this a rude greeting, he left in shock and anger. Later, when he upbraided his friend for the incivility, the friend replied that at the time when he was supposed to have answered the door he was in another part of the house, abed, and that he had not known of his fellow-atheist’s call. On receiving this intelligence the visiting atheist assumed he had heard an “apparition” and did repent. Now, as a matter of fact, a third man had come earlier to visit the tenant and had stayed in the anteroom when the latter went off to bed. It was he, unknown to the others, who had uttered the cry. Crusoe’s comment:

It is not to be doubted but that many an apparition related with a great deal of certainty in the world, and of which good ends have followed, has been no more than such a serious mistake as this. But before I leave it, let me observe that this should not at all hinder us from making a very good use of such things; for many a voice may be directed from heaven that is not immediately spoken from thence ...

Just as the Crusoe of the first volume had remonstrated with himself for not being “thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if ... [the appearance of the corn] had been miraculous” (I, 90), so here Crusoe allows that doubtless He that made all things and created all things, may appoint instruction to be given by fortuitous accidents, and may direct concurring circumstances to touch and affect the mind as much and as effectually as if they had been immediate and miraculous.

These thoughts suggest themselves. If the redundancy “fortuitous accidents” is taken literally, then Crusoe’s God is not directing events, but is depending upon chance for their occurrence: Crusoe may be one of those who, in Calvin’s phrase, place God “in a watch-tower waiting for fortuitous events.” But according to Crusoe’s other assertions there is no such thing as chance. And this denial places him in perfect agreement with his author, as the latter is generally and perhaps correctly understood. “[T]he God of Defoe’s nature is always present in his works. Calvin had contended that ‘Fortune and Chance are heathen terms ... For if all success is blessing from God, and calamity and adversity are his curse, there is no place left in human affairs for Fortune and Chance.’” Indeed, chance is superfluous in a world where, as Crusoe says in the first volume, “nothing happens without ... [God’s] appointment” (I, 106). And, conversely, by giving chance any part

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72 Ibid., pp. 296–312.
73 Ibid., p. 313.
74 Ibid.
75 Institutes, I, xviii, 1.
in the determination of events, Crusoe would risk its seeming usurpation of the whole.\textsuperscript{27} If chance, which has no place in a universe where nothing happens without God's appointment, is once invited to perform any small task in that universe, it may quickly seem to prove itself capable of doing much more—at least to those men who might “set [it] up in their imagination for want of a will to acknowledge their Maker.”\textsuperscript{28} Chance can acquire such a hold on the imagination of him who gives it entry, that he may begin to assume that \textit{everything} that happens, happens without God's appointment. Perhaps God's intervention in a chancy universe is not impossible, but neither does it seem necessary. And, since it may appear that a persuasive account of events can be given without reference to God, any reference to Him will strike one as gratuitous—and will therefore not augment the faith of the man who has once flirted with the “mock-goddess” chance. Recall how long Crusoe sustained his more fervent religious interpretation of the growth of corn on the island.

At last it occur'd to my Thoughts, that I had shook a Bag of Chickens Meat [meal] out in that Place, and then the Wonder began to cease; and I must confess, my religious Thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate too upon the Discovering that all this was nothing but what was common [I, 89–90].

This remark is not so far removed in immediate subject matter nor in spirit from one of Crusoe's concluding remarks on the episode of the atheist at the door. He says that episode was

ordered in the same manner as the cock crowing when Peter denied Christ, which, though wonderfully concurrent with what his blessed Master had foretold, yet was no extraordinary thing in a cock, who naturally crows at such a time of the morning.\textsuperscript{29}

Although Crusoe could usually explain concurrences, he was not so successful with at least one form of non-concurrence. He puzzles over it during his investigation of dreams as a source of intelligence about the future.\textsuperscript{30} Part of this presentation is our author's eye-witness report of a disputa-

\textsuperscript{27} According to Calvin, Augustine "everywhere teaches, that if anything is left to fortune, the world moves at random" (\textit{Institutes}, I, xvi, 8). Calvin agrees, emphatically.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Serious Reflections}, p. 203.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 313–14.

\textsuperscript{30} This investigation is part of a larger inquiry into all kinds of spiritual revelation and prophecy. Crusoe seems to believe dreams, i.e., "\textit{sleping} dreams," prophesy more reliably than do "waking dreams," even though the former may be "nocturnal delusions" or the "\textit{mere dosings of a delirious head . . . and relics of the day's thoughts}" (\textit{Serious Reflections}, pp. 252, 253). (One must reconsider Crusoe's narration of the dream that precipitated his conversion in light of such remarks as these). The reason for his preference of sleeping dreams is that those of the waking variety are so frequently experienced by "vapourish melancholy people, whose imaginations run this way: I mean, about seeing the devil, apparitions, and the like" (\textit{Ibid.}, p. 247). (The disparaging reference to apparitions is of interest in connection with the subject treated in Section F, \textit{infra}).
tion over the reliability of dreams, between a clergyman and a layman, in which the former urged men to heed dreams, while the latter tried to dissuade them. The layman brought five objections, and

the clergyman gave distinct answers to all these objections, and to me, I confess, very satisfactory; whether they may be so to those that read them, is no concern of mine; let every one judge for himself.81

The layman’s fifth objection was this:

As men were not always . . . warned, or supplied with notices of good or evil [by dreams], so all men were not alike supplied with them; and what reason could we give why one man or one woman should not have the same hints as another?82

And this is the pertinent part of the clergyman’s fifth response:

As to the last question, why people are not equally supplied with such warnings, he said, this seemed to be no question at all in the case, for Providence itself might have some share in the direction of it, and then that Providence might perhaps be limited by some superior direction, the same that guides all the solemn dispositions of Nature, and was a wind blowing where it listeth . . . .83

This is one of the more enigmatic passages in the Serious Reflections. To be sure, it reminds somewhat of Crusoe’s own prior rendering of Providence as a “daily agitator”, disposing of the “common incidents of life” “within the natural limits of cause and consequence.” 84 It departs from the earlier hypothesis principally in suggesting that Providence “might perhaps” be denied even that ignominious efficacy. As for the “superior direction” here invoked, it is probably impossible to determine with certainty what Crusoe

81 Serious Reflections, p. 255.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 257. Immediately after his report of this exchange, and referring to the clergyman’s series of responses, Crusoe says that “I thought it would be much to the purpose to remark this opinion of another man, because it corresponded so exactly with my own . . .” (Ibid., p. 258).

In John 3:8, the phrase, “wind blowing where it listeth,” refers to the Holy Spirit. The context is Jesus’ exchange with Nicodemus, in which the question of Providence, to say nothing of something like a limitation of Providence by Spirit, is not very prominent.

Speaking of the “misfortune” a traveler had to fall into the hands of robbers and be murdered (cf. note 63, supra), Calvin writes: “In relation to our capacity of discernment, all these things appear fortuitous. How will the Christian feel? Though he will consider that every circumstance which occurred in that person’s death was indeed in its nature, fortuitous, he will have no doubt that the Providence of God overruled it and guided fortune to his own end” (Institutes, I, xvi, 9). Calvin also mentions a school “who of old feigned that God rules the upper regions of the air, but leaves the inferior to Fortune” (Ibid., I, xvi, 4). Crusoe could be said to turn this scheme on its head, assigning a non-exclusive, reviewable, jurisdiction in the inferior region, to God.

84 See text at note 62, supra.
has in mind. But perhaps we should take courage from his boldness, and suggest that he means either the “mock-goddess” Chance, or something like the immutable laws of natural motion. On the one hand, Crusoe may be trying to teach his readers that they, like Crusoe himself on the island, have nothing to rely on but their “humane Prudence” and “meer Fear,” because their true condition is indeed as Calvin said it would be for men living in a world from which Providence had vanished or been expelled: “exposed to every blind and random stroke of fortune”;85 “exposed to all possible movements of the sky, the air, the earth, and the water.”86 Alternatively, Crusoe may have been preaching-up a science of the laws of “cause and consequence” which would, when matured, send chance a packing with the now departed providence, thereby making way for the kind of comforting prediction and control that was never available to believers in pre-scientific prophecy. In either case, Crusoe seems to have pushed free-thinking over the line where it becomes atheism.

F. A Miracle

We have been treated to a parade of apparent apparitions, near-miracles, and daily agitators. But our study would be incomplete without mention of Crusoe’s argument for the reality of spirits, in the course of which he also treats of a miracle, while at the same time clarifying the meaning of the term “apparition.”

The miracle is Jesus walking on the water. It comes up in the first few pages of A Vision of the Angelic World, where Crusoe, admitting that it will be hard to identify the inhabitants of that “world,” nevertheless assures us that “it is evident that there are such spirits and such a world.”87 To buttress this assertion, Crusoe says that “the discoveries in the Scripture which lead to this are innumerable, but the positive declaration of it seems to be declined.”88 And in the next sentence he furnishes an example of what he apparently regards as a “discovery” of the spiritual world. “When our Saviour walking on the sea frightened His disciples, and they cried out, what do we find terrified them? Truly they thought they had seen a spirit.”89 But since the disciples were mistaken, and since the Bible tells us that they corrected their error quickly enough,90 one wonders what commended this incident to Crusoe as a biblical discovery of the reality of spirits. The resolution of the perplexity is not easy because the rest of his discussion is based on what at first appears to be a contrary-to-fact condition. He continues:

One would have thought such men as they, who had the vision of God manifest in the flesh, would not have been so much surprised if they had seen a spirit, . . .

85 Institutes, I, xvii, 10.
86 Ibid., I, xvi, 3.
87 Serious Reflections, p. 238.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Matthew 14 : 27 ff.
But what if it had been a spirit? If it had been a good spirit, what had they to fear? And if a bad spirit, what would crying out have assisted them? When people cry out in such cases, it is either for help, and then they cry to others; or for mercy, and then they cry to the subject of their terror to spare them. Either way it was either the foolishest or the wickedest thing that ever was done by such grave men as the apostles; for if it was a good spirit as before, they had no need to cry out; and if it was a bad one, who did they cry to? for 'tis evident they did not pray to God, ... but they cried out, that is to say, they either cried out for help, which was great nonsense to call to man for help against the devil; or they cried to the spirit they saw, that it might not hurt them, which was, in short, neither less nor more than praying to the devil. This put me in mind of the poor savages in many of the countries of America and Africa, who, ... worship the devil that he may not hurt them.91

While the reader has been wondering what this polemic on the basis of a false hypothesis has to do with proving "that there are ... spirits," he may also have noticed that once, unintentionally or otherwise, Crusoe slips out of the contrary-to-fact condition into a simply factual alternative: "or they cried to the spirit they saw." And this slip is repeated in the first sentence following the last paragraph quoted. "Here I must digress a little, and make a transition from the story of the spirit ..." "Story" of what "spirit?" The only spirit mentioned thus far is that which the disciples mistook Jesus to be. Before completing an inventory of Crusoe's usage in this commentary, we should follow him on his digression.

Here I must digress a little, and make a transition from the story of the spirit to the stange absurdities of men's notions at that time, and particularly of those upon whom the first impressions of Christ's preachings were wrought; and if it be looked narrowly into, one cannot but wonder what strange ignorant people even the disciples themselves were at first; and indeed their ignorance continued a great while, even to after the death of Christ himself .... It is true they were wiser afterwards when they were better taught ....92

In mentioning the last of a series of instances in which the disciples betrayed their "ignorance," Crusoe returns to what might be interpreted as a hypothetical way of writing about the "spirit:" "Just so in their notion of seeing a spirit here, which put them into such a fright."93 But does he talk as if their "absurdity" was to think they saw a spirit? No, not exactly. Part of their error was their response to the spirit they thought they saw:

[Their notion of seeing a spirit here ... put them into such a fright, and indeed they might be said, ... to be frightened out of their wits; for had their senses been in exercise they would either have rejoiced in the appearance of a good angel, and stood still to hear his message as from Heaven, or prayed to God to deliver them out of the hands of the devil on their supposing it, as above, to be a vision from hell.94

91 Serious Reflections, pp. 238–39.
92 Ibid., p. 239. Another enigmatic suggestion, but not necessarily heterodox: see John 14:26 and Calvin, Institutes, II, ii, 21; xvi, 14; III, i, 4; ii, 4.
93 Ibid., pp. 239–40 (emphasis added).
94 Ibid., p. 240.
Matthew 14:25-27 reads as follows:

And in the fourth watch of the night he came unto them, walking upon the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

According to Matthew, if the disciples had been in their "senses," they would have seen Jesus. According to Crusoe, if they had been in their "senses," they would have reacted more astutely to "the spirit they saw."

Crusoe begins by searching the Bible for "discoveries" that "there are . . . spirits." He brings up a "discovery" through an adverbial phrase - "when our Saviour walking on the sea frightened his disciples" - which is respectful of the biblical account, but is no "discovery" of a spirit. In order to introduce the subject of spirits, Crusoe has to mention the disciples' misapprehension which he proceeds to adopt as the hypothesis upon which to criticize the disciples. But as the discussion advances, its premise loses this hypothetical character, and Jesus is replaced by a spirit, or rather, by a figure of speech. In a passage we have not yet quoted in its entirety, Crusoe writes,

One would have thought such men as they, who had the vision of God manifest in the flesh, should not have been so much surprised if they had seen a spirit, that is to say, seen an apparition, for to see a spirit seems to be an allusion, not an expression to be used literally, a spirit being not visible by the organ of human sight.95

According to Crusoe, the disciples' error was not their failure to see it was Jesus walking toward them on the sea. It consisted rather in two "absurdities:" first, reacting in fear and supplication to the spirit "they thought they had seen" and second, thinking they had seen anything - for "a spirit . . . [is] not visible by an organ of human sight." After his initial concession to the biblical account, Crusoe grants only that the disciples may have had an "apparition" of Jesus, i.e., seen nothing. That which the Bible tells us Jesus and the disciples considered an error, is by Crusoe asserted for a truth. The spiritual, i.e., the "apparitional" or metaphorical hypothesis supersedes the biblical, the bodily, the miraculous hypothesis. And this can be taken as Crusoe's last word on the subject unless one thinks to add what he said about the atheist befuddled by the answer he got at the door: "It is not to be doubted but that many an apparition related with a great deal of certainty in the world, and of which good ends have followed, has been no more than such a serious mistake as this."

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95 Ibid., p. 238. Here Crusoe recognizes the greatest miracle. So far as I know he never explicitly denies the Incarnation.