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A Study of Part 1, Chapters 1–7 of Maimonides’ 
*The Guide of the Perplexed*

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I

Dr. Marvin Fox’s recent book entitled *Interpreting Maimonides* reveals both sympathy and uncertainty regarding the alleged “esotericism” of Maimonides’ *The Guide of the Perplexed* (the edition used in this essay is Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translated and introduced by Shlomo Pines with an introductory essay by Leo Strauss [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963], volumes I and II, hereafter cited as the *Guide*). At one point, Mr. Fox recognizes the difficulties in reading the *Guide* because of its reputedly concealed composition. As a result he initiates a direction of study for the writing of a commentary on the work which would sort out the contradictions and allusive rhetoric of the *Guide*.

Once we begin to read Maimonides in the way he requires, we can no longer be comfortable about the confidence with which straightforward accounts of his general philosophy have been written, nor can we always trust the writers’ statements about Maimonides’ views and doctrines. Only the most painstaking study makes it possible for us even to hazard an opinion concerning the views of Maimonides, and such an opinion is reliable only if it emerges from a sensitive confrontation with the obstacles and subtleties of the texts. (M. Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides*, Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990], p. 7.)

At another point, his tone bears frustration at the suggestions of the depth of the esotericism. In response to Dr. Leo Strauss’ essays, which are, in the modern context, formative in explicating the magnitude of Maimonides’ esotericism, Fox writes:

I have chosen to discuss Strauss’ method at such length because it is widely, and justly, considered to be one of the most important modern contributions to the study of Maimonides. We have seen, however, that with all its brilliance and ingenuity, it seems to do little to advance the cause of sound understanding, even for readers who are well prepared and sophisticated. If the only way to expound an
esoteric text is by compounding and complicating the esotericism, then perhaps we should give up the effort altogether. (p. 62)

Few of us would not admit that the arguments made by Strauss regarding the deliberate concealment of the teachings of the *Guide* are indeed disturbing. Moreover, if the *Guide* is written with intentional contradictions, one wonders what can possibly be written about the *Guide* which will not be contradicted by another part of it. The interpreter of Maimonides seems required to reconsider preliminary impressions of the book and destined to regret his first expositions of the *Guide*. This tension remains evident in Mr. Fox's recent publication. In the same chapter from which the latter quotation is taken (it is actually only one page later), he writes: "If he was to conform to the law [talmudic law], Maimonides had no choice but to write his book in this esoteric fashion" (p. 63). Despite Fox's occasional tone of frustration, he recognizes Maimonides' respect for a rabbinc law in the concealment of certain teachings. If, then, Maimonides does deliberately conceal as well as reveal, we will need to make an inquiry into what he is concealing and how the concealment is accomplished. If we are determined not to misunderstand the *Guide*, and we are resolved to endure disturbances which might cause evasiveness in our inquiry, it seems unavoidable that we will need to scrutinize what elements lead to the affirmation that the *Guide* is a difficult, even esoteric, composition. Fox sets out what might be done; he suggests that it is necessary to write a commentary on the chapters which will not be the final exposition of Maimonides' teaching, but will be the careful comment on what is found in each chapter, and what the chapter's relation is to what precedes and follows (p. 152).

II

In the "Introduction to the First Part" of the *Guide*, Maimonides states that there are two purposes to his treatise, the explanation of biblical terms and the explanation of obscure biblical parables. He begins the *Guide* with a discussion of numerous biblical terms. Maimonides also identifies the two most central biblical parables as the Account of the Beginning (*ma'aseh bereshit*, the first chapters of Genesis) and the Account of the Chariot (*ma'aseh merkahab*, Ezekiel 1 and 10). The place in the *Guide* devoted to each parable is more difficult to discern than with the terms. The Account of the Beginning does not appear to be discussed directly in any chapter of the *Guide*. The Account of the Chariot is discussed in seven chapters at the beginning of Part III. Even in these seven chapters the explanation of Ezekiel 1 and 10 is cursory and allusive, however. If Maimonides fulfills his second purpose, that is, the explanation of biblical parables, it is necessary to discern the manner in which he offers this explanation. Furthermore, in what sense are these two passages parables? It is perhaps simple enough to recognize that Ezekiel's visions are symbolic, but
even this awareness does not account for the sense and purpose of these symbols. And in what way is the account of creation a parable? Is the claim that it is a parable more controversial than the claim that the Account of the Chariot is a parable, and is it therefore more necessary to present the Account of the Beginning enigmatically? Why does it appear that there are no chapters devoted to the Account of the Beginning in the way that there are for the Account of the Chariot?

Maimonides begins by cautioning the reader of the Guide to proceed in an orderly manner. In the Epistle Dedicatory to Joseph (2b), Maimonides writes: “Yet I did not cease dissuading you from this [Joseph’s demand for additional knowledge] and enjoining upon you to approach matters in an orderly manner. My purpose in this was that the truth should be established in your mind according to the proper methods and that certainty should not come to you by accident.” Maimonides recognizes that the reader may be impatient; the reader wants to know the final statement on all matters without the appropriate respect for the difficulty of the subject, without taking the necessary steps in developing and completing an argument and without submitting to any kind of moral training. In order to guard against the superficial readings that will arise due to the student’s impatience, Maimonides warns that it is necessary to read and to contemplate the teaching of each chapter of his treatise in its place. By means of this cautionary remark Maimonides indicates that the Guide will begin with certain preliminary teachings which are necessary for the full comprehension of later teachings in the Guide. Maimonides’ explanation of all matters does not occur at once.

Maimonides’ creation of a difficult, even a concealed and esoteric, book seems to arise from his insistence that the student should proceed in an orderly fashion and that the student should have proper preparation. Since there is doubt in this matter, let us note the three ways that he claims he uses to achieve this aim. First, Maimonides does not explain what the organization of the treatise is; he says only that “you must connect its chapters one with another” (9a). Second, the treatise is written “with great exactness and exceeding precision” (9a), and only the meticulous reader will scrutinize it with the required persistence and thoroughness. Third, Maimonides claims that the treatise contains contradictions. In the “Introduction” Maimonides mentions seven causes of contradictions in any book or compilation (10a–12a); at the end of this enumeration he says that “Divergences that are to be found in this Treatise are due to the fifth cause and the seventh” (12a). The fifth cause arises from the necessity of teaching difficult matters in ways that are easy to comprehend (10a–10b). The seventh cause arises from the necessity to conceal some parts of a difficult matter and to reveal other parts (10b). The reader is required to identify these contradictions without extensive assistance by means of acquiring a complete familiarity with texts of both classical philosophy and the Bible and by following Maimonides’ argument closely. One only gains confidence in the precision
with which Maimonides’ treatise is written as one begins to see that what at first may appear as lack of direction in the Guide turns into a sustained and coherent exploration of particular philosophical and biblical problems.

In order to be as concrete as possible as to the way in which these assertions regarding the composition of the Guide can be witnessed, let us look at one preliminary example. As already mentioned, the Account of the Chariot is found in Chapters 1–7 of Part III of the treatise. Yet even an initial reading of these chapters reveals how the explanation found in these passages is incomplete without the proper discussion of certain terms and problems found in other chapters. For instance, in III 1 and III 2 Maimonides insists, through at least three different arguments, that the forms of living creatures in Ezekiel 1 and 10 are those of human beings. He does not in any of the seven chapters of the Guide devoted to Ezekiel state why this argument is important. Furthermore, the meanings of all the key terms in these chapters have already been examined elsewhere. The term “face,” for example, is studied in I 37 and there it is explained that the term has six possible senses. Maimonides does not say which of the six senses is used in the Account of the Chariot. The explanation of the Account of the Chariot requires the study of other biblical terms as well, and they are treated in other chapters of the Guide. The reader is only alerted to the variety of meanings of a word if the chapters of the Guide have been studied in order, that is, if the chapters devoted to the explanation of the variety of usages of the terms have already been mastered. Thus impatient and disorderly readers will not be able to sort out what is said about the Account of the Chariot because they have not studied the other parts of the Guide adequately. The student who is serious in study is required to begin the laborious task of understanding each chapter in its place.

Maimonides also cautions the reader against commenting on the Guide. The teaching of the treatise may be harmful to the student, to the teacher and to the truth itself, and Maimonides urges the reader to be reticent in making comments. The reader is cautioned to explain the Guide only to the extent that the teachings of the treatise are explained elsewhere by authorities of the Jewish law (9a). Maimonides follows this legal sanction prohibiting the explanation of certain biblical passages before the student is prepared. This is one of the reasons that the Guide is such a difficult book. Only the diligent student, only the cautious student, will complete the necessary training. Thus the student of the Guide, provided he respects the cautions issued by Maimonides or submits to the Jewish authorities, is limited in what he may say or write about it. If the student does not submit to the author’s own explicit instructions, there is little chance of discovering what his true views are. If the student respects Maimonides’ instruction, the student may explain certain teachings of the treatise to others, but would also be restrained in teaching all that he has discovered on certain subjects.

The need for orderliness in the study of the Guide attests to an agreement
between the teachings of Aristotle and the teachings of the Bible. Both sources teach the need for respect for authority. For Aristotle the authority that must be respected is rationality; for Scripture the authority is the teaching of the prophets. Maimonides’ intentionally difficult rhetoric, therefore, requires the student to submit to the requirements of rationality and the wisdom of the prophets. A rash student will do neither. In this respect for authority the Guide is a vigorous defence of both the intellectual life and the teachings of Scripture. The difficult nature of the Guide is, thus, a way of distinguishing between students who are truly respectful of those authorities and those who are not.

It is possible that someone will claim to know the teachings of the Guide when in fact he is in ignorance. The student must come to be able to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy authorities. The key to this discrimination is always the extent to which the alleged authority can lead each student to the next step of his education. Maimonides assures the student that those who obtain a certain perfection have not gained it only for themselves; the one who has understood is under an obligation to allow the knowledge to be learned by someone else (II 29 [66a]). If the student can confirm the hints intimated by the teacher, the student has reason to be convinced of the competence of the authority. The aim of the teacher is always to teach to the student as much as the student can apprehend; the final teachings are not to be hidden from the student who is adequately prepared. To be sure, what constitutes adequate preparation will be a continual problem; each reader’s first inclination will likely be to assume he is competent. Maimonides must begin by creating a situation in which his readers become aware of their uncertainty and perplexity. Furthermore, the student will need to work independently and learn to resolve difficulties alone. However, the student need never be betrayed by a teacher who in fact does not know the teachings of the Guide and is being obscure as a way of hiding his or her ignorance. The qualities of a good teacher will be the most severe loyalty to reasonableness, the extreme care in the reading of all biblical texts, and a certain straightforwardness in revealing the next step, even if not all steps, in the student’s learning.

This essay begins the reading of the Guide in an orderly way in order to reveal, at least in part, the nature of the esotericism of the Guide. I shall study the first seven chapters of Part I, but even in these chapters I make no claim to having determined the purpose of all that is said therein. However, if we begin to see an order that is at first not apparent, we will be cautioned against a too rapid and superficial reading of the Guide. This essay seeks to explain that what appears in these first seven chapters as a discussion of randomly selected biblical terms is in fact an extensive commentary on certain biblical passages. In order to be alerted to the biblical passages the student must be sufficiently familiar with Scripture to know the significance of the contexts from which individual terms are chosen. The student cannot but begin to marvel at how well Maimonides knew the Hebrew Scriptures, and to be cautioned against
seeing these initial chapters of the Guide only as a discussion of randomly selected biblical terms. This careful exposition of key biblical passages is only one example of Maimonides’ esotericism in the Guide.

III

The first chapter of the Guide begins with a discussion of two Hebrew terms, “image” (šelem) and “likeness” (demuth). By citing the use of these terms in biblical passages, Maimonides establishes that the sense of both terms is not limited to physical shape or configuration. Šelem means “physical shape” in I Samuel 6:5, “images of your emerods,” but it does not mean “shape” in Psalm 73:20, “thou shalt despise their image,” for what is despised is a characteristic of their soul and not their physical shape. Demuth means “likeness in respect to a notion,” rather than simply physical likeness; see Ezekiel 31:8, Psalms 58:5 (King James Version English translation, verse 4), Psalms 102:7 (KJV, verse 6), and elsewhere. Šelem and demuth are both used to refer to that which is incorporeal and immaterial. In particular, šelem may be used to indicate that which causes a thing to be what it is, the formal cause or essence.

Maimonides studies the meanings of these two words because they occur in the same passage, Genesis 1:26–27. A phrase from these verses, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” containing both terms, is the first biblical quotation in Chapter 1 of the Guide. Parts of Genesis 1:26–27, though not always this phrase, are repeated three more times in the first chapter. Thus, through the coincidence of the terms šelem and demuth in Genesis 1:26–27, and through repeated reference to these two biblical verses, there is a suggestion that Chapter 1 of the Guide is devoted especially to the explanation of this single biblical passage. The importance of this passage is confirmed by the identification of the theme of the first chapter. Maimonides states that it is necessary to prove the doctrine of God’s incorporeality if we are to prove the doctrine of His unity (1 1). Thus he sets out to prove that God is incorporeal: God does not have a body, and He is wholly separate from matter and nature. According to certain philosophical arguments, it is a contradiction to say that separate substance is corporeal; but Maimonides does not draw attention to that philosophical argument. He proceeds by showing that biblical passages teach that God is incorporeal. The first and most central passage suggesting that God has a body is Genesis 1:26–27. If Adam is made in the image of God, then that image may be man’s physical shape. Maimonides sets out to refute this argument. Through his lexical study he shows that šelem and demuth in this passage do not mean physical likeness.

As an alternative he says that the image of God in mankind is intellect or reason. Reason is what constitutes the human being as a substance or being: it is our highest perfection. It distinguishes our species from all other species of
plants or animals. Moreover, reason is what makes us like unto God. God's nature is best evoked by saying God is reason and the image of God in mankind is an image of this reason. The first chapter of the Guide introduces the reader to a basic principle of philosophy. The chapter gives a justification of philosophy from a Scriptural text.

What began as a discussion of Hebrew terms resulted in the explanation of a single key biblical passage, Genesis 1:26–27. The significance of this one passage is, however, at first concealed because the chapter examines the meaning of another Hebrew term, "form" (to'ar), and there are numerous references to other biblical texts throughout the chapter. We are given the initial hint that the study of terms may conceal the more significant biblical context from which certain terms are selected.

IV

Chapter 2 does not begin with the explanation of biblical terms as Chapter 1 does. Chapter 2 presents and then responds to an objection that is raised against the conclusion of Chapter 1. The objection is based upon a second biblical passage, Genesis 3:5: mankind is prohibited from eating the fruit because if they eat they will be like gods, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:5 appears to contradict Genesis 1:26–27. With regard to the latter, Maimonides has just argued that mankind's highest perfection is reason and hence he suggests that the purpose of human life is the cultivation of the intellect and perhaps the attainment of the knowledge of God. Yet in Genesis 3:5, it appears that human beings are forbidden to pursue such knowledge. It appears too in the following verses in Genesis 3 that human beings gain the capacity for knowledge only after their disobedience: Genesis 3:7 says that after man and woman ate the fruit their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked. Genesis 3 suggests that the pursuit of knowledge is a result of disobedience.

Maimonides places the objection in the mouth of a learned man, albeit a man who is intemperate in regard to drink and sex. The intemperate man defends the second biblical passage over the first: he seems to have proof that desires and imaginings have brought reason into being rather than caused a diminution of it. Maimonides' initial reservation about this reading is made, however, by noting what type of moral life accompanied this objection.

Maimonides answers this intemperate man and resolves the apparent contradiction between the two biblical passages with two rejoinders. First, he shows that one of the Hebrew terms for god, Elohim, has three possible meanings: it refers to the deity, or angels or rulers who govern cities. Maimonides does not establish these meanings of Elohim by citing their use in biblical passages; he refers instead to another authority, the Aramaic translation of Onqelos. In Genesis 3:5 Onqelos translates Elohim as "rulers" (rabrabin). The knowledge pos-
sessed by rulers is not the highest form of knowledge; it is not identical to the knowledge possessed by God. What mankind acquires as a result of disobedience is the kind of knowledge that rulers have, but not the type of knowledge that God has.

Maimonides’ second argument is a confirmation and elaboration of the first argument. He distinguishes “truth” (’emeth) and “falsity” (sheqer) from “good” (tob) and “evil” (ra’). What is true and false exists by necessity. With the intellect humans discern the nature or necessity of all things or that which is always true. Good and evil, in contrast, are designations for generally accepted opinions (al-mashhârât). Maimonides identifies the Hebrew words “good” (tob) and “evil” (ra’) with, respectively, the somewhat ambiguous Arabic words al-ḥasan which may mean “good,” “beautiful” but even “agreeable,” and al-qabiḥ which may mean “evil,” “ugly” and “disagreeable”. He thus emphasizes that “good” and “evil” refer to generally accepted opinions. They are the opinions and views of the majority, and they may or may not be true. Through the cultivation of reason these opinions can be replaced by true knowledge. Since the terms “good” and “evil” (tob and ra’) are used in Genesis 3:5, and not “truth” and “falsity” (’emeth and sheqer), Maimonides concludes that what is acquired as a result of the disobedience of humans is not true knowledge but generally accepted opinions. Opinions are lower in dignity than truth; opinions are only possible after the disobedience and tend to distract people from the highest kind of knowing.

The inferiority of these generally accepted opinions is revealed in their admixture with the desires of the imagination. In Genesis 3:6 the tree is described as good for food, as pleasant to the eyes and as able to make one wise. But Maimonides indicates that this knowledge that comes by way of imagination is quite different in nature from the knowledge that comes by way of reason. Due to disobedience the human state tends to be absorbed in imaginings. Most people know only what is agreeable through their sensual nature and the impressions of this sensuality upon the imagination. The inferiority of this “knowledge” is indicated by the intemperate morality of the man who advocates it. The depravity of mankind’s subsequent condition is further evinced by the difficulty he has in securing food (Genesis 3:17–19); the human state becomes more like that of the beasts (I 2).

Chapter 2 of the Guide begins by responding to an objection to the reading of Chapter 1. Chapter 2 explains the key verses in Genesis 3 and, thus, gives an account of the cause and effects of Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience. Chapter 2, like Chapter 1, focuses upon a biblical passage. The first two chapters set up a dialectic between two different positions. Both positions have a certain merit and are, therefore, persuasive. However, Maimonides offers a criticism of the case against the view presented in Chapter 2 because the argument is made by an intemperate man. Yet is it not possible that the argument could have been made by a moral man? We may perhaps need to examine more closely what
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Maimonides implies about the proper understanding of these two positions, especially as he may modify or clarify his position later in the Guide. The force of Maimonides’ argument in these first two chapters stresses that the image of God in humans is reason and that God is incorporeal. The chapters seem to be written to someone who will immediately accept that intemperance is wrong, and that the intemperance of someone, including a philosopher, makes their argument incorrect. The one who is persuaded by Maimonides’ presentation will likely be a religious reader who, because of the moral problems associated with the position presented in Chapter 2, will accept the teachings that God’s essence is rationality and that this essence is the image of God’s perfection in human beings, as presented in Chapter 1. The religious reader is persuaded to accept the philosophical view, that is, a view he might not initially be sympathetic with, for moral reasons. There are also two types of readers that may not be immediately persuaded by Maimonides’ argument. The first reader is the genuinely intemperate person who prefers intemperance to right moral action, though such persons would be left with the insinuation that their argument is irrational because they are intemperate. Now it is possible that Maimonides affirms that intemperance causes irrationality, but it is also possible that he claims that someone who has not mastered all his passions may have achieved a certain degree of intellectual perfection. At this stage we do not know which of these situations characterizes the intemperate man. The second reader is one who is temperate and who agrees that rationality is mankind’s supreme perfection, but who wonders if what has been constructed with this dialectic are two extremes that need not be as radically opposed as Maimonides presents. Do the imagination and commonly accepted opinions participate in any more integral way in the perfection of the human intellect? We can at this point only wait to see how Maimonides manages these two positions in the subsequent chapters of the Guide.

The dialectical character of these first two chapters alerts us to a distinction between the ostensible literary form of the Guide and what the dynamics of the work truly are. The Guide appears to be a treatise with an exposition of various topics in a sustained fashion. But the dialectical nature of the first two chapters introduces the possibility that two or perhaps more viewpoints will be in conversation in subsequent chapters. It remains to be seen how one or the other of the views predominates or how one view is modified by the other.

V

Chapters 3 and 4 of the Guide discuss the meaning of five Hebrew terms. Chapter 3 examines the words “figure” (temunah) and “shape” (tabnith). The purpose of this lexical study is similar to what we discovered in respect to the terms “image,” “likeness” and “form”: Maimonides shows which term is used
to indicate physical shape and when, if at all, the terms mean essence or natural form. "Shape" (tabnith) is used exclusively of physical shape. "Figure" (temunah) has three uses: it may be used in the sense of physical shape, in the sense of the imaginary form of an object after the object is no longer manifest to the senses and in the sense of natural form or essence. Maimonides isolates one passage in which "figure" is used in the sense of the essence of God. In Numbers 12:8 Moses beholds the similitude (temunah) of God. The word "similitude" as it is used here in Numbers 12:8 could mean that Moses saw God's physical shape, and for those who do not know the other meanings of the word or the problem of saying that God is corporeal, the meaning is helpful, for it indicates that Moses knew God. But for those who know that similitude (temunah) means essence as well and who also know the problem of saying that God is corporeal, the passage indicates the perfection of Moses' knowledge. Moses' apprehension of God is perfect human knowledge because he knows God's true being. Moses apprehends the nature of God by his reason and not by his imagination nor with any apprehension received through the senses.

Chapter 4 notes the use of "to see" (ra'oh), "to look at" (habbit) and "to vision" (hazoh). In explaining the sense of these terms Maimonides cites those cases in which God either sees or is seen by human beings. Whenever God sees or is seen the terms are figuraiive; God does not have a body and, therefore, has no eyes to see nor shape to behold. The biblical text describes God as "seeing" as a figurative way of indicating that God possesses knowledge. Maimonides also notes numerous biblical passages in which God is seen by humans. The passages in the Pentateuch which say that God is seen by humans are Genesis 18:1, Exodus 24:10 and Numbers 12:8. Maimonides refers in both Chapters 3 and 4 of the Guide to the passage in Numbers 12; he thus gives us a clue to the importance of this passage. In the passage the terms "similitude" (temunah) and "to look at" (habbit) occur together. What links Chapters 3 and 4 is a single biblical passage; habbit, like temunah, is used figuratively. In Numbers 12:8 Moses does not actually see the form of God with his eyes; he apprehends the form of God with his intellect.

Numbers 12 is a biblical chapter which establishes the superiority of Moses' prophecy over that of Aaron and Miriam. In particular the Lord reveals to Miriam and Aaron that Moses has been singled out to know God. Other prophets at the time know God in visions and dreams (12:6) and in dark speeches (12:8); the Lord speaks to Moses "mouth to mouth" (12:8). The perfection of Moses' apprehension of God is contained in the phrase: "and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." The passage at first suggests, like the passage in Genesis 1:26–27, that God is corporeal. As Maimonides explains the other possible meanings of habbit and temunah, the passage is understood as evidence of the perfection of Moses' apprehension of God.

The theme of the superiority of Moses' intellective prophecy is continued in Chapter 5 as well. This chapter is not a study of terms, and it functions with
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respect to Chapters 3 and 4 as Chapter 2 functions with Chapter 1. Chapter 2 answers an objection to Chapter 1; Chapter 5 answers an objection to Chapters 3 and 4. The latter propose that Moses apprehends God through the intellect rather than through the imagination. But how can such apprehension of perfect being be possible for human beings after their disobedience? And even if such an apprehension is possible, Scripture and common opinion would insist that the prophet must possess a moral perfection by having a sense of shame. In order for Maimonides to affirm the degree of superiority of Moses’ apprehension, he must point out where Scripture reveals that Moses possesses moral perfection.

Maimonides begins his response to this problem with a digression on comments made by “the chief of philosophers” when he began to investigate obscure matters. According to Maimonides’ account in *Guide* 15, the chief of the philosophers enjoins the student to be patient, which indicates that the student should appreciate his own limitations and the difficulty of the subject. The “chief of the philosophers” claims the student may require an improvement in character; the student must extinguish the desires and cravings engendered by the imagination. Maimonides draws to our attention that moral probity is also central to the prophecy of Moses; in particular, Moses possesses more humility than other men upon the face of the earth, as is stated explicitly in Numbers 12:3, the passage central to Chapter 4 of the *Guide*. Moses is capable of an apprehension of God because he initially drew back from such an apprehension. The incident to which Maimonides refers in Chapter 5 is the story of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–4:17). In the story Moses realizes both his own deficiency and God’s perfection, and Moses draws back from such a knowledge of God (Exodus 3:6). Later, in Numbers 12, Moses is honored as having received a more perfect apprehension of God than Miriam and Aaron, and Moses is also said to be the meekest man on earth (12:3). Moses achieved, or was granted, the most perfect character and the most perfect intellect. He was thereby able to overcome the generally accepted opinions which came about as the result of Adam’s disobedience.

VI

Chapter 6 and 7 return to the study of Hebrew terms. Chapter six discusses the use of “man” (‘ish), “woman” (‘ishshah), “brother” (‘ah) and “sister” (‘ahoth). Chapter 7 examines the use of a single verb meaning “to bear children” (yalod). The purpose of Chapter 6 is at first obscure because the four terms that it examines are not in any key passages we have studied. It is in fact easier to establish the purpose of Chapter 6 if we begin with Chapter 7.

In Chapter 7 Maimonides distinguishes the literal notion of “to bear children” from its figurative uses. Yalod is used figuratively to mean the creation
of mountains, the growth of plants, the procuring of the events of the day, the
telling of lies and the propagation of opinions and knowledge. In the last sense
the term is used in a biblical passage similar to Genesis 1:26–27. In Genesis
5:3 Adam “bears” a son in his own likeness and image. What is intended in the
passage is not simply that Adam bore a son by procreation but that Adam
instructed his son, Seth, so that Seth bears the intellect of his father. The image
of God in Adam that is passed on to his son is reason and not a physical shape.
Moreover, Seth is the first son of Adam who bears this intellectual perfection;
the descendants of Cain, depicted in Genesis 4:17–24, cultivated evil and vio-
ience and, thus, did not resemble Adam. Therefore, it is only at the birth of
Seth that the text says that a son is born that is in the image of Adam.

Chapter 7, like the chapters before it, focuses upon a biblical passage, Gene-
sis 5:1–3. This passage is similar to Genesis 1:26–27 in that it uses the terms
“image” (šelām) and “likeness” (demūth). But Genesis 5:1–3 is potentially a
refutation of Maimonides’ reading of Genesis 1:26–27 because it says that
Adam begat a son in his likeness and image. If “begat” means only the creation
of physical shape, what Adam begets in his son is a body. Since the word
“image” is both what God creates in Adam and what Adam begets in his son,
then we expect the image to be the same. Hence, the passage may suggest that
God is corporeal. Maimonides opposes this conclusion by showing that “begat”
has several usages, one of which is the propagation or the education of true
notions. “Begat” does not mean “physical shape” in Genesis 5:3; it is used in
the sense of the preservation and perfection of reason.

Let us now return to Chapter 6. Every chapter thus far in the Guide contrib-
utes to the argument that God is incorporeal. We might suspect, then, that the
same is true of Chapter 6. Maimonides’ central statement about the terms
“man” and “woman” is that they refer to human beings. Maleness and female-
ness is a human distinction. He proceeds to say that animals possess this dis-
tinction as well, and, thus, they too may be called man and woman. Mai-
monides leaves the student to draw his own conclusion from this statement. If
we are correct that a central theme in these first chapters is God’s incor-
porality, then how could these terms contribute to Maimonides’ exploration of
the theme? The student is led to the possible problem of the origin of sexual
differentiation. This problem is indeed necessary in the exposition of Genesis
1:26–27 and Genesis 5:1–3 because in both passages it is possible that the
image of God in Adam is either maleness or femaleness or a combination of the
two. The Hebrew terms used in these passages, however, are “male” (zakar)
and “female” (neqebah), and not “man” and “woman.” If Maimonides wishes
to make his reading of these two passages in Genesis conform to his affirmation
that God is incorporeal, he must point out that the uses of “male” and “female”
are limited to human beings and animals and that the image of God is not
sexually determined or circumscribed. Maimonides makes this argument only
by way of saying that “male” and “female” are equivalents to “man” and
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"woman" (Guide, p. xxviii). As God is neither "man" nor "woman," so God is neither "male" nor "female." Sexuality is part of the created order and is not a part of the divinity. This discussion of equivalent terms does contribute to the theme of God's incorporeality.

Chapter 7 alerts us to the passage in Genesis 5 which forms part of the reading of Genesis 1 and 3. Maimonides continues to maintain that the image of God in mankind is reason.

VII

In summary, the first seven chapters of the Guide begin with an examination of what at first appear to be randomly selected biblical terms. Through a study of these terms the reader is introduced to the problem of God's incorporeality, and the reader might therefore conclude that the terms that are discussed have been chosen simply because they suggest that God is incorporeal. But throughout these chapters there is a movement from the study of biblical terms to the study of biblical passages, Genesis 1:26–27, 3:5–7, 5:1–3 and Numbers 12:8. The passages are identified as the reader becomes aware that the biblical terms which are chosen for examination are not selected randomly, but are used in specific biblical passages. At the same time Maimonides diverts attention away from these passages by examining terms that are not in these particular passages. He examines the terms "form," "shape," "to see" and "to vision" in these chapters, even though these terms do not occur in any of the four passages we have identified. These terms give the appearance that the study is purely lexical and is not devoted to specific passages. Several other terms, "man," "woman," "brother" and "sister," are equivalents of the words used in these passages. The equivalents are used to confirm the reading of these specific biblical passages but also deflect attention away from the passages because they are not found in them. Maimonides uses several devices to alert the student to the biblical passages with which he is concerned so that as a reader seeks to clarify the lexical study of the opening chapters of the Guide the treatise becomes an extensive commentary on specific biblical passages.

Maimonides' reading of these passages establishes three teachings which he wishes to explore and develop in the Guide. First, reason is the image of God in human beings; it is our highest perfection. Reason is what makes mankind most like God. Therefore the image of God in us is not corporeal being, for God is not a body and does not possess bodily parts or organs. Second, Adam's primordial disobedience causes a diminution of the human capacity for reason; most human beings are now ruled by desires and imaginings and are intemperate and even bestial. Human "knowledge" is more often of generally accepted opinions rather than of what is true or false. This "knowledge" is of a different order than the knowledge that Adam once had, and it is of a different
order than Moses' apprehension of God. Whereas Adam's reason was once able to apprehend truth without senses and imagination, after the disobedience intellectual knowledge has been obscured by mankind's preoccupation with the desires and pleasures of the senses. Third, Moses has been granted again, or has attained, the perfection of the intellect. Moses does not know God by way of the senses and imagination, in visions and obscure parables, but apprehends God through reason.

What is so boldly accomplished by these early chapters is that Maimonides has established, by recourse to Scriptural exegesis, the validity and necessity of pursuing philosophical investigation. He has shown that the Torah not only does not condemn philosophy, it points to the religious or moral necessity of pursuing it. Moreover, the prophet Moses is not antagonistic to philosophy, but is himself a philosopher, that is, he has achieved the highest possible human intellectual perfection. In a brilliant argument directed primarily to the religious reader, Maimonides reveals the religious and moral obligation for intellectual inquiry of the nature of God through a moral argument derived from Scripture.

Three of the four biblical passages which are central to these first seven chapters of the Guide are in the early chapters of Genesis. The explanation of these passages forms part of the first parable which Maimonides sets out to explain, the Account of the Beginning. We have gradually begun to reconstruct Maimonides' account of the first parable. But we should be cautioned lest we think the explanation of the first parable is complete. Maimonides has not resolved all of the problems in the explanation of these chapters in Genesis, and we have only begun our study of the Guide. We will need to be especially concerned with whether later chapters in the Guide modify any of these early affirmations in any way.

This inquiry reveals how Maimonides both explains and conceals the full import of particular biblical passages. It is an initial example of Maimonides' esotericism in the Guide. This esotericism is demanding on the student of the Guide, even humbling as we learn of our ignorance, but it does not seem, even on the basis of this preliminary investigation, that the Guide can be understood unless this deliberate procedure is recognized.
Dante and Machiavelli: A Last Word

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In a previous article in Interpretation, I examined Machiavelli’s Dialogue on Language on the premise that its indictment of Dante places it in the modern lines in the battle between ancients and moderns. The article emphasizes the political dimension of Machiavelli’s charge that by claiming to write in a common “courtly” language rather than Florentine Dante is unpatriotic and verges on “parricide,” but in the end I concluded that linguistics and politics do not exhaust the issues between the two Florentines and that to do justice to them would require a systematic look at the performed dialogue from which the Dialogue takes its title.¹ In the present article, I return to this unfinished business and emend my original premise. Insofar as Machiavelli’s account of his dispute with Dante is a true measure of their differences, I now think it fair to say, the dialogue becomes a sourcebook on the origins of the battle between ancients and moderns.

Situating the dialogue in the Dialogue as a whole is relatively simple. It is literally and figuratively the central of the tract’s three divisions, following on the one side Machiavelli’s negative assessment of arguments, including Dante’s, for a common vernacular, and preceding on the other Machiavelli’s own argument on language, which amounts to the position that all languages are made up of competing native and foreign elements.² The dialogue itself tests whether the language of the Divine Comedy meets the requirements of a Dantean courtly language or whether, as Machiavelli argues, it is Florentine. A contest over the Comedy’s language serves as a bridge, then, between Machiavelli’s particular arguments against linguistic homogeneity and in favor of linguistic heterogeneity. Similarly, but more generally, by concluding that Florentine rules the Comedy’s writing, the dialogue reinforces Machiavelli’s destructive analysis of our potential commonality and opens the way to his teaching on the essential contentiousness of all human matters.

To appreciate the dialogue’s implications for the destructive end of Machiavelli’s teaching, it helps to begin with the intersection between Dante’s linguistic and political teachings. For Dante, a common vernacular—it would span all Italy—presumes the existence or potential existence of a political order which would be its home and to which other Italian political divisions—cities, towns,
provinces—would be subject. In this respect, Dante’s teaching on language is tied to his proposal that a world monarchy be established to serve the needs of what he calls the universal human community—the universalis civilitas humani generis. Dante’s linguistic argument thus becomes an extension of his argument in favor of a secularized version of the respublica Christiana of the Church, that is, a political order that temporally reproduces the ends that order the Christian afterlife in an equivalent of a universal spiritual community. From Machiavelli’s perspective this would mean that Dante’s proposals manifest the triumph of the promise of Christianity, and of the teaching upon which the Church, speaking for the respublica Christiana, rests its case for demanding a leading role in secular as well as spiritual affairs. For Machiavelli, in short, Dante’s linguistic-political teaching demonstrates the bitter victory of the doctrines and the agents of what he calls “our religion,” and Dante’s arguments link him to the ascendency of the papal forces responsible for Italy’s political deterioration.

The Machiavellian animus to Dante that runs through his presentation, and destructive analysis, of Dante’s argument, then, is in some part a function of his better publicized antipathy to the Church and its spokesmen. This brings us to the specifics of the dialogue. Its first exchanges raise the question of the place of the Church in Dante’s teaching and Dante’s world. Machiavelli opens things by asking Dante to give examples of his Lombard, Latin, and invented words to support his disclaimer about using Florentine. Dante responds as regards his use of Lombard with passages from Purgatory 3 and—fifty-two cantos later—Paradise 22. Later, Machiavelli acknowledges the use of Lombard in these passages, but for our purposes Dante’s choices here are telling in another way. The first passage refers to the momentous victory of the Church over Manfred, the King of Sicily and the last of the politically effective line of the Emperor Frederick II, at Benevento in 1266, the second to the configuration of the heavens at the moment when Dante first breathes “Tuscan air” in 1265. The first quotations of the dialogue, in this respect, draw attention to Dante’s birth just as the line of the last emperor to mount a serious challenge to the Church—Dante describes Frederick as “the last of the Roman emperors”—runs out.

It is a matter for conjecture whether Manfred’s death and the exhaustion of Frederick’s line cement the power of the Church for Dante in the same way that Charlemagne’s victories and his crowning by Pope Leo III do for Machiavelli: in Machiavelli’s account, Charlemagne’s conquest of the Lombards disposes of the last serious unified threat to papal dominance of Italy. The vantage of seven centuries allows us to say what Dante probably could not, that “with the defeat and death of Manfred in 1266, the Ghibelline (imperial) cause became an anachronism.” We can be more confident, on the other hand, that the connecting of Manfred’s death and Dante’s birth by both Machiavelli and Dante—by the dialogue’s choice of passages and the Comedy’s positioning of
Dante and Machiavelli

cantos—calls attention to their agreement on the confluence of Dante’s life and Church predominance in Italian, and European, affairs. The Florentine Histories’ account of Manfred, for example, is consistent with Dante’s treatment of Frederick and his line. Machiavelli tells us that in life Manfred kept the Pope in “continuous anxieties,” but that after his death the Popes were able to take advantage of the ensuing period of “quiet” and “now through love for religion, now through their personal ambition, did not cease to call into Italy new men and to stir up new wars . . . thus that province which through their own weakness they could not hold, they did not permit any other to possess.” This process eventually culminates in the ascendency of Nicholas III, whom both Machiavelli and Dante seem to hold responsible for the development of the modern Papacy.11

Dante, as suggested, seems to agree with this assessment of the events at the time of his birth, that is, that they hastened his world’s deterioration and encouraged unforgivable excesses. Compared to Machiavelli, of course, there are limits to his description of what follows Manfred’s death. However, to the extent that he can see or foresees unfolding events, he describes them in terms similar to Machiavelli. The Banquet, for example, reports that Manfred’s death leaves a political vacuum on the imperial stage—echoed perhaps in Machiavelli’s “quiet”—and the Comedy barely mentions the short-lived attempt by Manfred’s nephew Conradin to continue the family fight against the Church.12 Nor is Dante particularly sympathetic to the Church—at least any more than Machiavelli—regarding its behavior towards Manfred. Although in the Comedy he has Manfred acknowledge his “horrible sins,” he places him among the late-repentent—which means he will eventually enter Paradise—and he is adamant that the Pope was unreasonable and denied Scripture in refusing to allow Manfred to be buried in consecrated ground, the act recalled in the passage quoted in the dialogue.13 In sum, then, calling up Purgatory 3 and Paradise 22 at the beginning of the dialogue directs attention to Dante’s and Machiavelli’s mutual awareness that Dante lived in a period that was severely affected by papal politics, and not for the better.14

For Machiavelli, if not Dante, the consequence of living in the wake of Manfred’s death is that Dante’s teaching bears the stamp of the Church, no matter how radical it appears to his own contemporaries: the Monarchy was burned for its alleged Averroism. In other places in the Dialogue, therefore, Machiavelli makes connections between Dante, the Church, and “our religion” for which one looks in vain in Dante’s writings. Machiavelli, for example, identifies the court of Dante’s curiale language with the Court of Rome and at the end of the Dialogue exacts Dante’s “confession” for having erred.15 Machiavelli’s treatment of Dante, in this sense, is part of his general anticlerical and antitheological posture, and part of the process whereby he displaces earlier writers. Using Dante as a target, he can confront apologists for the Church, pit himself against “those bad seeds . . . which . . . ruined and are still ruining
Italy,” and put those who provide aid and comfort to religion in the ranks of the premodern thinkers.16

The question of how Dante faces his religion and the world it colors further unfolds as we go deeper into the dialogue. In effect, Dante himself defines the question’s terms when, in the sequel to the reference to his birth in Paradise 22, he speaks of his “genius” or the capabilities his stars bestowed upon him. By joining this comment to his reference to Manfred, he leads us to ask how he expects to make his way between his natural and astral inheritance and the unfortunate events that follow Manfred’s failure: this is the Dialogue’s and Dante’s version of the Prince’s statement on how that to which “nature inclines” relates to the “path” which we walk but for which we are not wholly accountable.17 The issue of the Church’s impact upon Dante—and perhaps the question of religion’s impact upon all of us—thereby transforms itself into the question of how men deal with circumstances or conditions outside their control.

Machiavelli’s Dante is not without resources in this matter. We see this immediately in the examples of Latin and inventions that follow his Lombard examples: the temptation is to think that Dante responds to the questions raised by his Lombard quotations with a combination of the best of the old and the best of the new. The Latin example is the word transhumanare—transhumanize—that Dante uses in Paradise 1 to express the change that takes place in him as he ascends from Purgatory to Paradise. The invented example is the pair of reflexives that he utilizes, in the Heaven of Venus in Paradise 9, as he induces Folco of Marseilles, who changed on earth from a life of passion to one of faith, to speak with him. The two examples have in common, then, references to capacities for change, although the types of change involved are different.18

Transhumanization’s extrahuman character is self-evident, but Dante assures that we recognize it by comparing his change to what happens to Glaucus when, as Ovid reports, he eats the plant that transforms him into a seagod.19 On the other hand, Folco exemplifies the possibility of mortal improvement, a point Dante underlines by putting him with people who are in the Heaven of Venus precisely because of their ability to alter their behavior on earth: Cunizza da Romano, who late in life turned away from youthful debauchery and acted in a way that was a reproach to her infamous and bloodthirsty brother Ezzosino, introduces Dante to Folco, who, in turn, introduces Dante to Rahab, the Whore of Jericho, who rose above her condition to aid Joshua.20 The whole question of man’s confrontation with his surroundings and his conditions, we should also add, is best realized in the Heaven of Venus’s most imposing figure, Charles Martel. Charles, the promising son of Charles of Anjou who died before he could realize his potential, delivers the Comedy’s teaching on how to handle the intersection of character, or nature, and fortune, that is, its teaching on the question the Dialogue raises by linking Manfred’s death and Dante’s birth.21
In the wake of his examples of his Latin and inventions, therefore, Dante may say that the charge, open or implied in his examples of Lombard, that his times submerged his genius or imprisoned him misses the point. The problem of nature’s rivalry with fortune is daunting, as Charles Martel’s untimely death illustrates, but the Heaven of Venus demonstrates that it is not insurmountable. At the level of faith or speculation, transhumanization supplies the ultimate corrective to the possibly malign events or conditions of this life, irrespective of whether Dante depends upon the religious or philosophical tradition for the teaching and whether it is the power of grace or intellect that leads him to think we can escape from material or physical cares. At the mundane and material level, on the other hand, Folco and his heavenly companions demonstrate that our capacity for altering behavior at least occasionally intersects with an opportunity for doing so, with the result that it is possible for us to look for a rebirth in this life that is apart from, although patterned upon, our rebirth in the next. By providing glimpses of possibilities available at the levels of faith, intellect, and morals, in short, Dante gives men cause to think that they are not captives of fate or fortune, or even half of fortune. At the same time, he challenges Machiavellianism by leading us to see that we are not doomed endlessly to repeat the same mistakes.

In a nice instance of his artistry and fondness for symmetry, Machiavelli responds to Dante’s opening references and challenge with references of his own at the end of the dialogue. The connection between the two arguments is reasonably obvious. In place of Dante’s demonstration that he rises above his native vernacular through the use of Lombard, Latin, and invented words that combine with other words to produce a curiale language, Machiavelli gives examples of the Inferno’s clumsy, crude, and obscene—all “shameful”—Florentine words. Thus, particularly distasteful words from the Comedy defy Dante’s claim to have written in a new language particularly suited for the refined men—the huomini litterati—of the court. This connection is then reinforced in various ways. Without comment, for example, Machiavelli manufactures his example of Dante’s purported clumsiness, the first of his concluding examples, from pieces of Inferno 26 and Inferno 20, which makes it a rather clumsy example of Dante’s clumsiness but at the same time provides that there be four references to three kinds of words at both ends of the dialogue. More importantly, the opposing sets of examples are linked by subject matter. Both for instance, begin with allusions to Dante’s genius and his stars. Specifically, the part of Inferno 26 from which Machiavelli borrows describes Virgil’s and Dante’s move from the ditch of the thieves to that of the deceivers or evil counselors in Hell’s eighth circle. Confronting such people grievously affects Dante. After seeing them he observes that he must “curb (his) genius” lest it run where “virtue” does not guide it, because if a “good star” or something...
even "better" has granted him such a boon—that is, genius—he must not misuse it. In this sense, the fragment from *Inferno* 26 reasserts the associations initially established through *Paradise* 22.²⁸

Their common features notwithstanding, however, Dante's and Machiavelli's references work at cross purposes. Machiavelli intends to demonstrate through his that Dante cannot erase his linguistic roots, a point he drives home by reminding Dante that "art can never entirely deny nature."²⁹ Where Dante's examples point to an ability to improve and develop and lead us to construe genius or nature in terms of potential, Machiavelli's raise the specter of nature that constrains rather than liberates and is understood in terms of necessities, curbs, and limits rather than opportunities and potential. Machiavelli, in short, uses his examples to reconfigure nature such that we are bound by natural necessity rather than defined by natural potential. For Machiavelli, Dante's inability to "avoid" Florentine celebrates nature's triumph over art.³⁰

From this perspective, we can restate the differences that frame the dialogue. Dante's repudiation of Florence and his claim to a language that-supersedes hers are of a piece with his vision of man as a being of natural potentiality. Conversely, Machiavelli may take artistic manipulation of politics to hitherto unknown heights, but his argument against Dante is in keeping with his identification of nature with compelling necessity. The effect of Machiavelli's teaching is that Dante's audience needs to redefine its ends, substituting the idea that freedom means rising above necessity and remaining constant in the face of fortune for the idea that freedom means moving in the direction in which nature, or providence, impels.³¹ It is worth repeating, in this respect, that Machiavelli's examples all come from the *Inferno*, whereas Dante's come from the *Purgatory* in the first instance and the *Paradise* in the rest. For Machiavelli, the *Inferno* conveys an idea of nature as constraining that is seditious of the teaching of the rest of the *Comedy*. To see the why and how of this, we need look more closely at the examples themselves.

Machiavelli's closing reference to *Inferno* 26, for a start, adds something to Dante's discussion of genius which is not apparent in the earlier case. As opposed to the celebration of genius in *Paradise* 22, *Inferno* 26 emphasizes the need sometimes to keep genius under wraps. About to enter the realm of those who put their gifts to bad purposes—Ulysses, Diomed, Guido da Montefeltro—Dante indicates that keeping talents in check or reining in genius as circumstances demand guards against betraying one's promise like those evil counselors, who, to quote Grandgent, "applied their burning eloquence to the concealment of their real mind."³² The irony here is not far from the surface. Dante conspires to veil his abilities in reaction to those who hide their intentions by fully utilizing their abilities.³³ More to the point, Machiavelli's passage reveals that Dante's self-acknowledged abilities notwithstanding, he admits that genius and candor are not always companions.

The hint that Dante employs veils in his teaching is reinforced by the pas-
sage from *Inferno* 20 at the other end of Machiavelli’s manufactured quotation. Machiavelli borrows here from another transitional moment in the journey through Hell. Dante and Virgil are walking downward from the diviners to the barrators in circle eight. As they move they talk, which Dante mentions twice, but we are not told what they talk about. All Dante cares to say is that he and Virgil speak “of other things of which my comedy does not care to sing”: in Dante’s other specific reference to “my comedy,” he emphasizes his refusal to remain silent.34 Between them, it follows, the passages that make up Machiavelli’s example of Dante’s alleged clumsiness show Dante curbing his genius and then maintaining a purposeful silence. Why Dante is loath to “sing” of his talk with Virgil is intriguing in its own right—they may be discussing the troublesome position in Hell of respected ancient diviners—but in our context it is secondary to the way Machiavelli combines these passages to give a new, and subtle, response to the question Dante poses at the dialogue’s inception. Rather than handle the tension between genius and circumstances by stressing our potential for development and growth, Dante here more quietly teaches that problems may be avoided by maintaining reserve or avoiding self-exposure. Restraint—curbing genius and not “singing” of everything—becomes a practical response to the difficulties that arise when circumstances oppose talent.

Machiavelli responds, then, to the questions Dante raises at the dialogue’s opening by bringing forward the reticent end of Dante’s teaching at the dialogue’s close. In effect, Machiavelli turns Dante’s argument for artistic restraint back upon him by using it to accuse Dante of being injudicious or indiscreet in his writing: in the course of arguing Machiavelli tells Dante to “consider well what you have written.”35 Machiavelli rejects the open teaching of the *Paradise*, in this respect, in favor of the closed teaching or the teaching on discretion of the *Inferno*. Despite encouraging men to be adaptable, Machiavelli suppresses Dante’s argument that men may alter themselves and gives us a foretaste of his own teaching that morally neutral artistry, guided by morally neutral prudence or wisdom, is the key to navigating the waters aroused when nature and fortune collide. A new version of the old teaching on deception overcomes the old teaching on human potential. By such methods, the fox becomes the lead animal in Machiavelli’s modern bestiary.36

An obvious next question is why Machiavelli calls attention to Dante’s methods but will not apply them to Dante’s ends. Presumably, he thinks that it would have been preferable for Dante to be more discreet about the teaching represented by the examples of Glaucus and Folco, but he fails to tell us why he thinks so, a silence that anticipates his silence on why he foregoes ancient ways. This matter brings into play the remaining quotations in Machiavelli’s concluding set—and the last from Dante in the *Dialogue*. The quotations, which finish off Machiavelli’s demonstration that the *Comedy* is Florentine,
arise in *Inferno* 28 and 25 and refer respectively to Mahomet, who is in Hell as a sower of religious discord, and to Vanni Fucci, who is among the infamous Florentine thieves because of his involvement, in about 1293, in the looting of a treasury in the Church of San Zeno in Pistoia. Insofar as the charge that Dante employs crude and obscene Florentine expressions in the *Comedy* is concerned, Machiavelli could hardly choose better than these cases, which vividly describe Mahomet’s spilled entrails—“that makes shit of what is swallowed”—and Vanni Fucci’s defiance to God—“(he) lifted his hands with both the figs.” The passages also, however, carry a subtext which bears on the question of why Machiavelli accepts Dante’s methods but not his ends. In context, they reveal the difficulties in trying, like Dante, to join pagan Glaucus to Christian Folco or, more broadly, to fashion an accommodation between Athens and Jerusalem: that Dante and Glaucus transhumanize in a canto which begins with a call to Apollo for inspiration and that the canto which commemorates Folco’s reform begins with Beatrice’s reassurances signals Dante’s approach to the problem.

In the medieval framework, Mahomet is a religious “provocateur,” either in the role of apostate Christian or as the founder of Islam. In both instances, he stands for religious “scandal and schism” and is appropriately punished for creating disorder: he is hacked apart by a devil, thus the spilling of his entrails, and after he heals is hacked anew. The sacrilegious thief Vanni Fucci suffers similarly: a snake’s sting reduces him to ashes, after which, “like the Phoenix,” he regains life only to be stung and reduced again. Even such a terrible punishment does not, however, quell his “bloody rage,” and he is still capable of the “obscene” gesture to God which marks him as the most “proud” spirit Dante encounters in Hell.

In referring to Mahomet and Vanni Fucci Machiavelli supplies a series of rejoinders to Dante’s heavenly references. Vanni Fucci, for example, describes himself as more than a beast in a way that sets off Dante’s becoming more than human at the gates of paradise. Similarly, Mahomet’s tortured form acts as a counterpoint to Folco’s resplendence. More to the point, however, Machiavelli’s examples deflect the message conveyed by Dante’s. Whereas Dante and Folco become something new in Paradise and on earth respectively, Mahomet and Vanni Fucci undergo repetitive transmutations but always return to their original forms. Indeed, in Hell the latter are hardly different than on earth, their terrible punishments notwithstanding. Mahomet continues to sow discord by asking Dante to convey advice to the still living rebellious friar Fra Dolcino, and Vanni Fucci’s “obscene” gesture to God carries forward the defiant attitude that led him to desecrate San Zeno.

Machiavelli’s examples, then, carry an interconnected set of messages that oppose the arguments contained in Dante’s opening. First, with a nod toward the fifteenth chapter of the *Prince*, there is what amounts to a warning that the world that is renders impossible—in the *Dialogue*’s term, “incredible”—the
world of the *Paradise*.\(^{43}\) Mahomet, the sower of religious discord, and Vanni Fucci, the impious and defiant thief, illustrate the sectarian antagonisms and divisiveness that tear late medieval and early renaissance Florence and make Dante’s attempted accommodations between Athens and Jerusalem, and generally the secular and spiritual worlds, impractical, and probably dangerous. Alternatively, the world we behold in Machiavelli’s hellish examples is in such disrepair that it exposes the improbability of the world we behold through Dante’s heavenly examples.\(^{44}\) In this latter respect especially, the *Dialogue* thereby repeats the message on religion of the early part of the *Discourses*, where, as Harvey Mansfield, Jr. says, “we are presented with a contrast between ancient veneration of religion and modern contempt for it, leading to political unity among the ancients and disunity among the moderns” and eventuating in the provisional doctrine that “religion is incapable of producing unity” and that religious veneration must thereby give way to the view that religion is merely useful.\(^{45}\)

This points to another count in Machiavelli’s indictment of Dante. Dante miscalculates the impact upon his audience of sectarianism and religious instability and, by extension, fails to see that there is no educating his contemporaries. The best that can be hoped for is that they be manipulated. The covert teaching of the *Dialogue* is that life in a world molded by figures like Mahomet and Vanni Fucci requires that the methods and arts of deception become the critical tools of rule where once they had been one among other important tools. By bringing forward Mahomet and Vanni Fucci as rejoinders to Dante-Glaucus and Folco, Machiavelli elevates Dante’s Hell at the cost of his *Paradise*, and demonstrates that Dante’s arts, the arts of discretion and dissimulation, are more necessary for facing the world than the promise underlying Dante’s teaching.

As well as responding to Dante, it follows, the Machiavellian conclusion of the *Dialogue* suggests something of what we may expect at the end of the new route Machiavelli lays out. If it is correct that Machiavelli sees in his world the lower regions of the *Inferno* made real, the cyclical or at least repetitive punishments of Hell will compel human affairs, and Aristotle’s universe, where natural cataclysms manifest nature’s beneficence by presenting the opportunity to start things afresh, is lost.\(^{46}\) The world Machiavelli describes contains men damned, by Dante’s infernal standards, to repeat their own and their ancestors’ mistakes. This bleak picture, one should add, probably leads Dante to leave the stage at the end of the *Dialogue*. Much later, it will move the first wave of modern thinkers to struggle over how to honor Machiavelli’s view of man without having to give up hope of relieving the human condition.

Machiavelli’s closing examples in the dialogue, in sum, counterbalance Dante’s opening examples and challenge the credibility of the Christian-Aristotelian synthesis that is the theoretical highwater mark of late medievalism. For Machiavelli, the combination of Mahomet and Vanni Fucci defeats the
combination of Dante-Glaucus and Folco. By the same token, Christian-Aristotelian ideas of human potential are set aside and artistic manipulation of one’s fellows, the secrets of which Machiavelli attributes to Dante, becomes the route to survival and political triumph—it is most fully realized in the art of propaganda.

Machiavelli’s reservations about Dante’s teachings become apparent at the center of the dialogue as well as its peripheries. There, for example, Machiavelli replies to Dante’s opening claim to having used Lombard by citing a Florentine usage in Beatrice’s Thomistic message to Christians to avoid worry about unwanted or unforeseen consequences of vows by being more grave and more careful about vowing in the first place. In the immediate sequel to this, Dante, arguing that it is allowable to use a few foreign words in a long work, cites a Persian word in Virgil’s account of Aeolus’s sinking of Aeneas’s fleet at the urging of Juno. Outside the linguistic issue, it follows, quotations from Dante’s two guides place Christian sentiment in favor of stripping vows of their mystery and avoiding the unforeseen or unanticipated alongside paganism’s sense of our helplessness before oftimes fickle and indifferent but always fearsome gods. The central section of the dialogue may thereby be said to be dominated by the tension between Christianity and paganism and between Dante’s Beatrice and Virgil, which repeats, at a higher level, the competition between native and foreign elements in Dante’s writing.

The same sorts of conclusions follow from passages Machiavelli cites immediately after the illuminating confrontation of Beatrice and Virgil. In this instance Machiavelli, prefiguring Dante’s confession at the end of the Dialogue, says that Dante “confesses” to using Florentine in Inferno 10 and 23 by having men recognize him as Tuscan and Florentine when they hear him talking. The characters in question are respectively Farinata degli Uberti, the Ghibelline hero and savior of Florence, and Catalano dei Malavolti and Loderingo degli Andolo, hypocritical friars who had once ruled Florence. For Machiavelli, the relationship between these characters parallels that between Beatrice and Virgil. Where the latter indicates the tension between the two ends of Dante’s teaching, the former points to the incompatibility between the lifestyle Dante admires, that of Farinata, and the dominant lifestyle of Dante’s world, that of Catalano and Loderingo, who as friars and rulers of Florence represent the meeting ground of Dante’s religion and his political association.

Farinata, a hero of extraordinary proportions, an example of what Dante terms noblehood, and “the greatest of Dante’s colossal sculptures,” is in Hell for his Epicureanism. Despite this, but consistent with his old-fashioned bent, he is one of two figures in the Comedy—Virgil is the other—whom Dante, after Aristotle, styles magnanimo. Characteristic of the magnanimous, Farinata is exceedingly proud, even in Hell: he displays “great scorn of Hell” and ad-
dresses Dante "half disdainfully." Conversely, the friars are sullen and fearful. In contrast to Farinata's openness and self-aware greatness, they are always looking over their shoulders, and they worry that Dante will scorn them. Moreover, where Farinata is a throwback to pagan beliefs—Epicureans are punished for making "the soul die with the body"—the friars identify themselves according to their religious orders, and Dante keys their punishment to their monastic ways: they wear leaden versions of Cluniac cloaks and cowls. Finally, further establishing the antithesis, *Inferno* 23 refers expressly to the accusation that Catalano and Loderingo burned the palace of Farinata's family, the Uberti, at the instigation of the Pope.

As he exacts Dante's confession, then, Machiavelli leads us to Dante's contrasting pictures of an Epicurean heretic who is the last representative of pagan magnanimity and of religious hypocrites who are also Christian monastics and papal deputies. The initial conclusion that we draw from this is relatively simple, and not much different from that which Dante induces without Machiavelli's help. In a world of men like the friars, Farinata's model, to which Dante is openly sympathetic, becomes suspect. As Beatrice's and Virgil's essential contentiousness comes to the surface in Machiavelli's framework, so Catalano and Loderingo signify conditions unfriendly to a Farinata. The theoretical division between Dante's guides repeats in the political and practical divisions between his interlocutors. At the simplest level, the friars help destroy the Uberti, and at a more complex level their actions refute the notion of magnanimity identified with the family's greatest spokesman.

While Dante brings the Farinata versus the friars tension to our attention, he does not openly resolve it. Typically, he leaves it to us to decide whether we can steer between the ancient and modern perspectives. Machiavelli, however, is not so generous. He leads us to a decision by causing us to see, in a characterological version of Gresham's law, that Catalano and Loderingo win out over Farinata. To this end, Machiavelli enlists the example of Count Ugolino, a Pisan contemporary of Dante and the central figure in the longest episode of the *Inferno*: Ugolino is in Antenora, the part of lowest Hell assigned to traitors to party and country, where he is punished by having endlessly to devour the cleric, Archbishop Ruggeri, who had starved him so terribly that he cannibalized his dead children. After a brief change of direction in his argument—we shall return to this—Machiavelli causes Dante to admit that he uses Florentine by reminding him that Ugolino addresses him as Florentine after overhearing him talking to Virgil. Machiavelli overcomes Dante's resistance to admitting that he speaks Tuscan and Florentine on the basis of the examples of Farinata and the friars, in other words, through the similarly directed example of Ugolino. Ugolino's added weight, however, also tips the balance against Farinata as regards the question of what models of behavior are and will be compelling for either Dante or Machiavelli's audience. For a start, Farinata, and to a lesser degree the friars, draw attention to Dante's provincial roots by
initially addressing him "O Tosco," but Ugolino greets Dante as a Florentine. This simultaneously bears out Machiavelli’s linguistic point; leaves the impression that Florence, Dante’s patria, is more compelling than Tuscany, his province; and obscures the ancestral sensibilities that for Dante and Dante’s Farinata are intertwined with province.54 Ugolino, in these senses, testifies to the conditions that ultimately defeat Dante. Dante’s collapse in the face of his example—after admitting Machiavelli is “right” and himself “wrong” he does not speak again in the Dialogue—is tacit admission that what Machiavelli holds is true and that Ugolino, the devourer of his own children and spokesman for a city which is the “shame of the peoples of the fair land where the si sounds,” is more representative of Italy than Farinata, who was dominated by family concerns and was alone (fu’io solo) responsible for saving Florence from being razed by the Ghibellines but whose cause, and goodness, are little more than a dim memory by Dante’s own time.55 Where Machiavelli exposes the self-destructive tension at the heart of Christian-Aristotelianism with the Beatrice-Virgil dichotomy, he uses Farinata, the friars, and Ugolino to write finis to the Farinatan, and Aristotelian, end of any potential ancient-modern synthesis.

Although Machiavelli shows Dante little mercy in the Dialogue, he is fair in that he allows Dante to suggest some of his, premachiavellian, objections to Machiavellianism. A case in point occurs in a short exchange just before Machiavelli mentions Ugolino. For the purpose of “conving” Dante that he writes Florentine by comparing his writing to that of a contemporary, Machiavelli has Dante read sequentially from the Comedy and Luigi Pulci’s Morgante.56 The exchange begins with Machiavelli ordering Dante to read the first line of the Inferno: “In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost.” Next, he asks, not orders, Dante to read from the Morgante. In this instance, Machiavelli does not specify a particular reading, a failure Dante underlines by asking where he should begin. Machiavelli replies that the choice is his or that he can choose at random, a caso. Dante selects a line from the beginning of Morgante 24: “The one who begins does not deserve merit, it is written in your Gospel, benign father.”57

Machiavelli’s argument here is that there is no difference in language in the passages Dante reads, but the passages are also similar in another way. Both focus on beginnings. On this subject, Dante and Machiavelli differ substantially. Whereas Dante shares Aristotle’s suspicion of beginnings, Machiavelli is deservedly famous for celebrating founders and innovators.58 This, in turn, gives Dante’s reference to Pulci’s reference to the Gospel—Matthew 10 and 24 both fit—an interesting twist. The Scriptural message is not, as Pulci’s tone might lead us to think, that we ought to refuse to reward originators because of qualms about the new. Rather, it is that perseverance guarantees salvation, the
point being that we are to commit ourselves unwaveringly to our spiritual objectives no matter what pitfalls we encounter and how tempted we are to stray because of new but false prophets: "you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake . . . (many) will betray one another, and will hate one another . . . false prophets will arise and lead men astray . . . but whoever perseveres to the end, he will be saved" (Matt. 24.9–13); "brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child. . . . children will rise up against parents and put them to death . . . And you will be hated by all for my name's sake, but he who has persevered to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10.21–22). In the context of Dante's suspicion of innovation and respect for tradition, it follows, the passage he chooses from Pulci has a double force. It brings together Aristotle and Scripture by the expedient of identifying distrust of beginnings with Christian belief in steadfastness. Dante's quotation from Pulci, in other words—it is the thirteenth of the dialogue and occurs in the thirty-third of the Dialogue's combined paragraphs and exchanges—conceals the gap between Aristotle's bias toward the long standing and Scripture's willingness to overthrow all in the name of faith by reading Christianity's praise of perseverance into Aristotle's argument against opening new ways, at least in politics. The alliance between Dante and Pulci, or Aristotle and Scripture, is uneasy, but Dante apparently accepts it as the cost of mitigating a practical problem that sets apart Jerusalem and Athens—the clash between spiritual commitment and habitual respect for tradition—without employing Machiavelli's more acid remedies. Through Pulci, Dante restates the ancient challenge to innovators, and to Machiavellianism, and suggests a way to ease the strain between reason and revelation.

At a critical moment in the dialogue, it follows, a fundamental of Dante's and Machiavelli's dispute emerges. For reasons implicit in his respect for both Vergil and Beatrice, Dante accepts the concessions and uncertainties in the Christian-Aristotelian synthesis on beginnings, but because of his reading of his world, which includes appreciation of what "our religion" has wrought, and because of the impact of figures like Mahomet and Vanni Fucci, Machiavelli will not accept the thinly supported compromises the synthesis demands. When Machiavelli says here that he wants to "convince" Dante "with book in hand," he shows his disdain for the uncertainties tolerated, even welcomed, by Dante and ancient thinkers and is true to his greater project of replacing them with a hope, as Leo Strauss put it, "which approaches or equals certainty." Machiavelli's design in the Dialogue, in such terms, is to eliminate the forbearance in the face of uncertainty that colors the Comedy: having said that he began his journey lost in a wood, Dante immediately admits that he cannot account for his escape from it. It appears that for Machiavelli confronting fortune and natural necessity, the point of the Dialogue's comments on "artistry," and living in uncertainty are mutually exclusive. To succeed in his purpose, and to provide dependable truths, he must overcome Dante, the last great medieval spokesman for classical rationalism's reservations about knowing.
To the degree that Machiavelli corrects and convinces Dante, in summary, he eases the uncertainty the ancients beget and caters to a modern need for surety. When Dante quotes Pulci, on the other hand, he turns the pagan and revelatory traditions on Machiavelli by combining suspicion of originators with high valuation for perseverance and steadfastness. Machiavelli’s attempt to make Dante more assured or convert him to Machiavellianism, in this way, elicits a challenge to Machiavelli’s confidence in inventiveness. This is the closest Dante comes—or perhaps can come—to ancient skepticism while he wears his Christian-Aristotelian garb, but it is instructive as regards his and Machiavelli’s relationship. At their hearts, their teachings go in opposite directions according to the way the one reflects the modern desire for certitude and the other feeds it.62

We conclude by returning to the specifics of the dialogue. According to what has been said, the dialogue turns on questions that divide ancients and moderns. At its center—and the Dialogue’s—there is the contrast between Farinata, at once an Epicurean heretic, the savior of Florence and the last magnanimous man, and Catalano and Loderingo, at once hypocritical men of the cloth, betrayors of Florence, and objects of scorn. These figures are surrounded by references on one side to Beatrice on vows and Virgil on the fickleness of the gods and on the other side to the Comedy’s beginning and the Morgante’s scripturally supported warning to originators. The differences between Farinata and the friars, in this way, radiate outwards to the differences between pagan and Christian appreciations of the gods and ancient and modern appreciations of beginnings. Finally, framing the whole dialogue, we find opposed alternatives regarding our natural potential and the influence upon us of circumstances and surroundings. Looking at the dialogue as a whole, different types of men and different ways of looking at human possibilities face each across a medium composed of different ways of looking at the gods and at beginnings. This can be restated as follows: the contrasting psychological models or souls at the core of the dialogue become, through contact with different forms of belief, the contrasting moral types at its peripheries. Whichever way one takes Machiavelli’s argument, however, it leads to the conclusion that the quarrel between ancients and moderns is a function of the way ancient and modern views of the gods and God, and beginnings, mediate between the soul and the belief in human flexibility and growth that most of us identify with freedom.63

NOTES

of the original article is that Dante's stance on language is tied to his view of his political associations, Tuscany and Florence, which is in turn governed by Aristotle's discussions of polis and politiea. In criticizing Dante, I consequently argue, Machiavelli opposes Aristotelianism and anticipates the modern state. At Dial. 34, Machiavelli assures that we be aware that the dialogue is performed by expressly dispensing with the "he said" and "I replied."

2. The Dialogue is carefully crafted. Its 52 paragraphs and exchanges, for example, are divided into an introductory paragraph and a 13-paragraph section, the dialogue, and a 13-paragraph section and a concluding paragraph. There still exists some controversy over the Dialogue's authenticity. Polidori gives a compelling defense of Machiavelli's authorship in her edition and in her Nuove Riflessioni (Rome: Salerno, 1981). For a recent note on the relevant literature, see Charles Davis, "Dante, Machiavelli, and Rome," Dante Studies, 106(1988), 46 and n. 4. An adequate appraisal of the dialogue demands that special attention be given to the authorities and quotations that occur in its give and take. They supply the heavy weapons in Machiavelli's and Dante's struggle and occur in great density: nothing I know in Machiavelli compares with the dialogue in this respect.

3. Monarchia, I.i.ii.8, Pier Ricci ed. (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1965); Dial. 1–4, 9–10, 22–26. See Larry Peterman, "Dante's Monarchia and Aristotle's Political Thought," Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History, 10(1973), 13–16. Charles Davis, in Dante and Italy (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 14–15, says that the absence of an Italian court does not preclude a common language, for "Italy once had a united court under Frederick II and still has a dispersed court whose members are united all the same by the gracious light of reason, that is to say, by the bonds of custom and usage and most of all of a language," points that Davis reinforces by quoting Pier Mengaldo to the end that the argument of the Vulgari Eloquentia accurately reflects the interconnection of the political activities of Frederick and Manfred, the formation of the Magna Curia, and the formation "of the first unitary Italian language."


8. Convivio IV.i.ii.6, G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli eds. (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1964). In the same place, Dante says that since the death of Frederick and his "descendants" there has been no worthy claimant to the title up "to the present time." Cf. De Vulgari Eloquentia I.xii.4, Pier Ricci ed. (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1968).

9. Florentine Histories, I.11 [II.24]: "... and whereas the pope used to be confirmed by the emperors, the emperor began in his election to have need of the pope. As the Empire was coming to lose its privileges, the Church acquired them, and by these means it kept increasing its authority over the temporal princes," trans. Laura Banfield and Harvey Mansfield, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 22; Larry Peterman, "Machiavelli's Dante and the Sources of Machiavellianism," Polity, 20 (Winter, 1987), 249–53. See, too, Conv. IV.i.17. Marco Lombardo (Purg. 16.115–20) uses Frederick II as the dividing point between his country being full of "valore e cortesia" and becoming shameful.


11. Flor. Hist., I.22–23. [II.37–40]. See Flor. Hist., II.10, 26 chapters later, where Nicholas III is shown to ruin Charles in the same manner that Charles had ruined Manfred. Nicholas III was, in Machiavelli's account, not only the first pope of open ambition, he was also the first to attempt to "honor and benefit" his own relatives. Machiavelli says that after him mention of the relatives of pontiffs will fill history and all that is left is for popes to try to make their office hereditary. Dante places Frederick among the simonists in Hell. The first portion of the dialogue (35–36, 41–42) is dominated by examples which point to the growth, and impact, of papal secular influence before and during Dante's time. To the reference to Manfred's defeat are added a reference to Char-
lemagne's defeat of the Lombards and two references to Nicholas III. Thus, the act that solidifies the power of the Church in Italy is enclosed within references to the last serious secular threat to the Papacy and the first of the truly modern popes.

12. *Purg. XX.68, Conv. IV.iii.6.*

13. Charles Singleton, in *Purgatory 2: Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 59, quotes Villani: “(Manfred) was generous, courteous, and debonair, so that he was much loved and enjoyed great favor. But his whole life was Epicurean; he cared neither for God nor for the saints, but only for the delights of the flesh. He was an enemy of the Holy Church, of priests, and of monks. Like his father, he occupied the churches; and he became even richer, for he had inherited the treasure of the emperor and of his brother, King Conrad. Moreover, he had a large and prosperous kingdom, which, despite the wars with the Church, he kept in good state as long as he lived, increasing its riches and power on land and sea.”

14. Cf. *Purg. 3* and *Para. 22.74–84.* For Dante’s view of degenerating affairs after the deaths of Frederick and Manfred, see *Vulg. Eloq.* I.xii.4–5. For a recent assessment of Dante’s critique of the Papacy, see Peter Kaufman, “Foscolo, Dante, and the Papacy,” *History of European Ideas,* 12, No.2(1990), 211–20. More clearly than Dante, Machiavelli holds that the well-being of the Church and of the secular community are inversely proportional. Peterman, “Machiavelli’s Dante,” 251–53.

15. *Dial. 79.* Dante does not say his language attaches to any particular court (38), but Machiavelli still “marvels” that he might assign such importance to the Court of Rome (58–59).

16. *Hist. Flor. VIII.36* [II.434].

17. *Para. 22.114, Prince XXV [I.80].* Cf. *Dial. 22–24,* where Machiavelli acknowledges Dante’s “genius” but claims that fortune “gives (Dante) the lie” as regards his portrait of Florence: in the process Machiavelli describes a Florence of such well-being that his own description becomes incredible. See on the possibility of a middle way between the choices Machiavelli lays out in *Prince XXV,* Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 100.

18. *Dial. 36; Para. 1.70; Para. 9.81* (io m’intuassi come tu ti immii. “were I in you as you in me”). The change in Folco is sufficiently radical that Sinclair speaks of his “transfiguration” (*Para. *, p. 143). Folco was a troubadour and poet who early in life was given to the pleasures of the flesh but later became a Cistercian monk and eventually the Bishop of Toulouse, in which office he demonstrated his dedication to the spiritual life by taking a vigorous part in the persecution of the Albigensian heretics. As in the case of *transumanare,* Dante’s invented reflexives signify what cannot adequately be conveyed by language, an interpenetration of minds or “spiritual telepathy” which renders speech redundant. For this characteristic of Paradise, see Sinclair’s gloss on the passage (143–44). Erich Von Richthofen locates thirteen such inventions in the *Para., Veltro und Diana* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Publisher, 1956), 102–3.


21. Charles Martel creates problems for critics—Dante is unclear about why he is in this particular place—but he fits nicely into our framework. Having died young and before his political promise could be borne out—“the world held me only a little time, and if I had lived longer, much evil that will be would not have been” (*Para. 8.49–51*)—he becomes a good example of the ofttimes malign influence of fortune in active affairs and a case study in what can happen when nature and fortune collide. Thus, he also becomes a good source for the warning that men must be on the lookout for fortune yet not abandon nature: recollecting Aristotle, he says that men are moved to pursue different ends and should “nature” be discordant with “fortune” it will fail, from which he concludes that men must pay greater attention to the foundation nature lays and build on it in order to improve (121–48). See Peterman, “Machiavelli’s Dante,” 254–55. For Dante, we should add, the short-term consequences of Charles Martel’s death—the overthrow of the White Guelphs and Dante’s eventual exile from Florence—are on a par with the long-term consequences of Manfred’s death—the triumph of the Church and its party. Between them, in other words, Manfred and Charles define Dante’s major political problems, i.e., an unrestrained Church and an
unstable Florence. It is interesting in this respect that Dante mentions Manfred and Charles at the ends of thirty-nine cantos at the center of which Statius describes his remarkable change of life after experiencing Christianity (cf. *Purg.* 3, *Para.* 8, *Purg.* 22).


23. The Heaven of Venus is characterized by rhetoric at *Conv.* II.xiii.13, which is consistent with Folco’s position that it is a contact point between the temporal and extratemporal orders: Folco (Para. 9.107–20) tells Dante that in the Heaven of Venus “the shadow of your world comes to an end” and we “discern the good for which the world above turns about your world.” As rhetoric is a path between philosophy and politics, however imperfect, the Heaven of Venus mediates between the heavens and the earth.

24. There are interconnections between these passages that go beyond those suggested in the text, and which would have been seen by Machiavelli. The examples of Lombard and invented words, for example, belong to a sequence—it includes *Purg.* 3, Manfred’s canto; *Purg.* 16, Marco Lombardo’s canto; *Purg.* 29, Dante’s account of the chariot; *Para.* 9, Folco’s canto; and *Para.* 22, Dante’s birth under Gemini—that speaks to the question of man’s permanence and his place between the stars and the earth, a question that bears as well on Dante’s transhumanization. Cf. *Para.* 8.115–48; *Mon.* I.ii.2.


27. *Dial.* 50; *Inf.* 26.130, 20.13; Polidori, p. 243, n. 81. To argue that describing the two passages as one is an oversight ignores the fact that Machiavelli refers correctly to the same place in *Inferno* 26 at *Dial.* 26. By counting the incorrect attribution as a single quotation, the number of explicit quotations in the *Dial.* totals twenty-six. Making two quotations one reminds of Machiavelli’s use of prefaces to give the *Disc.* the same number of chapters as Livy has books.


32. *La Divina Commedia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 227. The evil counselors create problems for critics because of difficulties in reckoning their sins together. See, e.g., Mark Musa’s comments, *The Divine Comedy*, 3 vols. (New York: Penguin, 1981), 1, 313–14. Other things being equal, the extraordinary abilities of the evil counselors are obvious. Sinclair, for example, speaks of their “high mental gifts” and their “higher endowment(s),” and concludes that Dante’s “main thought is that great mental powers are a great trust and that the expending of them on ends which are not God’s is treason and disaster” (*Inferno*, p. 329).

33. Here again the passage Machiavelli utilizes is from a greater sequence. *Inf.* 26, with its comment on curbing “genius,” falls between *Inferno* 9, where those of “good intellect” are to note “the teaching hidden under the veil of (Dante’s) strange verses” (61–63) and—33 cantos later—*Purgatory* 8, where “readers” are to penetrate the “veil” over Dante’s “truth” (19–21). See, e.g., Vincent Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 137.

34. *Inf.* 21.2, 16.128. In the *Conv.*, Dante speaks of writing with discrezione, and allows himself and other writers room for dissimulazione within the discretionary purpose. See Peterman, “Reading the *Convivio*,” *Dante Studies*, 103 (1985), 126–30; *Inf.* 31.54; *Para.* 12.144.


37. *Dial.* 50; *Inf.* 28.27; *Inf.* 25.2.


41. The replacement of Dante-Glaucus and Folco by Mahomet and Vanni Fucci recalls the replacement of the God-Man Chiron by the Beast-Man Chiron of Prince XVIII. See Strauss, Thoughts, 78.

42. The heretical sect of the Apostolic Brethren, which Fra Dolcino led, is still active at the time in which the Comedy is set (Inf. 28.55–60). See Grandgent, Commedia, 247, n. 55. Vanni Fucci's pride is associated with that of the Black Devil of Inf. 21.29, to which Machiavelli refers in the Castruccio [I.673]. On the connection, see Davy Carozza, "The Motif of Maturation in the Commedia," Lectura Dantis Newberryana, 1(1988), 60–61.

43. At Dial. 26 Machiavelli notes the incredibility of Dante's finding Brutus in the mouth of Lucifer, five Florentine citizens among the thieves, and Cacciaguida in Paradise.

44. Vanni Fucci prophesies the deterioration of Florence through Black-White party strife, and Mahomet's Fra Dolcino was successful for a time, thereby disrupting the spiritual world. On Dante's accommodotions, see, e.g., the statements on the documenta phylosophica and the documenta spiritualia and the Emperor and the Pope in Mon. III.xv.7–18. Inf. 24.142–51, 28.55–57. For Machiavelli, perhaps, Dante's too rosy view is manifested in Folco's prediction (Para. 9.139–42) of the imminent end of the corrupt government of the Church.

45. Disc. I.xi [I.127–28], Mansfield, Modes and Orders, 73.

46. See Strauss, Thoughts, 299.

47. Dial. 43, Para. 5.64. Machiavelli's point is that Dante utilizes the Florentine ciancie (light or frivolous) rather than the Lombard zanze—-in Dante's text the word used is ciancia. See, too, Larry Peterman, "Gravity and Piety: Machiavelli's Modern Turn." The Review of Politics (Spring 1990), 189–214.


49. Sinclair, 141. It is surprising that Singleton fails to mention the delicacy of Dante's handling of magnanimity. He notes its opposition to pusillanimity in his comments on Virgil (Inferno, 2, 30) but he is silent on the subject in his comments on Farinata.

50. Inf. 10.41; 23.92–93. Singleton (Inferno, 2, 398) reinforces the connection between the two cantos by noting that both mention Frederick II.

51. Inf. 10.13–15, 23.61–66. Dante likens the cloaks to those which Frederick II had melted on traitors. The religious, and particularly Christian, undertones of the friars' canto are underscored by the inclusion in their ditch of Caiafas and other New Testament Jews responsible for judging and delivering up Jesus: they lie "crucified on the ground with three stakes" and must "feel the weight of every load" that passes over them, a punishment over which the pagan Virgil "marvels" (109–26).

52. Inf. 23. 115–26; 108.

53. Machiavelli (Dial. 44–45) mentions Farinata by name and correctly quotes his passage, but he garbles his account of the friars by having Dante hear Catalano rather than the reverse.


56. Dial. 46–49. The quotations from Pulci and Virgil are the only ones in the dialogue that do not arise in the Comedy. The passage from Pulci is the only quotation from a contemporary poet, Dante excepted, in the Dialogue.


58. We may also speculate that by having Dante recall the Comedy's beginning, Machiavelli reminds him that his innovativeness, which is comparable to Machiavelli's own, stands in the way of his attempts to promote traditional viewpoints: Machiavelli earlier signifies the unsatisfactory nature of such viewpoints by remarking on the incredibility of the Comedy's accounts of Brutus, the five Florentine thieves, and Cacciaguida (Dial. 26). On the other hand, Dante, who acknowledges that he is innovative but still warns about innovation's dangers, may remind Machiavelli through the Morgante that being new does not assure reward. Cf. Conv. I.x.1–3, Pol. 1268b25ff.

59. Strauss, Thoughts, 297.
60. *Inf.* 1.1–12.

61. At *Conv.* I.x.2–4, Dante announces that he intends to take a “new path” whose end is “not certain” and then bids his audience not to “marvel” at the direction his apology will take—he does not tell them not to wonder. Cf. *Prince* XV [1.48].


63. Other references and quotations in the dialogue (*Dial.* 39–42) suggest that Dante and Machiavelli agree about their worlds being dominated by the Church, and that there is a connection between that and Ugolino’s fate.
The Empire of Progress: Bacon's Improvement Upon Machiavelli

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I. BACON, MACHIAVELLI, AND THE ESSAYS

Many commentators have wondered whether Francis Bacon's complicated projects are somehow traceable to Machiavelli's simpler if ruthless novelty. Recent students of the Baconian political writings incline to say yes. That answer leads to new questions. How could scientific method and a humane utopianism rest upon a foundation so apparently incompatible? That question guides this study. I examine with care the four explicit treatments of Machiavellian doctrines in Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral and conclude that Bacon relies on Machiavelli's fundamentals, but attempts improved measures.

There is another difficulty that some contemporary scholars raise; they doubt that Machiavelli's works contain any very original or extensive plan. How can one measure Bacon against Machiavelli's innovations if Machiavelli merely advocates an old classical republicanism, as Zera Fink contends, or a typically civic and republican humanism, in J.G.A. Pocock's variation on an influential formulation? A little consideration of these views will provide a glancing introduction to Machiavellian fundamentals and Bacon's revisions.1

Fink simply interprets Machiavelli as a Renaissance republican, a new advocate of the old mixed government set forth by Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero, and others. She thus simply abstracts from the differences. Her arguments neglect the primacy of moral virtue and of philosophy for Aristotle (but not for the "utilitarian spirit" of Machiavelli), the primacy of execution and effectual princes and republics for Machiavelli (but not for Aristotle), the difference between Aristotle's mixed regime (which is partly attuned to diversity of ethical character) and Machiavelli's republican state (which sets diverse passions of fear, gain, and ambition into managed conflict), and, among many other important differences, Aristotle's recommendation of a small city (for quality of political life) and Machiavelli's of an expanding republican empire (for security abroad and managing faction within).

Pocock's historical synthesizing is much more a self-conscious and complex theory of historical development. Machiavelli and his fellow Florentine intellectuals are said to advance an Aristotelian account of the "political nature of

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man” under special Christian circumstances which deny the possibility of secular fulfilment; the resulting “civic” humanism is not simple classicism. Pocock is brief, not to say enigmatic, about the core of this humanism. He mentions “balanced government,” “dynamic virtue,” and “the role of arms and property” in shaping the civic “personality.” He is clearer about its future: the achievement was clearly epochal. This Florentine theorizing constituted a “Machiavellian moment” which influenced the “Atlantic” tradition; in particular it provided a formative civic republicanism that was hostile to the capitalism and commercialism of the liberal and individualist tradition.

These complications contain more difficulties than Fink’s simplicities. No more than Fink does Pocock confront the differences between Aristotle’s doctrines and Machiavelli’s, and his historicist theorizing gives us less of Machiavelli’s obvious counsels and more evasions and distortions. Pocock alludes slightly to the contention that Machiavelli challenges the “great tradition” of political philosophy (he probably refers to conclusions in Leo Strauss’s Thoughts on Machiavelli); he does not expound or confront this argument. While summarizing The Prince’s chapters, he neglects the passage most important for his purpose: the critique, in chapter 15, of “imaginary” republics and principalities and of an orientation by the good rather than necessity. It is a critique that seems directed at philosopher-kings and government by gentlemen and at the Aristotelian doctrines that a city comes into existence from necessity but exists for the good. Similarly, while reviewing chapter 3 Pocock skips over Machiavelli’s introductory formulations of his own foundation: “it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire”; and only if men fail are they to be accused of “error and blame.” Machiavelli legitimates acquisitiveness. It is the key step shared by the later and capitalistic versions of individualism. It is the step that should be absent, by definition, from the civic neoclassicism that Pocock attributes to Machiavelli. Also, Pocock misreads the character and importance of Machiavelli’s republicanism. He continually inserts an “ideal” of active citizen participation into Machiavelli’s advocacy of a republic that mixes peoples and elites in a way that protects liberty reinterpreted as a warrant for individual striving. He then overstates Machiavelli’s devotion to republicanism. He has to elude or explain away the advice to princes on how to acquire, destroy, or make use of a republic. In general, any impartial reader must have doubts about an interpretation that rests upon Pocock’s bristling and explicit array of assumptions and presumptions, not least the enormous assertion, a decayed Hegelianism, that the “Florentine mind” created its own concepts according to the “Hellenic intellect” it inherited, and thus, like a self-inflated and self-directed blimp, with passengers anesthetized within, came to dominate the future.

Bacon’s own comments on Machiavelli’s thought suggest that it was a turning point. Machiavelli and other such writers are decisively correct. “We are much beholden to Machiavel and others that write what men do, and not what they ought to do.” This much-quoted phrase is no aside, and its portent is
crucial. It occurs in the midst of Bacon’s comprehensive development of moral science in the *Advancement*; it encapsulates Machiavelli’s profound revolution in morality or, rather, away from morality. When in *The Prince*’s chapter 15 Machiavelli confronted the ancient political philosophers’ orientation by what is good, he called it imaginary and advanced a new orientation, by success in managing the forces that really move men. “For it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his presentation.” This is what Strauss called Machiavelli’s “clarion call” of modernity: the announcement of a novel foundation, finally in fear, for a new organization of human affairs, to provide not least for self-preservation. This is far from Bacon’s only allusion to Machiavelli. According to Richard Kennington, Bacon’s open references are unpre- dented among political philosophers; no other seventeenth-century philosopher published during his lifetime so much as one mention. In *Advancement* alone Bacon refers to Machiavelli ten times, almost always favorably.

Commentators have noted the family resemblance. Edwin Abbott in the last century, N. Orsini, Felix Raab, Howard White, Paolo Rossi, Jonathan Marwil, and Anthony Quinton in this, are among many impressed with the hard-nosed opportunism informing Bacon’s writings on practical affairs. Bacon was “more Machiavellian than Machiavelli,” according to Orsini. Abbott thought the *Es-

says* “greatly influenced by Machiavelli,” as are “the whole of Bacon’s political writings,” and added an impressive observation: all the writings exhibit a “pre-

occupation with vast schemes” that leads to “neglect of rules of morality.” Such writers suggest that Bacon follows Machiavelli in discarding traditional scruples and ends, and some, such as Abbott, even apply this thought to truth, the end of science.

Still, other writers have seen that Machiavelli’s influence on Bacon cannot be so simply affirmed. Even the explicit deference to Machiavelli on the status of morality, in the *Advancement*, is accompanied by qualification: we should attend to what men do and not what they ought to do, if only because “it is not possible to join the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove, except men be perfectly acquainted with the nature of evil itself.” The qualification might seem in the spirit of the Bible, even if the final counsel, that men devote themselves to perfect knowledge of evil ways, gives pause.

Such differences cloud the question of Bacon’s Machiavellianism, and there are more massive differences. Bacon’s important works and the general tone of all his works differ visibly from anything Machiavelli ever wrote. The works on method, to take the obvious case, have no Machiavellian parallel. Supposing the descriptions of experimental method to be Bacon’s chief contribution, James Spedding dismissed Abbot’s contentions rather airily. Spedding’s example and biography have often been followed. Also, precisely the famous Baconian features of the idea of progress are absent from Machiavelli’s plans. Chapter 15 of *The Prince* had turned to “what men do” and away from “the orders of
others,” who had “imagined principalities and republics that have never been seen or known to exist in truth.” Yet Bacon’s *New Atlantis* advances an imagined land of future health, peace, affluence, and parentlike care, a technological heaven on earth that had not been seen or known to exist. Even if Machiavelli might be thought to hide a prescription for new modes and orders beneath descriptions of historical examples, there are conspicuous differences between his prescriptions and Bacon’s. The surface of Bacon’s more practical works lacks the ruthlessness for which *The Prince* and the *Discourses* are infamous. On the contrary, the *Essays* counsel humanity, appear businesslike and respectable, and are filled with quotations from traditional authorities. None of Bacon’s works exhibits Machiavelli’s preoccupation with the strategy and metaphor of war. Nor do they exhibit Machiavelli’s characteristic themes: ruthless princely decisiveness, reminiscent of Cesare Borgia or Julius Caesar, and liberty, *patria*, and popular republicanism, reminiscent of the ancient Roman republic.

In short, Bacon defers to Machiavelli in ways that some consider fundamental, and yet differs from him in ways that others consider fundamental. This essay addresses the difficulty by investigating a selected number of the Baconian references to Machiavelli. I look at the references in the *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* alone, which allows me the luxury of close examination in a work that is nevertheless of broad scope, and I attend only to references to Machiavelli by name. The price of these restrictions is real. A complete account would weigh the express references to Machiavelli in other works. And what of the tacit allusions, not least in the *Essays*? In particular, why does Bacon not mention Machiavelli by name in the most visibly Machiavellian essay, “Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates” (no. 29)? This is one of the two central essays (if we count the 58 essays that Bacon included in the definitive 1625 edition) and the longest one, and its very examples are often drawn from *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*. Bacon prescribes a rather popular republic, unscrupulously warlike, with middle class and native militia encouraged and nobles and clergy reduced, and bent on growth in wealth, population, and naval empire. However one may explain Bacon’s reticence, there and elsewhere, I confine myself to the four essays in which Bacon provides explicit references. I can ponder progress of reasoning, selection of detail, and subtle differences of doctrine. The result seems to vindicate the experiment.

To summarize: all four references use the authority of Machiavelli to deal with matters of religion or sects, three times directly and once indirectly. All occur amidst crucial discussions of fundamentals—of “Goodness and Goodness of Nature” (no. 13), “Of Sedition and Troubles” (no. 15), “Of Custom and Education” (no. 39), and “Of Vicissitude of Things” (no. 58). All take issue with Machiavelli, the last two expressly, although on the basis of a fundamental agreement. With Machiavelli, Bacon seems impressed with the imperial
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glory that attends the head of a conquering sect. The thinking man should be the comprehensively calculating political man, not the comprehensively contemplative philosopher; not truth or virtue, but the glory that ensures preservation, is his end. Yet Bacon corrects Machiavelli’s calculations about the sect that will glorify. Essay 13 advises the adoption of a humane cause that retains an aura of Christian charity. Essay 15 encourages kings to be parental, rather than partisan. Economic development, and in general a management of hopes more than fears, is the way to undermine an old order and engender a new. Essay 39 criticizes Machiavelli’s bloody words, suggesting instead revolution through the customs of a civil society that affords opportunities, especially in business. The last essay, number 58, links Bacon’s vision of scientific progress to a series of growing and businesslike nation-states. Together such new nations can spread an imperial sect and overcome the Christianity that Spain, especially, upheld in Bacon’s time. Bacon thought that his combination of civil nation-state with visionary progress appeals more broadly than Machiavelli’s mixture of republican empires with modes of rising and safety, better hides its founder’s ambition, and better imitates the successful Christian vision of an other-worldly provider. It incorporates Machiavellian realpolitik in a subordinate place within a Baconian movement of enlightenment.

II. THE POLICY OF HUMANITARIANISM

“And one of the doctors of Italy, Nicholas Machiavel,”
“had the confidence to put in writing, almost in plain terms,
'That the Christian faith had given up good men in prey to those that are tyrannical and unjust’”

(“Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature,” no. 13).7

Bacon’s first introduction of Machiavelli in the Essays is as a theological authority. The irony barely glosses—in fact it accentuates—a telling blow at Christianity. The original indictment occurs in Dr. Machiavelli’s Discourses, II, 2. It is startlingly ruthless. The passage celebrates democratic liberty and democratic “ferocity” toward nobles and contrasts the freedom of ancient warlike peoples with modern servile peoples. Machiavelli traces the difference to the “magnificent,” “ferocious,” and “bloody” sacrifices in pagan religion, which celebrated worldly glory, as opposed to the delicate equivalents in “our religion,” which glorifies humble, abject, and contemplative men. Number 13 does not celebrate peoples, liberty, or pagan ferocity; neither does the Essays as a whole, except quietly, as in numbers 15 and 29. True, Machiavelli indicates repeatedly that liberty is but a means to growth in population and private acquisitions, and that a conquering republic is a tyrannical ruler. He plans a calculated liberty and a regulated populace. But these suggestions come only after bold praise of bold militancy.
Bacon veils his militancy. He follows his display of Machiavelli’s scandalous indictment, typically, by his own respectable-sounding explanation: “Which he spake, because indeed there was never law or sect or opinion did so much magnify goodness as the Christian religion doth.” Apart from identifying “the Christian religion” as, at best, a mere “sect” (he develops this in essays 16 and 17), Bacon appears to withdraw from Machiavelli’s charge—if the reader has missed his substitution of goodness for charity and his identification of Christianity with goodness rather than Christ. The essay begins with this sly identification, moves on to say that goodness “answers to” the theological virtue charity—for those who don’t ask questions—and then says that charity admits of no excess, except error. That big qualification of the goodness of goodness becomes thematic after Bacon turns “to avoid the scandal and the danger both.” Bacon will avoid the scandal of Machiavelli’s way and the danger of Christianity’s way. He proceeds in an indirect way characteristic of all but a few essays.

Essay 13 exemplifies both Bacon’s humanitarianism and his hard-nosed Machiavellianism and shows how each is revised to support the other. According to Howard White’s seminal study humanitarianism was part of Bacon’s moderation of the imperial and acquisitive spirit of Machiavelli’s politics and science. Yet White’s accounts neglect essay 13, the locus classicus of Baconian humanitarianism. It turns humanitarianism toward self-reliance, on one’s own acquisitions, and toward a social tool of political acquisitiveness. In fact White senses and portrays this development, even if he does not make it thematic. He eventually defines Baconian charity uncharitably, as “a political weapon” to recruit followers and as “depersonalized charity,” the “unwitting charity of the spirit of capitalism.”

Essay 13’s first description of philanthropia abstracts from the distinctively Christian name of charity and from its pious spirit: care for those sharing a divine soul. Bacon’s restatements move first to compassion for common bodily needs and then very delicately to self-advancement as the means of providing. Then Bacon cautions against regard for men’s “faces” or “fancies,” for precious gifts, and for equal distribution of things. That is, one should disregard what men appear to wish or say they wish, or their rare needs, or mere inequalities. Regard instead the basic needs satisfied by common and basic supplies, like food, or perhaps seed, such as “barley-corn.”

Bacon then slips in self-regard as a limit upon regard for others. The language is biblical, but the words are profound blasphemy. Having revamped the second commandment, Bacon replaces the first and fundamental commandment with a foundation in the self. “For divinity maketh the love of ourselves the pattern: the love of our neighbors but the portraiture.” Love of neighbor for God’s sake has been replaced by provision for human necessities for one’s own, and love of God, by love of self.

The revolutionary implications of the lord thyself are quickly developed:
advancement, not love, is the point. Concentrate on providing for oneself by a "vocation": "for otherwise in feeding the streams one driest the fountain." It is Machiavellian, this criticism of both Aristotelian liberality and Christian charity as ineffectual, and this movement toward an unChristian charity, as Clifford Orwin has called Machiavellian humanity. But Bacon's insinuations. quiet restatements, and focus on economic needs and attitudes are some way from chapter 17 of The Prince. Essay 13 lacks that chapter's spectacular theme: men must be governed more by cruelty than by humanity, because more by fear than by hope. Bacon relies more indirectly than Machiavelli on fear and more directly on hope, while managing both with a show of humanity.

Essay 13 contains a fearsome passage so hidden by its show of humanity that few commentators note it and even fewer weigh it. The message is that great politic selves are not good but bad by nature. Whatever be the "habit" or "disposition" of some toward goodness, nature tends most clearly toward "a natural malignity." A deeper sort of malignancy is inclined to envy, and the deeper sort of envy is inclined to slander things established ("Of Envy," no. 9) and to engage in mere mischief. "Such men in other men's calamities are, as it were, in season." These "dispositions are the very errors of human nature"—so deeply does the error of goodness go—"and yet they are the fittest timber to make great politics of; like to knee timber, that is good for ships, that are ordained to be tossed; but not for building houses, that shall stand firm." Bacon is what Richard Hooker called Machiavelli, a "wise malignant." He advances both humanity and malignity, and both have a place in his politics. While humanity has the conspicuous place, malignity is the foundation that shapes the other and their relation. Malignity accounts for the leader's humanity.

The profoundly evil teaching that barely breaks the surface of essay 13 appears as muffled effects on earlier essays. "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises either of virtue or mischief." Yet "Of Marriage and Single Life" (no. 7) discusses coolly various advantages of marriage; "wife and children," for example, "are a kind of discipline to humanity." The politic man can use family life for social control. Similarly, "A man shall see the noblest works and foundations have proceeded from childless men." Yet Bacon encourages a democratic or individualistic family, not austere and hierarchical but rather equal and indulgent. Children generally should be bred to engage in "vocations" and "courses"—today, the word might be "careers"—rather than "dispositions" of character or ways of the Lord. Upbringing is reshaped to foster mutually useful vocations and roles ("Of Custom and Education," no. 39). Depersonalized charity is social policy, especially the policy of channeling desires to provide for needs.

The occasional, more open statement appears outside of the civil Essays. Advancement's discussion of "active good," as opposed to passive good, becomes especially blunt. The active good turns out to be private domination on the grandest scale. Bacon equates this with divine power ("the true the-
omachy”), which is a gigantic passion to form the world for oneself—although Bacon finally issues a foggy qualification (which “we have determined”) on behalf of “society.”

Neither hath this active good any identity with the good of society, though in some case it hath an incidence into it. For although it do many times bring forth acts of beneficence, yet it is with a respect private to a man’s own power, glory, amplification, continuance . . . For that gigantine state of mind which possesseth the troublers of the world, such as was Lucius Sylla and infinite other in smaller model, who would have all men happy to unhappy as they were their friends or enemies, and would give form to the world, according to their own humors (which is the true theomachy), pretendeth and aspireth to active good, though it recedeth furthest from good of society, which we have determined to be the greater. (Advancement, II xxii 1, ed. Wright)

The conclusion of essay 13 shows how one who would be politic can use the good of society. It may hint at Bacon’s own use. The topic: what goodness, in its new sense of regard for others’ real needs, “shows” about “a man.” Bacon mentions various aspects (or exhibitions) of goodness: courtesy to strangers and compassion toward the afflictions of others, easy pardon and remission of offenses, gratitude for small benefits, and, a peculiar phrasing of “St. Paul’s perfection,” a “wish to be an anathema from Christ for the salvation of his brethren.” The complex prose twists a New Testament passage to require, as a test of goodness, a condemnation of Christ. This confirms Bacon’s procedure in essay 13, indeed in the Essays as a whole. The first line of the first essay quotes Christ’s killer, Pilate, and jests at Christ’s claim to be witness to the truth.

A very elliptical conclusion of essay 13 may intimate a new, humanitarian, faith: the place of goodness in building houses after tougher men have established a foundation. “If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them. If he be compassionate toward the afflictions of others. . . .” The language could remind of the hospitality to strangers afforded on the island of Bensalem, in Bacon’s New Atlantis, by Stranger’s House and Solomon’s House. Christian Europeans, cast ashore, are converted from their old faith by the humanity of new ways: the hospitality, the medicines and hospitals, the affluence and parentlike provision of a civil land infused with humane science and technology. It is probably not coincidence that Bacon once calls his comprehensive advancement of science a “citizen of the world.”

The founder of Bensalem’s scientific establishment, Solamona, had laid down the way of dealing with strangers to progress: “join humanity and policy together.” Humanity is conspicuous. There are intimations that policy governs. The governor-father of the benevolent scientific establishment is first shown in a parade that the cool narrator sees to be a “shew.” While the great figure
appears compassionate. Bacon’s description singles out the appearance: he has “an aspect as if he pitied men.” The hint of artifice is stronger in a similar phrase from an earlier Baconian work, the Refutation of Philosophies. Bacon never published this pungent little piece, perhaps, as Paolo Rossi suggests, because he had yet to master the envelopment of daring plans in the mantle of tradition and the half-light of insinuation. A philosopher addressing an international convention of “sages” shows a face which “had become habituated to the expression of pity.”

Like Machiavelli, Bacon was impressed by Christ’s worldly success. Like Machiavelli, he traces the success to Christ’s promise of satisfaction, an indirect and future satisfaction of the strongest passion, fear of death. Unlike Machiavelli, Bacon can supply an analogous vision of future satisfaction. Not fear but hope, he writes elsewhere, “is the most useful of all the affections.”

The management of wishes for the future is the deepest art of the politics of progress. “Certainly, the politic and artificial nourishing and entertaining of hopes,” Bacon says in the essay on “Seditious and Troubles” (no. 15), “and carrying men from hopes to hopes, is one of the best antidotes against the poison of discontentments.” Like many an antidote, it can also serve its turn as a poison.

III. SEDITION BY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Also, as Machiavel noteth well, when princes, that ought to be common parents, make themselves as a party and lean to a side, it is as a boat that is over-thrown by uneven weight on the one side; as was well seen in the time of Henry the Third of France, for first himself entered league for the extirpation of the Protestants; and presently after the same league was turned upon himself. (“Of Seditious and Troubles,” no. 15)

Bacon praises Machiavelli for a statement I cannot find in The Prince or Discourses and for a neutrality that misses Machiavelli’s conspicuous recommendation of princely decisiveness. Essay 15 suggests that great sedition and great authority can come from a teaching that displays the means of satisfaction or, at least, of hope. Thus princes might appear as “shepherds of people,” the essay’s first words, or like the Aristotelian prime mover, also used as metaphor for a prince. That is, one can appropriate for one’s own glory the roles of benevolent god and mover of nature. The essay shows the new political science: the formula for transforming irreconcilable human divisions of class and sect into a mutually useful division of labor and advancement.

The analogous Machiavellician passages suggest that one should deal with a disunited city by killing or putting by the leaders of the parties (Discourses III, 27); do not remain neutral in wars among your neighbors but take a side and join the war (Prince, 21). True, each of these counsels is quietly qualified. One
suspects Machiavelli of leading on, perhaps over a brink, a preliminary wave of more established (and less Machiavellian) allies. Discourses II, 21 and 25, on the other hand, are closer to Bacon's point. A prince dealing with a disunited free city may hold it as a benefactor by being an arbitrator between the parties, especially between plebs and nobles. Thus he will not drive them to union and may favor the weaker so as to weaken both. Yet these discourses recommend a prudent adoption of both sides, if only as expedient and to weaken both, and do not obviously deal with religious sects.

"Of Seditions and Troubles," by contrast, sets forth a sect. It is from start to finish about seditious slanders and envies which are eventually shown to be products of human speeches. The sign of tempests in states is libels and licentious discourses (fraudesque in the Latin saying Bacon supplies), or females of sedition as Bacon calls them. A Virgilian origin of fame, the rebellion of earth against the gods, is identified by Bacon as the origin of seditions. Sedition is inevitable or natural; it is self-assertion of one's name against what dominates, the guise of gods being but a form of domination by men's fame. Tempests in states, Bacon says, are greatest "when things grow to equality"; the greatest is when the most honorable, sacred, or authoritatative acts of a state "are taken in ill sense, and traduced." That summarizes what the earlier essays attempted. Bacon reduces the established hierarchy toward an equality; he reduces to exploitation and illusion the old order's devotions to divinity and nobility, truth and goodness. The previous essay ("Of Nobility," no. 14) took note of certain "democracies" that do not need a nobility; "utility is their bond, and not respects."

Essay 15 follows its first diagnosis, of sedition by slander, with a first prescription: relax. When confronting alien teachings, a prince ought to avoid "too much severity" and too much "disputing." Is this a pacifier? If Bacon can encourage royal and episcopal passivity, despite attacks upon the supports of royalty and religion, he accomplishes sedition under cover of prevention. In the sequel, he notes both that open discords signal that "reverence of government is lost" and that "reverence is that wherewith princes are girt from God." He had already insinuated a fundamental heresy or sedition; the topic is tempests of state, rather than blasphemies against God or treason against king and estates. But how can kings and estates be made so dumb as to be so passive? Bacon will suggest two ways: blandness of speech to veil sedition and economic development to insinuate it.

Just in this context Bacon corrects Machiavelli. Machiavelli had guided rulers to expand by war, and those ambitious for rule to advance by hidden war. Machiavelli's discourse on conspiracies (III, 6), the longest in the Discourses, corresponds to Bacon's "Of Seditions and Troubles." It turns quickly from defending princes to encouraging conspiracies, often violent conspiracies against princes. Machiavelli returned only briefly to urge upon princes a doubtful passivity: let them postpone action until they obtain full knowledge.
Bacon writes more euphemistically of "seditions and troubles," and his demeanor throughout the essay is of a counsellor preventing troubles, not of a rebel stirring them up. His counsel is of unity, not violence; a prince should be common parent and avoid being a religious partisan. This counsel, nevertheless, would separate kings from support of their supports from aristocracy, and church. The rest of the essay follows suit. Bacon lists religion, justice, counsel, and treasure as the four "pillars of government," then sets forth a general diagnosis and "general preservatives" that, in effect, restructure the old pillars into supports for a new civil order.

Essay 15 discusses the materials, the causes and motives, and the remedies of sedition. The crucial "matter" is neediness, less of the articulate few than of the many, and "discontentment," vaguely stated as "fears." Bacon does not enter upon the justice or injustice of discontents or even their strength: a "prince, or state," should anticipate dangerous forces and inevitable forces. While Machiavelli puts political men in motion in fear of inevitable war, Bacon fosters a vague insecurity and vague hopes for victories in a war on poverty. He quickly acknowledges a long list of "causes and motives" of sedition, which now omits the justice mentioned before, but includes "general oppression" and "advancement of unworthy persons" as central. He acknowledges slyly that a "just cure" must answer to the "particular disease," yet he sets forth "general preservatives": a general solution that may not solve particular problems of particular states. This prescription departs in principle from the Aristotelian diagnosis of civil strife in the fifth book of the Politics, which had examined especially strife between democrats and oligarchs and had commended different remedies for different regimes and circumstances. Instead, Bacon advances a now familiar revolution in civilization. General preservatives turn out to be the general institutions of a progressive economy and movement, institutions that promise to encompass everywhere both the many and the few.

Of nine "general preservatives," the first four encourage economic growth and regard for democracy, the fifth prescribes "moderate liberty," and the last four a politic nourishing of hope, especially in the most ambitious men.

The first three preservatives treat "the material cause of sedition" and consist in organizing an economy to conquer "want and poverty in the estate." Bacon waxes enthusiastic in praise of trade, population growth, and manufactures and attacks idleness and waste. The political agenda of his political economy surfaces: he attacks "the multiplying of nobility and other degrees of quality," "an overgrown clergy, for they bring nothing to the stock," and an excess of "scholars."

Bacon spells out the premise of this attack upon leisurely or pious activities: great industry produces great gains, for "materiam superabit opus." Work is superior to the material and, the Baconian conclusion, "enricheth a state more." It is a worthy slogan for the political economists to come, as well as for natural scientists bent on conquering nature. Essay 15 uses an example of a democratic
The judgment as can will that kings, as science the even in a sometimes fortune “The wealth-getting; the riches. The for leisure, and arts of financiers Bacon devout trious, Plantations” Estates” can breed hopes of such foreign “strangers” class. dle without becoming his of possibility of redistribution, an investment-oriented Lord Keynes: “money is like muck, not good except it be spread.” Machiavelli himself had so praised republics: free peoples and liberated acquisitiveness encourage growth in wealth and population. According to Bacon, however, economic growth can itself be an object of royal patronage and thus a means to republics. A growing middle class and a corresponding democratization can evolve as if by chance, and reformers can avoid the risks of war. Bacon rarely mentions democracies or republics and discusses the possibility of warring for liberty only with the greatest reticence (no. 29). This, despite his clear awareness that the breakup of the old empire, Spanish or Christian, will occasion great wars (no. 58).

Later, thematically economic essays develop Bacon’s plan. They nourish the hopes of various new parties who can advance themselves, and their new order, without becoming independent of the mutual system of exchange and the middle class. “Of Expense” (no. 28) encourages self-made men, who, if frugal, can breed riches from their vocations. “Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates” (no. 29) encourages small farmers and merchants, as well as “strangers” or immigrants who can perform more delicate manufactures. “Of Plantations” (no. 33) prescribes colonies of the very plain and the very industrious, devout barely in name, lacking gentlemen, and given over to production. Bacon encourages the rich, especially nobles, to invest their money in such foreign ventures. “Of Usury” (no. 41) encourages the monied to become financiers of trade and manufactures, not least of young merchants and of new arts and improvements. New hopes and new discoveries can enliven a new economy and new men. That is a theme in “Of Riches” (no. 34). Riches are not for leisure, redistribution, or pleasure; they are capital for producing further riches. The beginning of the essay plays with moral and religious strictures on wealth-getting; the remainder shows how really to pile it up. Among the means: “The fortune in being the first in an invention or in a privilege doth cause sometimes a wonderful overgrowth in riches; as it was with the first sugar man in the Canaries. Therefore if a man can play the true logician, to have as well judgment as invention, he may do great matters, especially if the times be fit.” Even the judgment of kings may be thus won to patronize the new logic of science as well as the new science of economics. “Of Empire” (no. 19) notes that kings, discontented even in their security, are moved to patronize “toys” that will distinguish them and bring them fame. Perhaps Bacon’s new science can be made to appear such a project. Essay 58 calls it a “toy” (compare “Of Empire,” no. 19, and the Letter Dedicatory to the Great Instauration). Kings
may patronize the economic and technical powers that undermine kingly power.

Preservatives four through nine deal with “removing discontentments”—those, one might say, other than poverty. The fourth quietly advances on political grounds another anti-aristocratic policy: the few are chiefly to blame for strife between “noblesse, and commonaltie.” This shows, we are told, “how safe it is” for monarchs to seek “the good will of the common people.”

Bacon sets forth the last five preservatives quickly and elliptically, perhaps because their revolutionary import is hard to hide. “Moderate liberty” is the central prescription, which qualifies his preliminary elevation of democracy. It also replaces moderation, virtue, and religion in general, the general preservatives advanced by traditional political philosophy and theology. Bacon elaborates more how hopes can be managed to regulate liberty. “And it is a certain signe, of a wise government, and proceeding, when it can hold men’s hearts by hopes, when it cannot by satisfaction, and when it can handle things, in such manner, as no evil shall appear so peremptory, but that it hath some outlet of hope.” Essay 15 stops there, reserving the revamping of visionary hope for “Of Prophecies” (no. 35) and New Atlantis, and of ordinary hope for discussions of economic and political advancement, such as “Of Riches” (no. 34), “Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates” (no. 29), and History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh.

The three final preservatives deal with the managing of extraordinary hopes. They slip from preventing unity of the hopeful beneath an enemy of the state, to avoiding sharp speeches that cut off the hopes of followers for their own dictatorship's or places, to a prince's need for a valiant defender. The prose is terse. The last shows that Bacon, despite his more pacific counsel of unity, follows Machiavelli in understanding his crusade as a war. “Princes” need a “military person” who can repress seditions against “the state” and keep correspondence with “other great men in the state.” Perhaps Bacon is that “great person,” a shepherd of peoples who also can aid enlightened kings with valorous speeches like the ensuing essays. Essays 16 and 17 take on Christianity under cover of a skirmish with atheism and superstition. Bacon keeps enemy factions, such as king, nobles, and admirers of ancient philosophy, from a unity beneath the Church of England, such as the theologian Richard Hooker had sought in the 1590s. Bacon also keeps up correspondence with leaders of a like state of mind, including great scientists, enlightened kings, and comprehensive chiefs such as Machiavelli. In “Of Followers and Friends” (no. 48), Bacon presents a crucial saying of Machiavelli as an example of the advice to be taken from a few friends. Machiavelli's sharp speeches, however, drive from him the followers whom Bacon's project can satisfy, advance, and keep in hope. Immediately after taking Machiavelli's advice, Bacon concludes that friendship is only between “superior and inferior, whose fortunes may compre-
hend, the one the other.” Bacon means to comprehend Machiavelli’s civil crusade within his progressive movement.

IV. CUSTOM AS THE BUSINESS OF REGULATED OPPORTUNITY

And therefore, as Machiavel well noteth (though in an evil-favored instance), there is no trusting to the force of nature nor to the bravery of words, except it be corroborate by custom. His instance is, that for the achieving of a desperate conspiracy, a man should not rest upon the fierceness of any man’s nature, or his resolute undertakings; but take such an one as hath had his hands formerly in blood. But Machiavelli knew not of a Friar Clement, nor a Ravillac, nor a Jauregay, nor a Baltazar Gerard; yet his rule holdeth still that nature, nor the engagement of words, are not so forcible as custom. (“Of Custom and Education,” no. 39)

This third reference is the first to criticize Machiavelli explicitly. Bacon criticizes not a prince’s impiety and immorality, but the inefficacy of bloody impiety and immorality. Bloody conspiracies are not said to be evil; they are, however, “desperate.” In welcoming assassins as a matter of course, rather than as a desperate measure, Machiavelli had underestimated the power of other-worldly assassins. The four that Bacon names were all Catholic assassins of politic kings. Friar Clement, for example, murdered the politic Henry III of France, the very king Bacon mentioned in essay 15 when he used a similar “noteth well” to criticize a policy of siding with a sect. Nevertheless, Bacon relieves Machiavelli of responsibility and approves his general rule as to the force of custom. Still, Machiavelli erred about the force of devotion, a consequence of his error about the force of hope. Bacon develops this implicit criticism by correcting Machiavelli’s rule to extol the force of “custom.”

In his quick and quiet way Bacon has involved us in one of the nastiest passages from a writer known for nastiness. Machiavelli calls not exactly for different customs, but for men tried, experienced (isperimentati), in bloody deeds.Murdering a reverend man, especially a religious man, is difficult; it is hard to be altogether bad. The context is again the discussion of conspiracies in Discourses, III 6. Since even accustomed killers are often bewildered by the “majesty” and “reverence” of some great target, the job requires men “experienced” in such murders. Machiavelli has more in mind, namely, accustoming men by speech. Confusion of brain can also cause foolish speech, such as “Traitor!”, which warns the victim. The turn to words is important; experience in murdering the reverend is hard to come by and the first such murder hard to account for. Besides, Machiavelli immediately turns to conspirators who are moved by words to attack a number of tyrants. The examples include two disciples of Plato, and Pelopidas, who liberated his “native land” from ten tyrants with the aid of one Chiron, adviser to tyrants. People may become
experienced or accustomed by ruthless words about bloody deeds, but the words must be shrewdly chosen so as not to alarm. Machiavelli’s writings, which combine advice to republican conspirators and tyrants, will help and harden the variety of followers to come, not least in overcoming an other-worldly empire.

Bacon fears superstition more than does Machiavelli and hopes for more from his special replacement, the prediction of progress. Perhaps his fear and hope reflect a greater estimate of the power of custom. He seems to describe “nature in men” as but body with passion or force (no. 38, immediately before “Of Custom and Education”); it may be the same as the universal nature described in the Plan for the Great Instauration and in the New Organon. If so, all that appears distinctly human is wholly invented, including speech or reason. If our deeds are not products of impulse, they are but the effect of someone’s calculation or custom. Advancement of Learning is explicit as to Bacon’s enlarged estimate of custom compared to Aristotle’s (II xxii 8). The ambiguous beginning to “Of Custom and Education” may imply as much: “Men’s thoughts are much according to their inclination; their discourse and speeches according to their learning and infused opinions; but their deeds are after as they have been accustomed.”

The problem for Bacon is how to institute suitable customs, which Machiavelli failed to solve. He follows his criticism of Machiavelli thus: “superstition is now so well advanced, that men of the first blood are as firm as butchers.” Five examples of custom’s “reign or tyranny” follow, all examples of disdain by the religious for even their own deaths. Bacon reduces religious disputation and zealotry to a discussion of custom. He even says, since custom (not God) “is the principal magistrate of man’s life, let men by all means endeavor to obtain good customs.” While other essays prescribe what customs are useful, essay 39 indicates chiefly how to make them effective: start young, and rely on mutual interaction—what we and he call “society.” Bacon may originate the usage. Effective custom is “custom copulate and conjoined and collegiate,” because “there example teacheth, company comforteth, emulation quickeneth, glory raiseth.” After thus hinting at the secrets of the church (and of the roots of goodness), Bacon dwells on the role of “societies well ordained and disciplined.” Governments and commonwealths depend on seeds otherwise planted. What societies Bacon has in mind are left obscure in this essay, except for an implicit dig at the churches: “the most effectual means, are now applied, to the ends, least to be desired.”

One suspects that Bacon wishes associations for gain: businesses. Useful pursuits can discipline a people. In various places Essays commends merchants, manufacturers, and financiers, and the word “business” recurs incessantly. This suspicion is heightened by New Atlantis, in which a Jewish merchant is the most prominent civil figure among the Bensalemites.

Nevertheless, the essays on custom (no. 39), making one’s fortune (no. 40),
and economic science (no. 41) say little about companies or enterprises. What association is based on wary and anxious neediness ("Of Superstition," no. 17), is rather democratic and has the bond of utility ("Of Nobility," no. 14), and fosters a self-reliant opportunism? Bacon, I suggest, advances businesses less than a world of business. Businesses can discipline us in a world of business that he calls "society." If this is true, then much of Bacon's reformulation of religion, ethics, economics, and politics is designed to promote what we often take for granted as society or civil society. Perhaps later intellectuals slight the artifice involved in the invention and preservation of society.

"Of Fortune" (no. 40) exhibits the chief opinion to be infused with social custom: the mold of a man's fortune is in his own hands. Self-reliance should be customary. Bacon intimated this as he transformed "goodness" (no. 13). Here he elaborates the difference between Baconian self-reliance and any sense of goodness. A number of "virtues, or rather faculties and customs," make men fortunate, and two are crucial: do not be too devoted to country or master, do not place one's thoughts too far outside oneself. Like Machiavelli, Bacon replaces virtue with ability to succeed. Bacon encourages customs that do not scandalize, however, and do not lead toward wars that the politiques are likely to lose. They have "a slide and easiness," as "Of Fortune" puts it. The Essays are popular, the dedication says, because they come home to men's business and bosoms.

The next two essays explore the systematic connections between individualism and businesslike society. One connection is the art or science of economics. "Of Usury" (no. 41) shows how the author of an art can advance himself by showing others how to advance themselves. It begins by rebutting seven arguments, religious and moral in tenor, against lending at interest. The rebuttal is an argument from the "necessities" of borrowing and lending. Bacon then "invents," strictly from the viewpoint of economic progress, disadvantages and advantages of lending at interest. Among the disadvantages are the damping of "industries, improvements and new inventions"; among the advantages, the encouragement of "young merchants" and of "industrious and profitable improvements." Before our eyes, yet with a slide and easiness that come from transforming a necessity into a priority, Bacon overturns moral and religious distaste for moneylenders and invents a comprehensive custom for civil society.

"Of Youth and Age" (no. 42), which follows, shows the "compound employments" available in the new society. The young commonly will shine on the inventive side, the older as executives or managers. Bacon indicates that some young may be judicious before their time—his examples are generals and emperors—but he confines himself to supposing that "heat and vivacity in age is an excellent composition for business." While both he and Machiavelli praise young over old, Bacon is more reserved. His society seems more of settled business than of daring military exploits. Accordingly, he favors the young not as combative but as inventive and open to "new projects" or "new things." This
openness may show foolishness: "for the moral part" the young are superior, as are the older for "the politic." His example: "your young shall see visions" rather than merely dream. Perhaps the new project of progress, as portrayed in the visionary half-light of New Atlantis, is designed especially for the adventurous young. The Europeans in the story left from the far edge of the known world and were prepared to sail, over uncharted seas, for a year.

V. STATES AND STATES OF LEARNING

As for the observation that Machiavel hath, that the jealousy of sects doth much extinguish the memory of things; traducing Gregory the Great that he did what in him lay to extinguish all heathen antiquities; I do not find that those zeals do any great effects, nor last long; as it appeared in the succession of Sabinian, who did revive the former antiquities. ("Of Vicissitude of Things." no. 58)

The fourth and last reference to Machiavelli occurs in the final and culminating essay. This second criticism distances Bacon from Machiavelli's impiety and name, while tacitly confirming his own more respectable name. There is less here than meets the eye, and yet it indicates a real difference.

Bacon appears in the lists of opinion as defender of Pope Gregory the Great against Machiavellian slanders. The defense barely exists when closely viewed, and is, in any event, misleading. He defends Christianity's efficacy for empire, not its truth, and defends it as a sect, again tacitly denying its claim to be the one and catholic faith. He defends a pope (while not defending the ecclesiastical name), after having heretofore favored the Protestants. He fundamentally defends Christianity's weakness in dealing with its predecessors, and by dignifying one Sabinian (also a pope whom Bacon deprives of the name) for saving things of a former sect. Actually, this pope seems best known for introducing the ringing of bells at canonical hours and for celebration of the eucharist; the Latin Essays indicates that his alleged "revival" of antiquities was but the creeping out of things forbidden. Like Machiavelli, Bacon is silent about the Renaissance popes' patronage of Greek and Roman philosophy and art. In effect, Bacon adopts Machiavelli's treatment of Christianity in Discourses II, 5, except for adding a fraudulent retraction that itself mirrors Machiavelli's hints about the impotence of the unarmed conqueror. Besides, after a two-paragraph intermission, Bacon asserts what is close to the Machiavellian statement that he has just questioned:

The greatest vicissitude of things amongst men, is the vicissitude of sects and religions. For these orbs rule in men's minds most.

The paragraphs between dubious correction and imitative paraphrase are Bacon's serious correction of Machiavelli. As Machiavelli overestimated Christianity's disposition to transform an old sect, he underestimated its capacity
to be transformed into a new sect. Bacon’s correction is a new science able to find the causes in nature for effects useful to man. This invention can be presented as leading by regular progress to a new heaven on earth. Like Machiavelli’s political science, however, Bacon’s natural science is part of a sect to rule the world. The sequel reveals Bacon’s fundamental science, which is the political science of causing “new sects.”

The first of these intervening paragraphs is studded with “I’s.” It shows how to learn causes of useful effects, rather than alleged causes of eternal nature, such as Plato’s supposition of natural cycles, or Aristotle’s prime mover. Bacon shows himself observing useful causes and effects and then generalizing about them. In such generalizations will be found the true prime for man intimated in essay 15: he can move nature for his benefit. One can predict floods, for example, and control some of their effects. Thus the first advantage of Bacon’s correction: it can influence natural vicissitudes that Machiavelli could not. But human sects, not natural disasters, are the decisive causes of oblivion. The art of prediction affords a tool for getting glory by manipulating hope, a tool that Machiavelli lacked. “Of Empire” (no. 19) had suggested that kings, however well established, seek “toys” to provide against an incessant fear that their fame will not endure. The illustrations were of arts or feats “of the hand.” Essay 58 suggests a “toy” that is an art of the mind: the art of prediction and of invention. In another work, Bacon shows prominent persons relying on astronomy as “fortune-teller”; he discredits reliance on such “toys.” His toy can master fortune, however, and can engage the patronage of both the prominent and the learned.

The two paragraphs are directed to those tempted by the old learning, as are the Advancement of Learning, the New Organon, and, in general, the project of an empire of the learned. As a nation-state advancing in wealth and power attracts the statesman, growth in powerful knowledge is to attract the curious and studious. Bacon provides a niche for those who would otherwise fall for the charms of philosophy. “The principle” appeared in “Of Empire”: the mind of man “is more cheered and refreshed by profiting in small things, than by standing at a stay in great.” Glory is the profit, however, not knowledge as such. Advancement of science brings advancement of the scientist. Bacon’s description of the rules and rites of Solomon’s House, the scientific establishment in Bensalem, begins with “two very long and fair galleries,” one for the best inventions, the other for “statua’s of all principal inventors.” Every invention earns the inventor both a liberal and honorable monetary reward and a statue, which may be of a degree of richness ranging up to gold. By serving mankind the scientist can obtain affluence and the glory of leading mankind; the Fathers of Solomon’s House are revered in Bensalem. The last of the rules and rites is the distribution of largess, especially useful knowledge. The leading scientists periodically bestow “natural divinations of diseases, plagues,” and so
forth. It is the art of prediction that is the scientists' power, and by serving the scientists Bacon can lead them. Bacon took care to put his chief books in the language of the learned. Machiavelli did not, except for chapter titles. Machiavelli blamed change of language for oblivion of memories (Discourses II, 5). Essay 58 does not. Even the English version of the Essays is stuffed with Latin quotations, a bar to the unlearned but a charm to the learned. While Bacon helps Machiavelli contribute to the oblivion of the Greek language, he insinuates himself into the power of Latin as into the circles of the learned. In an ironic dedication, he assures the Duke of Buckingham that "the Latin volume" of the Essays, being in "the universal language," may last as long "as books last"—longer, presumably, than an English kingdom and its dukes.

It is difficult to compare essay 58 as a whole to the corresponding Machiavellian discussion in Discourses, II,5.16 Both are among their authors' most cryptic writings, probably because in both shocking statements cover more shocking intimations. The pioneering study of Bacon's mix of state and sect is by Howard White; he sets forth a Baconian "imperialism of the human mind" that wins by "subversion." White goes on to infer from Bensalem's hospitality, and the absence of political coercion, aggressive commerce, and imperialism, that Bacon's universal science calls for a "world community" or "world state."17 Yet White acknowledges that New Atlantis hints at a pervasive hidden state, at prominent merchants, at new and terrible weapons, and at industrial and scientific espionage to build up Bensalem at the expense of other countries. To supplement White's thesis, Richard Kennington has argued that an imperial state is needed to overcome the world of independent nation states; "world utopia is imposed by imperial power." Yet Bacon reduces humanitarianism to a policy for domination and empire in essay 13, and no one has shown a Baconian writing that prescribes or expects world government or world community. Essay 58, upon which White and Kennington do not comment, suggests what I believe to be Bacon's solution: various civil states, advancing and declining in turn, that separately harbor the progressive civilization devoted to useful science.

Amidst a rational explanation of sects or religions, that is, Machiavelli's discourse and Bacon's essay each invents a new sect or civilization to rule men's minds. Machiavelli is more nearly direct in title and text. The title: "That changes of sects and languages, together with the accident of floods and plagues, destroy the memories of things" (II, 5). At the start of his argument he confronts expressly "the philosophers" contentions as to the eternity of the world. Bacon allows this contention of Greek philosophy to appear only in quotations from Seneca, Plato, and, a nasty cut, an abstruse astrologer who reads rather like Aristotle. He finally confutes Plato, however, twice and expressly. Contrary to Plato, Bacon, like Machiavelli, maintains that immortality must be made or conquered. As to nature, "certain it is, that the matter is in a
perpetual flux, and never at a stay.” Bacon takes up change of sects, by which
a man might make his name immortal, only after exploring the natural causes
that Machiavelli puts second.

Like Machiavelli, Bacon touches preliminarily upon floods as the chief
cause of oblivion, whose effect is to extinguish the memory of things. He omits
from this biblically significant attribution a Machiavellian jibe that some sur-
vivor might conceal the past to get himself a reputation and name. More inter-
esting, his account rebuts a myth from Plato’s Timaeus blaming the sun and an
account from the Old Testament blaming fires. Instances of floods in the “West Indies” follow, in a way that alludes to the Americas (“their Andes”), asserts
the inhabitants to be a “a newer or a younger people,” and alludes to the At-
lanthis Plato describes in the Timaeus. Elliptical indeed. What coherent message
may be discerned?

Bacon seems to be rebutting old myths that have a supernatural tint, myths
that his rivals for empire over the mind, Plato and the Bible, had set forth. He
intimates a new myth that promotes belief in his new project. Specifically, he
turns to observations, to what might be examined in a particular place and
topography. But his purpose is to imagine what might newly be accomplished.
Uncanny parallels with his imaginary New Atlantis occur. In Bensalem an offi-
cial dealing with Christian Europeans tells a broadly similar tale of flood and
surviving mountaineers, similar down to “West Indies,” equated with “Am-
rica,” which is inhabited by a “young people.” He explicitly calls “poetical and
fabulous” the divine or religious features of Plato’s Atlantis. The drama of the
work rebuts the biblical drama: by Bacon’s art Christian Europeans convert to
faith in a land of progress. The conversion is accomplished for most of the
Europeans by a priest (by “vocation”) who looks after strangers (by “office”).
The Europeans ask about the secrecy: how can the island know of “our state
and business” but not be known by Europe? Despite the connotations of an
unknown knower, the priest rejects any implications of “magicians” or “spirits
of the air,” even “angelical” ones. He tells not of a divinely guided golden age
but of an ancient time of great commercial and naval empires. As their norm,
one may infer, Europeans should look to the power politics set forth in “Of the
True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates” (no. 29). Yet all these empires and
all this navigation have disappeared, except Bensalem’s. Bacon can present
himself as restoring the old ways. Peru attacked Greece and was never heard
from again. Mexico attacked Bensalem but was captured by Altabin, ingen-
iously and without force, and then freed before succumbing to the flood. The
rest of the tale concerns the research establishment at home and industrial and
 technological espionage abroad.

I shall venture some interpretation of the relevant parts. Bacon hints, I be-
lieve, at his strategy to spread his new ways to the new world. The land of the
title, the new Atlantis vanquished by Bensalem’s new ways, is America. Ba-
con’s puzzling conflation of the empire of Atlantis-America with those of Mex-
ico and Peru itself intimates, perhaps, that a variety of states may nevertheless exist in the new world.

Unlike the old Greek political ways, Bacon’s will be humane to conquered lands. Altabin’s extraordinary mixture of ingenuity and humanity is not easy to interpret as a feat of real generalship. Might it symbolize Bacon’s mode of conquering his practical-spiritual rival, Christian Spain? Like a “a wise man and a great warrior,” he will handle the Spaniards, whose forces in Europe and America carry the spiritual empire, “so as to cut off their land-forces from their ships; and entoil both their navy and their camp with a greater power than theirs, both by sea and land.” Could Bacon refer to British navies on the seas and expanding British plantations in the New World? Essay 29 urges a naval power; essay 33, industrious plantations. The Christian empire may eventually render itself “without striking stroke.” Perhaps the appeals of progress will undermine the old spirituality within its Spanish homeland. In that case the father of enlightenment could content himself “only with their oath that they should no more bear arms against him,” dismissing them all in safety. This strategy combines the new civil forces the Essays summon forth with the new humane vision New Atlantis propounds. Essay 58 soon intimates wars involving the Spaniards, but Bacon keeps this and many other tough secrets of state and life even farther from the visionary surface of New Atlantis.

A reader may be excused for wondering whether these scattered allusions to Atlantis amount to a Baconian plan for world empire. Yet similar allusions exist elsewhere, and they too are hard to explain otherwise. For example, the bizarre “Of Prophecies” (no. 35) contains the only other reference in the Essays to Atlantis or, rather, to Plato’s “Atlanticus.” It intimates that a philosopher may act the poet (“Seneca the Tragedian”) to provide “natural predictions” of disease and floods, the “divinations” for which human nature hungers. The phrase reminds of the scientists in Bacon’s poetic Bensalem; during their circuits they bestow “natural divinations” of diseases, floods, etc. The end of the essay recurs to Seneca’s alleged prophecies, in his Medea, of new worlds. Bacon expressly interprets it as a prophecy of the discovery of America. Bacon takes care to dwell on the rational causes of such a prophecy: the fact that land lay beyond the Atlantic might be demonstrated, and “the tradition in Plato’s Timaeus and Atlantis” (Bacon misnames the Critias, perhaps to awaken us to distorting emphasis). These books encouraged Seneca to invent a “prediction.” What Bacon makes Seneca appear to do for Plato, the poet and philosopher Bacon makes for himself. The New Atlantis predicts new worlds in America; its visionary poetic form helps make effectual the prediction.

While “Of Prophecies” discredits false prophecy of a traditional sort, it also shows how to master the art. It indicates that apprehension, the desire to know of dangers to come, is the cash value of natural divination. The essay ends by predicting political dangers. By the end of a catalogue of some fourteen foolishnesses, Bacon has discredited heathen oracles, divine prophecies (“in the
East," of "Judea," etc.), and ancient predictions, which in hands like Seneca’s are no better than prophecy. The account moves from prophecy in Greece and Rome to modern kings and empires. The Spanish Armada is the only subject of two prophecies, the last two. It was "the greatest in strength" of any fleet ever. Catholic Spain remains, the great empire and the great vehicle of Christ’s empire. Against these Bacon contrives a plot in which he can also embroil and form the British and perhaps the French kingdoms (which are threatened by Spain). Guiding the poetic geography of New Atlantis, as well as its poetic humanity, is policy.

An allusion of comparable obscurity occurs in the History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh. Bacon singles out as a "memorable accident" John Cabot’s discoveries in North America and praises the explorer for following other sailors, rather than prior "conjectures" such as "Seneca’s prophecies, or Plato’s antiquities" (Works, 11:293–94; 6:196–97). The likeness to "Of Prophecies" seems too close for coincidence. A bit of dark prose presents Cabot’s effort as inspired by Columbus’s, which is itself curiously reinterpreted. Columbus only rediscovered America; the original discovery had been related by a Spanish pilot who died in Columbus’s house. Columbus suppressed the account, wishing to "make his enterprise the child of his science and fortune." Bacon praises Cabot’s enterprise and knowledge: he obtained his fleet by telling Henry of "an island endued with rich commodities." There must be a reason for these elaborate oddities. Bacon elsewhere compared himself to Columbus, especially in being adept at inspiring those he hoped to attract to great projects (New Organon I 92, in Works, 8:129; 4:91). Is he showing followers how to woo kings? Or is he evoking his own promise of a future land of health, wealth, and peace? Or might he hint at a borrowing from Christ (the Spanish navigator), whose influence will die, nevertheless, in the secular land produced by Bacon’s science and fortune?

However one settles such obscurities, it is clear that the History encourages English kings to patronize "the discovery and investing of unknown lands," particularly of North America. While Bacon praises Henry VII for "dexterity" in confronting immediate dangers, he tasks him for lacking "providence to prevent and remove [dangers] afar off" (Works, 11:364; 6:244). Bacon insinuates his own providence as tacit remedy for a defect explicitly noted but never explicitly remedied. The account of Cabot’s discoveries occurs expressly out of chronological order and as memorable. Bacon puts it immediately after the king’s defeat of Perkin Warbeck, the latest in a line of pretenders whom Bacon presents as magical or supernatural idols. The Baconian substitute turns affections away from supernatural remedies. It appears as instrument, not enemy, to the king’s unending desire for security of state.

The remainder of Essay 58 outlines Bacon’s greatest policy. Counsels civil and moral conclude with counsel as to the "causes of new sects." Ostensibly concerned with the "stay" to such great "revolutions," Bacon mainly gives for-
mulas for producing them. This Machiavellian science, of averting oblivion from the most powerful selves, is the greatest science. Bacon discusses in turn three conditions that are appropriate for the rise or founding of new sects, two necessary properties and then a third, and three manners of “plantations.”

The three properties of a successful sect are opposition to existing authority, provision of license to pleasure, and—if “speculative heresies”—the “help of civil occasions.” Bacon’s new sect, like Machiavelli’s, will oppose existing authority, although not as directly. Like Machiavelli, Bacon removes the traditional moral restraints or virtues, although for a liberty more moderated by business than Mandragola and Clizia portend. Like Machiavelli’s sect, Bacon’s is comprehensively planned and not merely anti-establishment and licentious. Indeed, Bacon’s is more attuned to speculation or learning, and yet such a sect can spread if linked with a civil movement. Essays and related works provide the civil supports.

For example, “Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates” (no. 29) suggests a growing naval empire and also lightly suggests expansion by “plantation of colonies.” “Of Plantations” (no. 33) suggests an economic sort of colony. Nobles can invest and patronize; plain people of skills and industry will populate new worlds. People as well as crops are thus “planted”; the population is the means for growth, wealth, and power, and colonies growing in wealth and numbers will expand to rival, and perhaps overwhelm, the missionary and gold-digging colonies of the other empire. Eventually “it is time to plant with women as well as men; that the plantation may spread into generations.” Bacon cares not at all about religious and marital regulations, except, as is also clear from New Atlantis, for the sake of population growth. “The sinfullest thing in the world” is to forsake, not God, but a plantation. He may be even more sly. Once he calls what has been planted a “country.” Does he anticipate the independence from the old world’s kings and nobles that such self-reliant new nations are likely to demand?

In essay 58, Bacon has a more comprehensive type of plantation in mind. Of the three methods of founding, he treats coolly “signs and miracles”; here as always he appears one of the “great atheists. . .ever handling holy things, but without feeling” (“Of Atheism,” no. 16). He treats almost invisibly the second means, “by the eloquence and wisdom of speech and persuasion.” Yet deep policy is in his brief counsel to stop new sects and schisms through reform, fostering agreement, and mildness, and “rather to take off the principal authors by winning and advancing them than to enrage them by violence and bitterness.” He would transform a struggle over creed into a plan of mutual tolerance with opportunity for rising. It is his general strategy for a civil society.

Behind the counsel of moderation, however, is a strategy of war. Virtually the whole remainder of the essay is about war. Bacon shows his followers the strategy by which a new civilization can conquer. A little sign: he substitutes the comprehensive term “war” for his first description of the third means, “the
sword.” This war is conducted in good part by “eloquence and wisdom in speech and persuasion,” the sort that later generations would call a war of ideas, ideology, or enlightenment.

Bacon expects to contrive with words a rise by the northern powers (perhaps including North America), a rise in wealth, numbers and power. Cold weather makes “the bodies hardest, and the courages warmest”; yet he notes the difference that “discipline” makes. Wars will follow the fall or rise of a great state and empire (Spain is his last example), and when a state grows to a great overpower, it is sure to overflow. The “ancient northern people” did. We recall that Bacon plans many ways to increase population, and not least by what he mentions here, growth in “means of life and sustentation.” Will modern northern peoples increase, forcing some to overflow into colonies abroad?

Abruptly, Bacon notes that rich states tend to become soft and vulnerable, whereupon he turns to the effect of weapons, of technology, upon military strength. Does he imply that a civilization devoted to increasing power can with new weapons overcome warlike barbarians? Perhaps. Yet here his argument grows more strange and abstract.

One wonders whether this discussion of artillery, like Machiavelli’s in Discourses II, 17, is actually about how to spike and redirect the canons and big guns of the church. The sequel intimates the use of a strategy of simulation and dissimulation. Warfare of old was waged more by peoples and now is more by “number rather competent than vast”; it relies on planning, cunning, and skill rather than force of numbers. Bacon’s next step somewhat confirms our suspicion that he is subtly intimating the warfare and followers his sect will have: he turns from the rise and fall of states to the rise and fall of learning. Even an enlightened political state will fall as well as rise, especially when “mechanical arts and merchandise” replace the arms of its youth, the learning of its middle age, and the union of the two. Striking. Does this mean that the economic cast of Baconian states, the prominence given to merchants, the soft affluence portrayed in Bensalem, are causes of downfall? Is Bacon’s compassionate and economic appeal, then, a consciously corrupting appeal? Or must we not remember the emphasis of essay 29 upon growth in power, a warlike population, and occasions for war? That is a tough element of Bacon’s civil teaching, a slight variation on Machiavellian toughness.

Nevertheless, Bacon suggests that modern economic states will inevitably decline and exhibits a further type of empire, of “learning.” One state of learning can exist in a variety of civil states. There are civil states and states of learning; in Bensalem, both the ordinary father, who is regulated by a governor, and the scientist-father, who keeps secrets from state institutions, appear beneath a “cloth of state” (Works, 5:587, 397; 3:148, 156). There can be a variety of enlightened and progressive nation-states, rising and then declining, while all embrace the science of progress.

Yet essay 58 indicates that even the sect of enlightenment may be finite.
Learning, too, has an infancy, a youth, a strength of years, an old age. Probably Bacon alludes to his own science established and progressing, to science developed and applied. Learning, too, may become “dry and exhaust.” Bacon had earlier intimated an uncertainty whether “the world should last.” He knows limits to progress, even his own progress in enduring. At this point, he counsels averting the eyes from such “turning wheels of vicissitude,” lest they make us “giddy.” Yet he eschews, he tells us, tales of cycles or other names. Bacon is steadfast in making his empire and himself endure, while knowing that he cannot do enough. If my argument has been accurate, Bacon’s steadfastness produced an effectual plan for our progress.

NOTES


16. I have been helped here as elsewhere by Harvey Mansfield’s Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979).


18. The quotations in this and the next paragraph occur in New Atlantis, ed. Gough, pp. 16–25.
Review Essay

Collingwood’s Embattled Liberalism

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Almost half a century after the death of R. G. Collingwood, Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford, a new volume of his writings on politics has appeared. Edited by David Boucher, author of a recent study of Collingwood’s political thought,1 Essays in Political Philosophy makes available eighteen selections from his published and unpublished writings. Eight extracts are reprinted from books or journal articles, while ten appear in print here for the first time; of these, seven are drawn from lecture notes and three from other manuscripts among the Collingwood papers in the Bodleian Library. To these are appended a 1918 reader’s report on Collingwood’s unpublished manuscript “Truth and Contradiction,” which he destroyed after the appearance of his Autobiography in the late 1930s, and parts of three letters on current politics penned by Collingwood to his student T. M. Knox between 1937 and 1940. The earliest selection was written during the First World War and the latest during the Second: the essays here collected thus span the whole of Collingwood’s life as a mature writer. Despite the curious stipulation required by Collingwood’s daughter “that no item should be reproduced in its entirety” (3 n. 10; cf. viii), Professor Boucher has managed to fashion a readable and intriguing book, which not only offers material never before published but also complements and illuminates Collingwood’s other political writings.

After the editor’s introduction, Collingwood’s essays are organized into two parts. The first, “Political Activity and the Forms of Practical Reason,” begins with an essay, originally published as a journal article, that undertakes a philosophical investigation of economic action. Despite the cleverness and success of “the science of economics,” Collingwood finds it laboring under disciplinary blinders. Economics has attained great “prestige” by formulating “empirical laws” by induction from the study of economic facts; yet economists presuppose some “fundamental conceptions, such as value, wealth, and the like,” which they rarely define or ponder (58). Collingwood finds the clue to understanding these conceptions in the idea of economic action, which discerns a

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human intention behind economic facts rather than simply describing them, as an empirical psychologist might. His “thesis” is “that there is a special type of action, which we ordinarily distinguish by such epithets as expedient, useful, profitable, and the like,” and “that this utilitarian or economic type of action is the fundamental fact with which all economic science is concerned” (59). Collingwood distinguishes economic action from action done on impulse—a child who “runs shouting round the garden” or “an angry man kicking a chair” (61, 62)—in that economic action involves calculation. Unlike impulsive action, which follows desire “without more ado” (61), economic action has an end that is “immediately desired” and a means that “is only mediatly desired, as the necessary presupposition of the end” (63). Collingwood is unpersuaded by “the hedonist” who sees no difference between economic action and impulsive action, since everyone does just as he likes: for there is a difference between simply doing what you like and doing what you dislike for the sake of something else that you like (61, 63). Economic action always involves an element of prudence that is missing in impulsive action.

A like distinction must be made, according to Collingwood, between economic and moral action. Borrowing in effect Kant’s distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives, he argues that we act morally when we set aside expediency and do something simply because it is right. Of course one may do the right thing for prudential reasons—obeying a rule for fear of being caught, or treating others decently for reputation’s sake—but those actions have an economic rather than a moral motive. Only when considerations of utility are “subordinated to duty” is an action moral. Again, Collingwood is unpersuaded by “the utilitarian” who would explain moral action on the grounds of expediency, since every prudent man chooses means in relation to an end he has chosen: for there is a difference between the duality of ends and means in economic action and their unity in moral action (61). Here the end and the means, though distinguishable as in economic action, are “merged in a fresh unity”: we aim “to be good; and the only means to being good is—being good” (63). Thus Collingwood, though not without a doubt as to whether this taxonomy is exhaustive (62), distinguishes actions into the three categories of impulsive, economic, and moral.

Economic action is marked by a combination of pain and pleasure, or aversion and desire. In the economic action called exchange, for instance, one gives up one good in return for a good that one wants even more. Since it is the individual preference for those oranges over these apples that causes a man to give up his apples for oranges, Collingwood understands this transaction not as the exchange of one man’s apples for another man’s oranges, but as one man’s exchange of apples for oranges and another man’s exchange of oranges for apples. Each man finds the other useful in making the exchange, but each gets the better of the exchange—not of the other—because of his own subjective preference for what he receives over what he gives up. A man has to exchange
one good for another through the medium of the market. Preferences change from hour to hour, so market values alter. If he sets too high a price on the good he wants to exchange for another good, then his preference is ineffectual and he fails to find a market; if he sets too low a price on it, then he finds a market but buys dear. Collingwood allows that some economic exchanges are seen to have been imprudent: the price that a vendor "ought to have asked is the highest price that the public will pay" (67). But his insistence that value is subjective forces him to deny that there is any "right price" and prevents him from calling any willing exchange unfair (66). Even the man who buys dear—who finds no choice but to sell his labor, perhaps, for a pittance—cannot be said to strike a bad bargain, since he only chooses to exchange one condition for another that seems better to him. Such a purchase may "offend our moral consciousness," but then we really claim "that this case morally demands not an act of exchange, but an act of gift," which would remove the situation from an economic to a moral plane (65). While Collingwood admits that there are some kinds of exchanges which simply ought not to be made (for instance, prostitution), his argument leads him to claim that "there cannot conceivably be any economic argument against gambling," since the gambler prefers his wager to standing pat, "and there is an end of it" from the economic point of view (69 n. 4). Yet one must wonder whether there is not some truth in the almost universal judgment of empirical economists that gambling is imprudent—or whether Collingwood's admission of prudential calculation in economic action is finally consistent with his insistence on valuing that remains, in his terms, impulsive.

In the second selection, taken from his lecture notes, Collingwood begins by asking which things are good; his answer, from arguments in a previous lecture, is "that the goodness of a thing is the fact of it being chosen" (78). Here we suffer from the omission of those arguments; but, presupposing thus that goodness is no more than a human choice, he bids us consider why we choose what we choose. Sometimes we have no conscious reason for choice; this kind of choosing Collingwood calls caprice, or goatishness. Cambridge Realists like G. E. Moore, whose "doctrine is that there is never any reason why anybody chooses anything" (79), suppose that all choice is capricious. But Collingwood holds that rational choice entails the consciousness of alternatives and of reasons for preferring one to another. When we can explain why we chose as we did, he calls our choice rational, though he dismisses as "unreal" (i.e., tautological) the explanation that we chose something because it was good, or pleasant, since he understands goodness as nothing but what we choose, and pleasure as "a constituent of activity, a presupposition of choice" (84–85). Real explanations, he argues here, may be reduced to three: utility, right, and duty. We have already encountered the pursuit of the "useful"—or as it may be called the "expedient," the "profitable," or the "prudent" (86)—in our consideration of economics; here Collingwood elaborates on this type of action,
which involves ends and means. Action which aims at an end is consciously understood to be divided into “two distinct phases,” which in fact belong to all action: a “preparatory or preliminary phase” and a “completing or crowning phase” (88). In the time sequence of action, immediate acts, or means, come first; but in the logical sequence of a man’s desiring, the mediate act, or end, comes first. Here Collingwood’s argument resembles that of Hobbes in the first part of the Leviathan.

The reader will have noticed that the taxonomy of actions of the first essay, which distinguishes among impulsive, economic, and moral actions, does not correspond with the taxonomy of the second, which distinguishes among capricious, utilitarian, right, and dutiful actions. Not that Collingwood means to distinguish between impulse and caprice, or between economics and utility as motives; but his distinction between right and duty, asserted but not explained in the second essay (86; cf. 86 n. 5), modifies the taxonomy of the first. That this revision reflects a refinement in Collingwood’s thought is the main theme of Boucher’s introduction. He offers as a “particular” justification for a new collection of writings the fact that Collingwood’s previously unpublished essays “illuminate far more clearly than the cursory discussion in An Autobiography, or in the short expositions in The New Leviathan, the distinctions he wished to make between utility, right, and duty” (4–5). Indeed, this tripartite division of goods and of the motives for rational action suggests the plan of the first part of Essays in Political Philosophy, which the editor chose to mirror Collingwood’s own order of argument. The first two essays distinguish utility from caprice; the remaining essays of the first part explain how right and duty differ from the first two motives and from each other, beginning with five essays on politics.

In the first of these essays Collingwood looks past the substance of the state, which he finds ordinarily the focus of political theory, to study politics “from a different angle” (92). He finds politics not only in states but also in churches, trade unions, and municipalities, and in the relations of these associations with states. Since sovereignty belongs to all political action, it inheres in all of these associations, not only in states (106–7). A focus on states leaves the observer perplexed when practical problems arise whose solutions depart from the confines of state sovereignty—for instance, the League of Nations. Instead, Collingwood considers political action, arguing that it differs from moral action and economic action, just as they differ from each other. While moral action is performed out of duty and economic action aims at wealth, political action (such as a society undertakes, for instance, in making a law) is performed “for some other reason—a political reason” (95; cf. 117). Political goodness consists in “a life lived under good laws,” which Collingwood describes as principles “really worked out in thought so as to apply to a particular region of practice, really laid down as binding within that region, and really obeyed or observed” (96). He finds political action epitomized in the “singular” English practice of queueing for tickets, which he has not seen “in any other country”
but which exemplifies the choice of “a political value: orderliness, regularity, submission to a rule which applies equally to all persons.” Again, if you came upon one man who was threatening to shoot another and you decided to interfere, though both of them were strangers, out of “the feeling that one can’t have this sort of thing going on . . . shooting people like that,” then your motive would be political (97–98). According to Collingwood, you do not really answer the question why you can’t have this sort of thing, for if you did your action would have a utilitarian motive instead. The political motive involves a simple resolve that “I won’t have it”—Collingwood’s acknowledgment of the political importance of what the Greeks called thymos. Observers who confuse economic and political action will miss the difference, for instance, between a price and a fine (99).

Contrary to Thrasyvahus’ claim in the first book of Plato’s Republic, rulers do not rule for their own benefit; or, when they do, they are not acting as rulers (100 n. 1). To make a rule is to regulate one’s own conduct along with that of others (101). While savages follow inscrutable rules, civilized men follow rules they have made themselves. Collingwood admits that even civilized rules may develop unintentionally, citing as examples both the rules within a family and “the law and custom of the British Constitution” (103 n. 2). Yet he discerns a distinctive intention behind political action, or regulation, as such: just as the getting of wealth in economic action is for the sake of prosperity, the promulgation and observance of rules in political action is for the sake of “its own end, peace” (108). But if political action has after all its own end, to which it contributes by well-chosen means, may it not be likened to economic action in its concern for means and ends—in a word, for utility? In any case, here is an unambiguous echo of Hobbes, who in the first part of the Leviathan makes peace the most important end of political life. Collingwood’s claim that “political action is essentially regulation” (100) follows Hobbes in diminishing the importance of the political regime and the controversy over justice that it presupposes. By denying any standard of good beyond human choice, both writers drain disputable content out of the political good and reduce it to the mere regularian form of law.

In a second essay on politics, Collingwood argues that in political action we make and follow a plan. Some would claim that following a plan makes us unfree, but they are mistaken: “we are always free to break the rule,” but “the power to follow out a plan is a real power, something involving more rationality and therefore more freedom than the simple power to do what we like at any given moment” (111–12). Such a plan may be as modest as the suppression of “seditious or obscene publications,” which falls within the proper province of the state in Collingwood’s view (113), or as grand “as the establishment of the Principate by Augustus” (112). Collingwood’s third essay on politics begins by denying that it recognizes any “form of goodness except conformity to rule” (118): to do one’s moral duty cannot be part of a political intention.
The state makes room for private conscience only as part of its provision “for the security of person and property” (119). The citizen’s part is to comport himself according to the laws of the land. Lawbreakers contradict themselves, according to the argument that Collingwood silently borrows from Kant, by relying on the very laws they break: a forger depends on a banking system that presupposes honesty even as he tells himself that dishonesty is justified by his desperate need (121–22).

This brief treatment of crime anticipates the last two essays on politics in this part, which take up the question of punishment. Collingwood begins by opposing punishment to forgiveness. Though both are attributed to God and enjoined upon man by the Bible, they seem contradictory: if punishment is a duty, then forgiveness seems like “sentimental weakness” (125); but if forgiveness is a duty, then punishment seems no better than revenge. Collingwood argues that both claims rest on “the moral consciousness.” Punishment should not be understood simply as the “state organization of revenge,” since revenge is a second crime but punishment is a moral duty. (In this early essay, first published in 1916, Collingwood does not yet distinguish between right and duty.) Nor should punishment be understood as deterrence, “as a means of self-preservation on the part of society” (126). Such a view, compounding “cruelty and selfishness,” allows us to maltreat a criminal in order to deter others, like “a marauder nailed in terrorem to the barn-door” (127). The only just punishment is retribution—“giving a man the punishment he deserves” (128). There is actually no contradiction between punishment and forgiveness: the pain we inflict by punishment aims at no more than evoking the criminal’s “self-condemnation or moral repentance,” which in turn makes it possible for us to forgive him. Indeed, the best punishments entail no incidental pains: a word of admonishment, without any encouragement from the stick, “goes straight home” to a properly brought-up child. Collingwood admits, however, that “extremely coarsened and brutalized” criminals will have to be punished by less “perfect” means (131).

The second essay on punishment, from a lecture written in 1929, asks whether its purpose is deterrence, retribution, or reformation. Since “it is immoral to inflict suffering” on someone simply “for the sake of frightening other people,” deterrence cannot be justified unless it is simply the effect of punishment as retribution. Likewise, since forcing a man to amend his ways is immoral “unless his habits are such that he deserves to be hurt,” reformation can only be justified on the same ground (133). The wish to achieve deterrence or reformation leads easily to excessive punishments, which may be avoided only by reining the punishment back into line with just retribution. Collingwood acknowledges that punishment as retribution must be carefully purged of anger, since an angry man is unfit to decide what a criminal deserves (134). Here he draws a distinction, however, between the political action of determining a proper punishment and the moral action of assessing moral guilt. The court
simply tries to determine whether a man “has broken the law, and if so, what law” (135). Hence some “moral delinquencies”—amongst which Collingwood lists greed, laziness, ill temper, drunkenness, and adultery—are not criminal offenses; but “they are punished elsewhere than in the courts” (136). In its political life a society aims not at moral purity but at conformity to rules, some (like the length of women’s skirts) enforced by fashion and others by the courts. The good man will be concerned about the moral guilt of the prisoner in the dock; the good judge, as such, will ask only whether the prisoner has broken the law (138).

After the five essays on politics, the first part of the book concludes with two essays on ethics. The first of these, “Monks and Morals,” taken from Collingwood’s account of a yacht trip to the Greek islands in 1939, is the most charming of the essays. Together with some of his students from Oxford, he had visited the monastery of the Monks of the Prophet Elijah on Santorini (144 n. 1). What they found among the monks was music, grace, devotion, dignity, and hospitality; all of these elements were so foreign to their utilitarian way of thinking that they could find them appealing only by what “seemed a kind of treason to their upbringing.” His students could not but admire the beauty of the monks’ way of life, but they were ashamed of their admiration:

They had been taught that monks were at worst idle, self-indulgent, and corrupt; at best selfishly wrapped up in a wrong-headed endeavour to save their own souls by forsaking the world and cultivating a fugitive and cloistered virtue. They had, I suspect, been taught that the best was worse than the worst; for whereas a vicious monk was a sinner to be saved, and from another point of view a man doing his best, like most men, to have a good time, a virtuous monk was a man irretrievably sunk in the deadliest of moral errors: a man who had renounced the primary duty of helping his fellow men, and had thus corrupted the best thing in human nature, the moral principle itself, into the worst, a purely individual and self-centred quest of salvation. (144)

The students, no crude materialists, were willing to grant the social utility of music. But the monks were removed from society. What good was beautiful music without an audience to hear it? Still, after living closely with the monks for a few days, the students had found no “moral faults” in them (145).

After the visit to Santorini, and especially during the night watch on the yacht, Collingwood conversed with his students about their contrary impressions. Perhaps they already prized pursuits as useless as the Santorin music. For instance, they agreed that pure mathematics was worth while, despite its lack of social utility; for even if the pure mathematician published, the only result was to increase the number of pure mathematicians. If others found pure mathematics worth while and were proud to have its practitioners in their midst, then they felt that their life was of some benefit to themselves. The Greeks around the monastery clearly held that view about the monks and their way of life. But what if their admiration was simply superstition? Yet the view
that “utility is the only goodness” contradicts itself (147). In the world of the utilitarian, reasoning about means proliferates while reasoning about ends recedes. But the ends must be good for their own sake and cannot themselves be sought merely as means to something else: for if ends disappear altogether, then means are no longer useful for anything intrinsically choiceworthy. Collingwood likens “the moral bankruptcy” of this unbending utilitarianism to inflation in economics, where people find themselves rich in banknotes but poor in real goods: if “everything one does is done in the hopes of purchasing by its means a satisfaction which never comes,” then “life is not worth living” (148). So if we trust our impression “that the Santorin way of life is a good way,” including their honored monks, then we may find ourselves obliged to defend the monks against our Protestant, secular, utilitarian world, even at the risk of Collingwood’s being accused at Oxford “of corrupting its young men” during their nocturnal dialogue. But, after all, he asks, “What is the use of travel if it doesn’t broaden your mind? And how can it do that except by showing you the goodness of ways of life which, according to the prejudices you have learned at home, ought to be bad?” (149).

In the final essay of the first part, “Duty,” Collingwood lays out his peculiar understanding of the third of the motives for rational action. Any sort of rational action obliges one to give up “the particular kind of freedom which belongs to capricious action,” for “obligation in general is merely the denial of caprice” (150). To act usefully one is obliged to do something that contributes to one’s end; to act rightly one is obliged to obey a rule. Yet both utility and rightness still allow a “relic of caprice” (151): one can choose which means to use or how to act within the law. Moreover, utilitarianism offers no explanation of why one chooses a given end, nor does regularianism explain why one recognizes a given rule. Only when one acts out of duty, according to Collingwood, does the element of caprice still present in other kinds of rational action disappear altogether. Hence “duty is completely rational” (152), which means that “a person who does his duty has no option; he has got to do exactly what he does; he has no choice” (151). Collingwood understands duty as an obligation that allows no discretion—one which springs from “the situation in which, as a practical agent, I find myself or place myself” (153). Both situation and action appear to the agent in their “unbroken or unanalysed individuality” (154). But it is not immediately clear why duty has to point inexorably to a single action; and it might appear to the reader, as it must have appeared to his students when Collingwood presented this argument as a lecture, that this understanding of duty is tautological: “I do this because I have got to do it” (153).

Collingwood seeks to escape from these difficulties by connecting dutiful action to a theme that might surprise us but for the fact that The Idea of History is his most famous book. “There is a thing called history,” he writes here, and “every situation which the historian studies is an individual situation” (155). Briefly he summarizes the argument of The Idea of History that each historical
event is individual and can only happen once; that the men who made history acted as they did because of their situation; and that the historian’s view is determined by his own historical situation. He concludes that “the consciousness of duty is thus identical with the historical consciousness” (157). Though historical study is still confined by historians who fail to rise above utilitarian or regularian analysis, the idea of duty allows us to understand the individual actions of men in history as rational. “Granted,” for instance,

that Gladstone was the man he was, conscious of himself as standing in the situation in which he was aware of himself as standing, the historian is able to ask how he came, towards the end of his life, to pursue Irish Home Rule as an end, and to pursue it, though unsuccessfully, through the means of parliamentary action. And these questions are historically answerable. (158)

Instead of imagining the events of history as accidents, the historian can understand their necessity. Instead of supposing that the French revolutionary capriciously chose to recognize a certain rule, and to obey it in a certain way, “the historian may hope to show that he recognized that rule because he had to recognize that rule and obeyed it in that unique way because he had to obey it in that unique way”(158).

Collingwood’s understanding of duty, the crowning element of his political philosophy, thus depends on his philosophy of history. That philosophy, which owes much to Hegel, bids us believe that the choices men make in history are not really contingent upon their own willing, and thus that Gladstone had to pursue Irish Home Rule, Augustus had to found the Principate, and the French revolutionaries had to wield the guillotine. All of these actions appear to Collingwood to have been imposed by duty on the men who took them, if only the historian could understand how. Yet his view runs counter to common sense in denying that the men who took these actions might have chosen otherwise. By attributing to duty many historical actions that seem anything but dutiful, it seems to excuse or justify actions that are usually considered morally culpable; and it belies our ordinary understanding that duty has a moral or religious basis rather than an historical one. Aside from these moral drawbacks, Collingwood’s view of history leads to the unwelcome conclusion that the historian’s duty is to understand the men he studies not as they understood themselves but in a unique way imposed upon him by what has happened since. Despite Collingwood’s insistence on deprecating the freedom we give up by forsaking “the residue of caprice” in other kinds of action in order to do our duty, he leaves our most rational actions entirely subject to the accident of the historical moment in which we act. One can hardly help wondering whether this understanding of duty, which confines even philosophy to the well-worn paths of our own era, does not underestimate man’s ability to act and think freely.4

Certainly Collingwood thought himself bound by duty not to conform to the political fashion of his day. The apocalyptic theme of the closing paragraphs of
An Autobiography, which might almost be called a jeremiad against what he considered the increasing acceptance of fascism in the Britain of the late 1930s, finds a more sober echo in several of Collingwood's letters to T. M. Knox in the second appendix of Essays in Political Philosophy (232–34). The essays in the second part of the book, which the editor calls "Civilization and its Enemies," show how Collingwood thought about the public questions facing his country and the rest of the civilized world. He begins the first of these essays, "The Present Need of a Philosophy," by arguing that philosophy can contribute to public debate on intractable social problems not by dictating the correct solution but by providing a conviction "that all scientific problems are in principle soluble"—failing which, he avers, there is a great temptation simply to conclude "that the special problems of the modern world are inherently insoluble" (168). What allows philosophy to provide this conviction is a growing assurance that all human things are made by men, so that "there can be no evils in any human institution which human will cannot cure" and no permanent obstacles to human progress (169). This assurance is based on a view of man "conceived neither as lifted clean out of nature nor yet as the plaything of natural forces, but as sharing, and sharing to an eminent degree, in the creative power which constitutes the inward essence of all things" (170).

In his second brief essay of this part, "The Rules of Life," originally written as a lecture in 1933, Collingwood announces a practical rather than an academic purpose in his pedagogy: "I have not been trying merely to supply you with materials for writing a successful paper on Moral Philosophy in the Schools." Instead, he seeks to make his own experience useful to students in deciding how they should act. He describes their world as one "whose chief singularity is that nothing in it can be trusted to stand firm." While their parents were brought up in a framework of institutions that seemed certain to last, "this framework has collapsed" (171). The older generation can never "entirely adjust themselves" to the change but can only "grope uneasily in the unaccustomed darkness." Collingwood describes two unsuccessful tacks they took: first they embarked on a bootless attempt "to rebuild what had in fact been finally destroyed"; then, despairing of success, "they rushed to the other extreme and plundered the ruins in which they lived, and called this having a good time." It is up to his students to make themselves "at home in that darkness" and to learn to find their way there. Amid the ruins of the old system have been born new movements, both religious and political (amongst which Collingwood includes communism and fascism), all of them sharing "a spirit of serious constructive work." Gently he deprecates the growing popular clamor for a leader, suggesting that a worthy follower would have to have a defensible way of life before he professed allegiance to any leader (172). Collingwood lays down three rules that his students might follow: (1) "know yourself," which is the only way to find the independence that a man needs to be happy; (2) "respect yourself," which means not to give in to a reductionism that belit-
ties human nature and denies a proportion between the body and the soul; and (3) “orientate yourself,” which allows a man to rise above fear and anger and to treat love as more than an animal appetite. He concludes by appealing to his students’ desire to leave “a new world” to their children (173–74).

In his 1927 preface to Ruggiero’s *History of European Liberalism*, reproduced here as the third essay of the second part, Collingwood defines liberalism as the principle that assists “the individual to discipline himself and achieve his own moral progress” (175), discerning in it a happy mean between overbearing authoritarianism and ignorant democracy. Combining a democratic “respect for human liberty” with an authoritarian insistence on “the necessity for skilful and practised government,” liberalism is now under attack from “powerful and dangerous enemies” (176). That attack upon liberalism is the theme of the following essay, “Modern Politics,” which is taken from an undated manuscript entitled “Man Goes Mad.” Therein Collingwood describes “the essence” of liberalism as “the idea of a community as governing itself by fostering the free expression of all political opinions that take shape within it, and finding some means of reducing this multiplicity of opinions to a unity.” Parties, territorial constituencies, majority votes, and parliamentarism are simply means, and not indispensable means at that, for assuring that opinion is freely expressed on political questions (177). This free expression of opinions is to be not just tolerated but actually fostered, since it improves the nation’s politics and provides a political education to citizens. For “the last three centuries” this idea of political life has been developing, with “France, England, and the United States” the most important contributors. Collingwood judges it “certainly one of the greatest achievements” of our civilization, even though it is hardly finished (178). Liberalism is not well suited to every political situation: it would not be chosen by a nation in acute danger from war or violent crime, which has an urgent need for less talk and more force.

Liberal government is attacked from the right, which rues its inefficiency and calls for resolute action by powerful experts— as if a state of emergency were the permanent and proper condition of good government. Collingwood fears that even in England, “the home of the parliamentary system,” the power of parliament is giving way to government by the cabinet and the permanent civil service. But the principles of liberal government “are the most precious possession that man has ever acquired in the field of politics”; and free government is possible only when government “can appeal, over the heads of criminals, to a body of public opinion sufficiently educated in politics to understand the wisdom of their acts” (180). To take away the right of public debate is so to brutalize the populace as to leave them unable to do more than “to throw up one gangster government after another” (181). Liberal government is also attacked from the left, which claims that liberalism is only an attractive cloak beneath which capitalists plunder the wage-earners. Within the capitalist system, according to their argument, free debate occurs only among the exploiters;
the exploited class can find redress only by waging war upon their oppressors and establishing the temporary dictatorship of the proletariat. Collingwood is friendlier to this attack from the left, since it aims to vindicate liberal principles; but he rues the “anti-liberal” method of the socialists (182), who have borrowed from “Kant’s essay on Universal History” the idea of a revolution that ushers in a “happy millenium,” and from Hegel a glorification of class warfare (183–84). Collingwood teases the socialists by arguing that the political ideas they have borrowed are “obsolete”—that “they are,” in fact, “undigested lumps of bourgeois ideology in the stomach of socialist thought” (184).

It is “madness” to abandon liberal principles; but liberals are perhaps too apt to blame ideologues of the left and right for the ills that have come over them. Collingwood argues in a moderate tone that “nothing is gained by blame: something perhaps, by trying to understand” (184). Instead, he blames liberalism itself for not having applied to international relations or to private business the generous principles it established in domestic politics. It would be easy to miss the fact that Collingwood is actually criticizing liberalism for a moderation that its founders would have thought realistic: his argument is not untinged with the millenialism he decries in Kant. In the case of foreign affairs, he explains that our neglect has left us with “weapons more destructive, wars more expensive, and national hatred (a thing hardly known in the seventeenth century) smouldering everywhere.” Within the body politic, this “external illiberalism” was mirrored in the private realm of business, which was held exempt from government control. Only Adam Smith’s “extraordinary doctrine” that men actually serve each other by serving themselves kept them from seeing the truth in the socialists’ critique of life in liberal society (185). Thus liberals themselves, according to Collingwood, must reap the harvest of “the failure of our grandfathers” to apply their own principles consistently. That failure, however, hardly justifies the intemperate attacks from left and right, “not against the incomplete application of liberal principles, but against those principles themselves” (186).

The central essay of the second part, originally published as an article in 1940, inquires into the reason for the appeal of fascism and Nazism. Here Collingwood finds another cause of the decline of liberalism: the loss of its “vital warmth” at the heart, which comes from religion. In the spirit of John Stuart Mill’s argument that uncontested opinions degenerate into dead dogmas, he argues that just as “Greco-Roman civilization” met its demise when its inheritors “lost heart,” liberalism is threatened by the collapse of its spiritual underpinnings (187). For Collingwood, Greco-Roman civilization was succeeded by Christianity, which, after a vital youth, suffered a curious fate during the scientific revolution of the Renaissance. Modern science carefully divided Christianity into its rational and superstitious parts, preserving what was logical and discarding the residue (188). An “Illuminism” became orthodoxy among
educated men, who did not scruple to disguise their hostility towards religion. The political principle of “free speech and free thought for everyone” was, in Collingwood’s view, “distilled” from Christianity; but it disdained the religious beliefs that might have helped to sustain it (189). Christianity seems to him the real source of the idea that every man has “infinite dignity or worth,” which in turn is the ground of our liberal rights; these gifts came to each man because of God’s love for us and the intercession of Christ (190). The Christian view of human nature which entails liberal principles survived long after Christianity had been discredited. Even in the countries which have succumbed to fascism or Nazism, most people believe in “liberal-democratic ideals.” Yet the fascists and Nazis have “a driving power, a psychological dynamism,” that their opponents lack. While liberals can hardly be troubled to defend liberalism, the fascists seem to fight with the power not of men, but of demons (191). Neither the Marxist claim that fascism is a class movement, nor the populist suggestion that it is the creature of big business, nor the publicist’s confidence that it owes its success to propaganda is sustained by fact. The truth is that while liberal arguments, in our day, are merely cerebral, the fascist “thinks with his blood,” and that makes him irresistible, “silly” though his thoughts may be (192). Fascism, which “harks back consciously to the Roman Empire” and its “worship of a ‘Leader,’” appeals to what Collingwood calls “the pagan survivals” that have been allowed by Christianity in Italy and Germany (195).

Our neglect of emotion is also the theme of the sixth essay of the second part, taken from a manuscript called “Fairy Tales,” which describes our “utilitarian civilization.” Collingwood observes that our thoroughgoing rejection of magic, which expresses emotion, leaves us proud to be “sensible, rational, businesslike”; we hold that every act is justified by its utility (197). What is not useful we tend to suppress. We are afraid to embrace our emotions, finding them a worrisome residue of our savage past. As we discountenance emotion, we are apt to discredit its expression in art and religion as useless things (198). We misunderstand the customs of savages, supposing that they must be based on the same utilitarian calculus that moves our own actions. Yet if magic helps us to “resolve emotional conflicts” and to make necessary adjustments in our practical lives, our rejection of emotion may prevent us from understanding ourselves (199).

The seventh essay of the second part, extracted from an address to Belgian students in 1919, considers what Collingwood calls “the Prussian philosophy” (202). He begins by denying that imperialism “is fundamentally evil,” distinguishing instead between “right imperialism—the rule of the more civilized over the less civilized,” which he calls “a necessary element in the education of mankind”—and the “false and evil imperialism” of the Germans, who would impose the tyranny of one civilized people over another (201). German imperialism caused the Great War, but he finds its genesis in the Prussian philosophy, which diminishes the individual and exalts the state. “This strange philosophy”
was expressed but not embraced by Hegel, who "was too great a thinker to believe in it entirely." Marx made his proletarian dictatorship as absolute as Hegel's rational state. In the Prussian view, the state was "conquering and imperialistic"; its will could "only be defined as a will to power," in Nietzsche's "very formula" for the Prussians' "crude message" (202–3). Schopenhauer's pessimism was a sign that the Prussians were undergoing a "spiritual disease," which Collingwood attributes to Hegel's philosophy. He flatly claims that "this spiritual disease" caused the Great War and that "only the eradication of this theory" could bring peace (203). The error of the Prussian philosophy is in its belief in the unlimited power of the state: for power must always have limits. Even the power of the Christian God was limited by the moral law which he created and would not break. Collingwood therefore recommends international law and the League of Nations as proper antidotes to the omnipotent state (204). But he warns that "the Prussian philosophy is not crushed"; when it rises again, it will threaten "disaster and death, the destruction of civilization" (205). In the civilized nations' task of civilizing the world, every nation (even Belgium) must play its part; but we must not yield to the Prussian disease of supposing that the state should be omnipotent. Collingwood concludes by posing this stark alternative: either we embrace "mutual service and devotion, abnegation of self, of class, of race, nation, and language in the service of civilization and of the world," or we "see Europe a desert, silent, unpeopled, uncultivated; riddled with the craters of shells and scorched black with the fumes of poisonous gases." In his view "there is no third alternative" (206).

Collingwood's penultimate essay—the longest of the second part—leads up to the same danger by considering what he calls "three laws of politics." Originally delivered as a Hobhouse Memorial Lecture, it served as the basis for what Collingwood later published, in less readable form, as the twenty-fifth chapter of The New Leviathan. He defines a society as a community whose members determine together how they will live. The first law of politics is that there are rulers and ruled, those who make laws and those who obey them (209). The second law explains that the division between rulers and ruled is "permeable." At a minimum it must be so because of the fact of death, which means that the ruling body must replenish itself or be extinguished (210). Only "recruitment of competent persons from the ruled class" can supply the eventual defect of rulers. Since, however, the ruling class does not supply these vacancies automatically, it must make provision for accepting people who begin among the ruled into its own ranks (211). The third law is that rulers are those who take the initiative, as Collingwood divines from the original meaning of the Greek word archē. The ruler sets an example to be imitated by his subjects (212).

In a long but tersely written digression by this digressive writer, Collingwood illuminates what he means by the three laws. The digression begins by considering Harold Laski's complaint against T. H. Green, who refused to call Tsarist Russia a state because of its strong inclination to despotism. Colling-
wood sides with Laski, arguing that Green was “confused.” What he confused was the “scientific” meaning of “state” with the practical question of how Russia ought to be treated. In other words, Green mixed up values (“practical statements,” in Collingwood’s terminology) with facts (“scientific statements”). Green, whose “indignation got the better of his scientific bent” because he found Russia’s treatment of thinking men abhorrent, acted like someone who, when he was asked “what sort of meat had been offered him,” had replied, “‘It is a perfectly beastly sort of meat’; telling you not what the meat [is], but what his practical reaction to it is.” Collingwood suggests that the cobbler should “stick to his last,” and that as a political scientist Green had no business making a condemnation of Russia. At the same time, he mentions that the Chamberlain government concealed “the horrors of the concentration camp” from the public “to prevent indignation from flaring up into an inopportune and hopeless war.” He asks whether “this deception” was criminal or not, which reminds us of the division between ruler and ruled, of the need for the rulers to recruit from among the ruled, and of the importance of examples set by the rulers (213–14). Collingwood seems to be hinting that Chamberlain and his men were wrong to try to hide the villainy of the Nazis from people who would later have to fight them—that as political rulers they can be faulted not for criticizing their enemies, as the political scientist Green did, but for failing to criticize them. Collingwood’s conclusion seems to be that political scientists and statesmen should be held to different standards. But he leaves his position very murky, perhaps because it would be hard to show why this criticism of Chamberlain is any more scientific than Green’s criticism of Russia.

After a second digression on the meaning of the word “state,” in which Collingwood suggests that the turning point in its history was Machiavelli’s realization that rulers should enlist the active energy of the ruled (215), Collingwood asks why rulers achieve ascendancy over their subjects. Though superior intelligence provides a rational basis for rule, “H. G. Wells wrote a fantastically unpleasant story” to show that, although in the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man should rule, the blindness of the many might keep them from acknowledging the superior fitness of the one-eyed man (217). Madness competes with rationality in claiming the right to rule—most of all the creative kind of madness that puts Orthodox Christians in mind of the demonic. Plato’s tyrant has the appeal of this false currency; and, by “a reversed action of the Third Law of Politics,” the madman engenders more madness by his example. For sanity requires exertion: “it is much easier to speak and act and write crazily than to do it intelligently; you just let yourself go, and there you are.” The impressionable democratic mob finds new leaders who carry the madness to new extremes; shouting with a mob “is the easiest thing anybody can do” (221). Collingwood admits that he never expected the sudden collapse of the French in 1940. In retrospect, he finds its cause in the legacy of the French weakness for Napoleon, which divides them from England and makes them
susceptible to the blandishments of leaders who sympathize with German tyranny (222). He concludes the essay by claiming that his discussion was “altogether neutral” between political systems; but he disclaims any scientist’s ability to predict the issue of the Second World War, then in progress. As for German philosophers like Hegel and Marx, who thought they could foretell the future, “more fools they.” The future, Collingwood assures his readers, “has to be made by us, by the strength of our hands and the stoutness of our hearts” (223).

The book’s final essay is a draft preface to The New Leviathan, Collingwood’s attempt to elucidate what he took to be “the revolt against civilization” in his own time (224). (This preface was replaced by a shorter one when the book was published in 1942.) He understands civilization as a condition of “law and order, prosperity, and peace.” Civilized men live under “definite rules”; they win their livelihood without taking it from others; and they come to agreement with their fellows rather than relying on violence to enforce their own will (224). Rebels against civilization claim, from the left, that it fails to live up to its own ideal by allowing some men to exploit others; from the right, that “the very ideal of civilization is false,” since only civilized cowards forbear from exploiting their fellows (225). Germany, which prefers barbarism on account of the latter claim, is “fighting for the destruction of civilization.” England fights against Germany; but “what we are fighting for, nobody knows.” The government says only “that we are fighting to defeat the enemy,” which is hardly illuminating. Collingwood seeks to provide his “own answer.” In order to show that “we are fighting in defence of civilization,” he has to know what civilization is. To answer that question forces him to ask what a society is, but before he can understand a society, he must know what a man is (226). So The New Leviathan will limn a theory of man, society, and civilization, but only in the brief compass required in the present crisis to prepare a man to consider the revolt against civilization, and what a civilized society might do to defend itself. By this account The New Leviathan is a piece of war writing, though not war propaganda: Collingwood means to offer his reader “just what the present emergency demands, and no more.” He concludes the draft preface by paying homage to Hobbes, whose “Leviathan was the first book in which the idea of a civilized society was consciously and systematically expounded” (228). According to the plan established by its editor, the new volume of Collingwood’s essays leaves off where The New Leviathan begins, encouraging us to embark on Collingwood’s final and most neglected work. Boucher, in turn, makes The New Leviathan the centerpiece of his own study of Collingwood’s political philosophy, which he undertook as a companion volume to the book here reviewed (3 n. 10).

The editor is to be commended for having brought together the disparate essays of this volume and making them a whole, somewhat as Collingwood’s student T. M. Knox did earlier in compiling The Idea of History. With a par-
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tiality that may be forgiven he concludes his own study with the remark that while "many academics" have warned us "of the dangers which confront modern civilization," no one has done it "so eloquently, and few so passionately and incisively, as R. G. Collingwood." Our own appreciation of Collingwood must be more modest. In the theoretical first part of the new volume, he combines variations on James Mill's account of utility, Hobbes's account of right, and Hegel's account of duty in a welter of ideas more thought provoking than consistent. In the more practical second part, he advances a trenchant, if not always persuasive view of the dangers facing liberalism. There is enough of Collingwood in this book to convince the reader that he was a serious thinker and a devoted teacher. But some such judgment as Henry Jones wrote in his reader's report on Collingwood's manuscript "Truth and Contradiction," now published in the first appendix to this book, might well be applied to Essays in Political Philosophy as well:

I have read every word of it, and done so with lively interest; which is as good a testimonial as I could give to a book. But I cannot feel that I have a clear estimate of its worth. Not that it is unintelligible, nor that its problems are unfamiliar, or its doctrine strange; but that it has such contradictory qualities. (230)

NOTES


2. One notable feature of these essays is Collingwood's critique of psychology. Psychologists pretend to offer a comprehensive account of human action, but he sternly confines their empirical science to describing the actions of men insofar as they are not determined by reason. Though Collingwood dismisses the psychologist's argument that our reasons for choice are all unconscious, he admits that the psychologist may be able to help a man to understand and correct "capricious actions" if they "are 'morbid' actions, that is to say actions that interfere with the life he is trying to lead" (81; cf. 58–59). Unfortunately, however, psychology can alter healthy actions as easily as morbid ones, just as a surgeon can amputate a healthy limb; so "for everyone except those who suffer from really serious psychological disease the only sensible advice is James Thurber's: 'Leave your mind alone'" (82–83). Here Collingwood writes from experience: Boucher reports that he "took psychology seriously enough to undergo a full 50 sessions of psychoanalysis before considering himself qualified to comment on it" (81 n. 3).

3. One should compare Collingwood's brief discussion of duty in The New Leviathan, which concludes that "a man's duty on a given occasion is the act which for him is both possible and necessary: the act which at that moment character and circumstance combine to make it inevitable, if he has a free will, that he should freely will to do": The New Leviathan, or Man, Society, Civilization, and Barbarism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), 124.

4. My argument about the adequacy of Collingwood's understanding of history was suggested by Leo Strauss, "On Collingwood's Philosophy of History," The Review of Metaphysics 5, no. 4 (June 1952), 559–86.


7. See his famous remark that a part of him "used to stand up and cheer, in a sleepy voice, whenever I began reading Marx": *An Autobiography*, 152; but see also, in the introduction to *Essays in Political Philosophy*, Boucher’s convincing argument against the common view “that about the time that Collingwood wrote *An Autobiography* his political views had swung sharply to the left” (7–30).


10. The text reads “it” here in place of “is,” presumably in error.

**Book Review**


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I

Had the events of 1989—the collapse, theoretically and practically, of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, not to speak of its palpable fragility in China—occurred before Professor Machan's book had been published, he would have been able to offer the reader a less pessimistic, more truthful, though no less ironic text to serve as his epigram. That text, from Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, says the following:

Yes, say what you will—the Communists were more intelligent. They had a grandiose program, a plan for a brand new world in which everyone would find his place. The Communists' opponents had no great dream; all they had was [sic] a few moral principles, stale and lifeless to patch up the tattered trousers of the established order. So, of course, grandiose enthusiasm won out over the cautious compromises and lost no time turning their dream into reality: the creation of an idyll of justice for all.

As an escapee from Communist Hungary, moreover, Machan might even have celebrated the fact that the Communists' opponents without the grandiose dream, without the moralistic and dreamlike rhetoric of "justice for all," but armed with those few moral principles and the love of liberty, won out in the longer run. The China episode demonstrated that all the Communist utopians had left, if there ever was anything else, was mere rhetoric and brute force. Not social justice, not power, not authority, just mere rhetoric and brute force.

Machan's book is a defense of those few moral principles, but more especially of that liberty both presupposed by and resulting from them. At the same time it is a defense of the reality of persons as individuals whose rights hinge on the right to property as the necessary condition for the practice of virtue and the pursuit of happiness. It is, to say it somewhat archly, a noble defense of libertarianism. In this lies the originality of his thesis: the attempt to rescue the conceptions of life, liberty, and property from their associations with mechanis-
tic materialism and empiricism and to join them instead to a certain kind of moral individualism which he calls "classical ethical egoism." It is an attempt to establish modern virtue on an ancient basis, to wed the truths in Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith to the truths in Aristotle. At the same time, Machan studiously and laboriously takes into account what he calls "the various critics of foundationalism, meta-ethical naturalism, ethical cognitivism, egoism, political individualism, and capitalism." His taking account of the critics of these positions is concomitantly an affirmation of those very positions the critics deny. This results in a unified texture of his affirmations and their denials.

That unity is established over the course of seven chapters, two postscripts, an instructive introduction, and an even more instructive preface. Many of the ideas developed in the book, Machan tells his readers, were "partially aired" in such other forums as philosophical and political journals as well as in two volumes to which he contributed, The Main Debate, of which he is also the editor, and Ideology and American Experience.

II

A

In order to discuss classical ethical egoism philosophically and not merely ideologically, propagandistically, or casually, Professor Machan believes, and this reader concurs, that he must confront an epistemological issue, an ontological issue, and a metaethical one.

The first is to dispel the requirement of modern foundationalism, i.e., speaking the truth means speaking necessarily and with absolute certainty (saying that p means saying that ~p is impossible) without dispensing foundations altogether. The application here is that Machan wishes to define the concept of rights truthfully and soundly without having at the same time to imply that the truthful definition is "some final, unalterable timeless statement that corresponds to some final, unalterable, timeless fact" (p. 1). Rather, the truth of the definition of rights, like many other truths, is "context bound." In the case of the definition of rights, the contextual boundary is that of social morality, politics, and law. Correlatively, it is bound to that wider "context of human reality within a world in which not all that one wishes for is available just by wishing it" (p. 1). But to say that definitions are relational is not to deprive them of their objectivity. Just as a right not existing apart from a context of persons living together is not deprived of objectivity, so too a scientific principle holds conditionally yet objectively. If the sun's rays shine on skin pigment, for example, certain results would obtain (p. 2).

Machan maintains that human beings possessed rights they now have, however clearly or unclearly this was known, from the time that human beings
began to exist. Here he addresses himself to the challenge offered to the existence and knowledge of such rights by a Kantian-Platonic/Cartesian model of knowledge which holds that knowing is a kind of timeless, changeless, mutual-entailment relation. Referring to knowledge accounts in the work of Keith Lehrer and Stuart Hampshire, Machan answers the first by asserting that contextual aspects of knowledge should be admitted into the meaning of necessary and sufficient conditions, and that Gettier-type counterexamples—wherein merely conceivable (i.e., logically possible and not really possible) scenarios serve to defeat a definition of ‘knowledge’—should be rejected because not to do so is to lose the concept of knowledge altogether by requiring it to live up to a “fantastic” ideal which can be attained only by an omniscient mind (p. 6).

He answers Hampshire by asserting: (1) Language is not conventional in the sense that a person can choose to have or not have it, although he can choose to use a particular language. (2) The rules of language are not created ex nihilo but develop gradually through the recognition of their suitability and effectiveness, as is the case with other tools. (3) Language is not a mere game. “Games are optional activities in human life whereas language is a basic tool” (p. 5). Machan implies that Hampshire and others like him seem to have reversed the order of analogy, which is that the rules of games are analogous to the rules of life and not the other way around. (4) The model of knowledge invoked by Hampshire is similar to Lehrer’s, i.e., “to know that p” means “to be unalterably, forever certain, beyond a shadow of conceivable doubt about p” (p. 6). Machan repeats that such a requirement for knowledge is impossible and self-defeating. To seek “an independently identifiable ground in reality,” one independent of human consciousness, is impossible and to show that something is the actual ground of reality, no other ground being possible, is to require infallibility, incorrigibility, and perfection—the qualities of divinity not humanity (p. 5).

At this point in his epistemological propaedeutic, Machan suggests a more appropriate conception of knowledge by regarding the rules of language the way Aristotle did in one of his formulations of the principle of noncontradiction: “It won’t be possible for the same things to be and not to be [not] just [as] a matter of the word—but where it’s a matter of the thing” (p. 5). What is more, although Machan does not impose on himself or his readers the requirement of meeting what he calls a fantastic Kantian-Platonic/Cartesian model of knowledge, he does not leave himself or his readers without any epistemological foundations. He settles on and for the Aristotelian view of the basic principles of reality (noncontradiction, identity and excluded middle) understood in a substantive rather than in a purely formal sense. The fact that there are mathematical objections to the principle of excluded middle does not vitiate Aristotle’s basic metaphysical position, according to Machan (p. 7). A system of concepts—in this case one which includes those of “individual” and “rights”—resting on such principles learned from Aristotle “is confirmed repeatedly in all thought and action,” to which Machan adds unnecessarily, “and also on the processes of sensory perception” (p. 7).
Interpretation

In addition to a proper epistemological basis for his argument about "individuals" and "rights," Machan turns for further support to the ontological issue, the nature of human beings. He says that if it is the case that individuals have rights, these rights cannot be grounded only on either convention, contract, or interest. For these presuppose something else, i.e., something that is natural, something that human beings are, such that the conventions, contracts, and interests occur or exist. Machan is not deaf to the criticism that the concept of "the individual" is recent, however, a concept that either did not exist or did not have ontological priority in medieval or ancient discussions. He mentions the alternative of "the family" having ontological priority in these discussions but argues, among other things, that this may have been a mistake of omission, albeit an understandable one due to an inadequate development of our conceptual system. The recent so-called invention of the concept of the individual would then be not an invention but a discovery of what was implicit in the concept of 'family.' Machan then addresses himself to the issue that "individualism" has been associated with those philosophical concepts which entail a rejection of the concept of human nature. He formulates and addresses himself to the following dilemma: "the individual exists and has always existed, in which case there is no human nature and natural rights; or the individual has been invented and there is a human nature, but no individuals have natural rights since no individuals exist to have such rights" (pp. 8–9). The dissolution of the dilemma lies first, he says, in arguing that individualism has had an inadequate philosophical base, presumably Locke's and more recently Sartre's, and then in finding the adequate one, Aristotle's, which reconciles individuality and human nature in such a nonreductivist way as to offer a conception of human beings who, while being members of a species, are the cause of some of their own actions. Thus they would possess not merely numerical individuality but, through choosing some of their behavior, individuality in the significant political sense of possessing individual natural rights (p. 9).

Machan proceeds, then, to consider, and to discard by way of sound arguments, the various ontological positions which deny human choice or freedom. Among the positions he considers are mechanistic scientific views such as Newtonian physics, Skinnerian behaviorism, and Darwinian natural selection, not to speak of those philosophic doctrines which accept a materialist and mechanistic physics such as positivism. In the course of his arguments, Machan more than hints that he considers a teleological view of nature neither obsolete nor incompatible with a rigorous nonreductivist science.

The third issue that Machan considers as preparatory groundwork for his central argument is the metaethical one of the "distinction" between facts and values, between "is" and "ought," between nature and morality. Although he does not put it in the following way, my formulation would be congenial to him, namely that while the distinction is true, the division or separation is not. It is the dogmatic version of the distinction he disavows. This is to say that there are not two worlds—the world of facts and the world of values—but one
world with interrelated aspects. One interrelated pair is the “fact-value” pair. Machan puts it this way: Values may be regarded as kinds of fact and many facts must be inferred, especially those not immediately accessible to sensory awareness. He then proposes a theory to explain how values are indeed a species of complex fact. The theory says that with the emergence of living things, values come into existence, and with the emergence of human life, moral values come into existence. Since living things can perish, whatever contributes to perishing comes to be regarded as bad or “disvalue,” so that the idea of value or goodness derives from the fact of life. But lives are not all identical. Nor are the standards of value or goodness by which the differing kinds of lives find the best way to live. Human being is the kind of living being that discovers that the best way of life is to “adapt” to its environment through the capacity to rearrange it (i.e., free choice) and thereby take advantage of and create a number of options to forge a successful life. Morality, then, is the set of general principles that members of the human species must discover in order to live a successful human life. This is what Machan means by a fact-based concept of value or goodness. Good and bad are features of living human being. “They are objective relational features or aspects of living” (pp. 18–19).

B

Having established the groundwork for his central thesis, Machan, in the body of his book, proceeds to develop the argument through a set of proposals which he defends against their critics. He provides a brief summation of his thesis, which is worth quoting in its entirety.

We as human individuals are responsible for doing well at living our lives. This, when understood, implies a system of moral and political principles. It implies, morally, that each person should aspire to live rationally as a human individual and, politically, that regarding their chosen conduct, everyone must be left free from, and should seek protection against, intrusions by others. Each person, in short, must be left with a rightful, defensible sphere of authority to make his or her own way in life—for example, play it safe or take risks, develop or falter, stay apart from others or join with them when this is mutually agreeable. All this rests on a conception of ethics as a firmly-based yet contextual system of guidelines required by human beings because they lack automatic, built-in (instinctual) prompters for how to carry on with their lives successfully. In what follows it will be argued that the human self ought to be understood along not Hobbesian but Aristotelian lines. Then the egoism that emerges will prove to be the best and indeed most noble ethical system on which to ground a sound politics. (P. 27)

It is equally worth examining in somewhat greater detail some parts of this summary so as to illuminate further not only the thesis as a whole but also and especially the novel points expressed in the last two sentences.

The individualism which Machan defends is that conception of it which he
opposes to collectivism. To Marx’s notion that “the human essence is the true collectivity of man,” Machan opposes the notion that “the human essence is the true individuality of man” (p. 21). The main reason he gives for his treatment of the human essence is that since human beings are distinguished from other living beings in virtue of the form of consciousness they possess, and since this form of consciousness—namely rational and conceptual thought—implies the capacity for creative original thought, then it is correct to argue that it is an individual not a collectivity which is capable of original ideas. For this the individual brain is a necessary prerequisite. Machan adds the reminder that it is individual human beings who are born, live, enjoy, suffer, and die, whereas collectivities do none of these.

If this is so, then moral and political values arise. The rational and free individual, because of a creative role in governing the course of his life, can act wrongfully as well as rightfully in sustaining and enhancing that life. Hence morality. Since individuals spend most of their time with other individuals, the moral principles which sustain and enhance individual lives must also be a guide to public and economic policy. The rules that govern communities, therefore, must be such that they enable individuals to flourish in the best way possible. This is done best, according to Machan, not by rules telling individuals what they must do for and to one another but what they must not do to and for one another. Government is established, then, to protect individuals from and against interference with one another as they engage in their chosen conduct. The name for the power to choose the conduct of their life so as to sustain and enhance life is “natural right.” The name for those rights that government exists to protect is “negative right.”

Most of this sounds like the natural rights doctrine of Hobbes and Locke on one hand and the individualistic political economy of Adam Smith. Egoism or self-interest is required by these doctrines. But while Machan admits this, the egoism he defends he calls classical and finds in Aristotle. Herein lies the originality of his book. Such an egoism he regards as a sound system of morality, not merely a crutch for libertarian politics or capitalist economies. Indeed, since Machan considers ethics as conceptually prior to politics or economics, he expressly admits that he would abandon negative liberty and libertarian politics if classical egoism were to demand their abandonment. This admission is qualified with the admonition that rational self-development, i.e., classical egoism, is hardly conceivable in a society where some individuals have the authority to tell others what to do rather than what not to do (p. 29).

The task of separating a version of egoism for the basis for ethics and for liberal capitalism without overstretching the very concept of egoism or having it collapse into the Hobbes-Lockean version is formidable, and Machan knows it. He believes that his version will escape the logical and ethical solecisms of such formulations of the Hobbes-Lockean version offered by Milton Friedman and George Stigler.
... every individual serves his own private interest. ... The great Saints of history have served their 'private interest' just as the most money grubbing miser has served his interest. The private interest is whatever it is that drives an individual. (P. 26)

... Man is eternally a utility-maximizer—in his home, in his office (be it public or private), in his church, in his scientific work—in short, everywhere. (P. 30)

Machan replaces the isolated and atomistic individual with what he calls Aristotle's "self-sufficient, self-loving human being" because it is more "sensible" than the other version and it is "closer to what we know about human beings" (p. 31).

The Aristotelian text which is the point of departure for Machan's "classical ethical egoism" is from the eighth chapter of the ninth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

... if a man were always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues, and in general were always to try to secure for himself the honorable course, no one will call such a man a lover of self or blame him.

But such a man would seem more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the things that are noblest and best and gratifies the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys this; and just as a city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most authoritative element in it, so is a man; and therefore the man who loves this and gratifies it is most of all a lover of self. (P. 37)

Machan is not oblivious to the objections that arise immediately about this use of Aristotelian material as support for ethical egoism. In fact, in the second sentence after the completion of the quotation, he asks: "Why call this 'egoism' in the first place?" He anticipates in this way a most obvious objection. Aristotle appears to be contrasting the moral individual with the egoistic one. The moral individual performs noble actions and obeys reason, the most authoritative element in him, and not self-love or self-interest. The end for the sake of which actions are performed, whether they be of the class of moral or of intellectual virtues, is the actions themselves and the satisfaction derived from performing them. Some such actions may require the sacrifice or denial of self-interest, such as risking one's life to save another's. If self-interest is not sometimes denied or sacrificed, then the notion of self-interest or egoism collapses into those versions of it that Machan wishes to avoid, as found, for example, in Milton Friedman and George Stigler.

In an endnote on page 214, in which Machan discusses the Aristotelian passage with respect to interpretations of it, he anticipates another serious objection to his use of Aristotle for libertarian ends. The objection is one of the few that the present reviewer has to the book. Machan quotes from Jack
Wheeler’s essay “Rand and Aristotle: A Comparison of Objectivist and Aristotelian Ethics,” in which Wheeler rightly says:

In a certain sense, no Greek can be labeled an egoist any more than an altruist. The whole issue of egoism and altruism is modern. Indeed, the entire project of attempting to reconcile one’s own interests with benevolence or the interest of society as a whole seems clearly to start with Hobbes and the Hobbesian view of man.

Machan does not answer this objection. The response that the notion of the individual emerged later from its implicit locations in classical and medieval thought is not sufficient answer. Nor is the response to the question “Why call this ‘egoism’?” sufficient. Machan’s replies that “the ultimate beneficiary of moral conduct is the agent, in that he or she will be the best person he or she can be” (p. 37). He adds that the point of morality is to give human beings “a guide to doing well in life, to living properly, to conducting themselves rightly.” But all these, as already said, may sometimes involve self-denial or self-sacrifice.

Machan insists that egoism is abhorrent because the standard version of it tends toward greedy, envious, lustful, and, in general, antisocial behavior—behavior that is incompatible with morality which entails generosity, good will, and noncalculating loyalty. The objection to standard egoism about its inability to resolve conflicts of self-interest in principle or in fact is a question-begging objection for classical egoism inasmuch as in this version it would never be in one’s genuine self-interest to do the morally wrong thing (p. 33).

The thrust of classical ethical egoism is that “everyone ought to strive to become the best individual human being possible” (p. 61). It does not abide making some individuals the “resources” for others, however. While “sociality” may be inherently human, says Machan, i.e., implicit in human nature, it must be a matter of choice (p. 61). In this way, whatever is morally dubious in egoism disappears for him. Ethical egoism or individualism, he repeats, is not an ethics of greed, ambition, or power, but one of self-development. Its political form, the doctrine of natural rights, is concerned with the expansion of self-development in as peaceful, “though not necessarily fraternal or familial,” manner as can be obtained (p. 61).

A problem must be noted here with Machan’s Aristotelianism. It would appear that he disregards the singularly characteristic line of Aristotle’s Politics, “Man is a political animal by nature,” a line which does not mean merely that human beings are social by nature but rather that individuals become human in and through the city. This means that the kind of life the city makes possible is precisely the human life (i.e., the life of reason and liberty). Hence this social form cannot be thought of solely as a matter of choice but as a necessary condition for a human life. It is no sin to be selective in one’s Aristotelianism, however.
Machan's politics are Lockean, but his wish and desire are to relate this politics to an Aristotelian ethics understood as ethical egoism which establishes the content of the natural law ethics and which Locke claimed governed the state of nature. This is to say that "eudaimonistic individualism" is the ethics that should guide human conduct prior to the consideration of civil law (p. 95). Machan substitutes Aristotelian ethics understood as an egoism of self-development for Lockean ethics, whereby every man is an executive and an executioner of the law of nature. The problem may be one of an appropriate fit here. The Lockean ethic fits with the Lockean state of nature because the latter is the place of Hobbesian war of everyone against everyone. The Aristotelian ethics fits with the Aristotelian political society, which is primarily cooperative in character, starting as it does with the desire that unites men and women and the fear that unites master and slave. Locke’s doctrine of natural rights fits comfortably with Locke’s political doctrine. Aristotle’s ethics, understood even as a benevolent egoism, seems to be ill fitted for a Hobbes-Lockean politics.

This is not to say that Machan’s attempt to provide a sound and even humane moral theory for libertarianism is not original and interesting. He says that once it is accepted that every individual ought to pursue a good life, then the conditions that are necessary to make this possible, although not to guarantee it, are necessary conditions for justice (p. 123). Ethical egoism, he continues, demands that persons be treated in such a way that their right to acquire and retain some domain of personal authority be respected. Complete rational conduct would be difficult if not impossible without this domain of personal authority, liberty, and jurisdiction. The respect for the domain of authority is an expression of justice, while the domain itself is concretely expressed in the right to property (p. 137). Machan takes the term “property” first in the Lockean sense of one’s own person, such that the individual, not others, must be the final authority in conducting his or her life and, second, “anything tradable or exchangeable [items, skills, or other valuables] that may be of value to persons” (p. 140).

Machan again admits at this point in his argument that prior to the modern period individuals were thought of by prominent thinkers as part of a whole, while at the same time personal privacy and property did not receive emphasis. But he rejects the view of those critics who exaggerate the point and draw invalid inferences from it. These critics claim, moreover, that the notions of the individual and of his moral sovereignty are inventions. He, however, asserts that they are discoveries based on a better understanding of human life reached at a later point in history. But he readily admits that extreme doctrines of individualism and of private property, i.e., those that understand the individual as entirely unique and separate from everyone else, capable of isolated self-sufficiency, are unwarranted. The concept of privacy which he defends is that which signifies the aspect of a person which is separate from others, namely autonomy, in the sense of self-direction or self-governance. This, in turn, is the
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moral presupposition for private property such that an individual possesses naturally the authority to keep, use, or give away the things which belong to him and such that he (not others) is responsible for whichever choice he makes as to their disposition (p. 141). Machan finds a medieval suggestion of his view in the thought of William of Ockham (who, through some oversight, is placed in the twelfth century rather than in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth). He is supposed to have held that "private property is a dictate of right reason," and also that "natural right [being] nothing other than a power to conform to right reason" (p. 141). It may be no accident, but it is mildly ironic that hints of modern capitalism can be found in an English medieval Franciscan.

At any rate, rational moral life requires a reflective deliberation on available alternatives and then responsibility for the decisions or choices made from these alternatives. Of course, deliberation about and choice from alternatives implies jurisdiction over the alternatives. In a totalitarian regime of a socialistic kind, both deliberation and choice would be so restricted that each of its members could rightly say about his actions, "Nothing is up to me" (p. 144). Without a clear distinction between what is ours and what belongs to someone else, says Machan, moral confusion sets in and confidence about leading a moral life is lost (p. 143). He quotes Aristotle's criticism in the Politics concerning common property and says that what is ultimately tragic in the tragedy of common ownership is that even if an individual were determined to fulfill his responsibilities, it could not and would not be clear what his responsibilities are (p. 144). Hence property rights are necessary for the practice of the moral life (p. 147).

A political economy which permits and guarantees to its participants not only the ownership of property but the derivative right to exchange or use it as they wish is one which is best suited for the possibility of human individuals living a moral life. That such a political economy does not at the same time guarantee equal economic results and avoid market failures is not and should not be a ground for government to disregard property rights altogether or to redistribute property in the name of a moral imperative to redress economic inequalities. The coercive power of government exists, precisely in the forms of defense and crime fighting, to protect the lives and property of its members so that they may engage in a rational pursuit of self-development (pp. 150–51).

Machan's defense of property rights and a free enterprise political economy is a disavowal of Marx's conception of private property and human individuals on one hand and of defenders of capitalism on the other. He quotes Marx as saying:

The right of man to property is the right to enjoy his possessions and dispose of the same arbitrarily, without regard for other men, independently from society, the right of selfishness. (P. 153)

Then he correctly points out that Marx is speaking of the worst possibility of private property and an inordinately pessimistic view of human intentions. The arguments against both are too obvious to be repeated here.
Machan’s more interesting criticisms are directed at those champions of capitalism who are economists pretending to be value-free social scientists. In attempting to be purely “scientific,” in a false albeit not falsifiable positivist theory of science, these economists who defend the free market presuppose a normative viewpoint as well as a controversial conception of the good (p. 154). When they defend the superiority of the free market system, they defend the superiority of private property over collectivism or welfare-statism even, argues Machan, when these economists attribute no more merit to the system than its efficiency for producing what people want (p. 155). He adds that this purportedly value-free posture is so transparently false that the adversaries of capitalism trade on it to discredit the transparently best economic system and the discipline which studies it (p. 154). Machan does concede, however, that Marx was not mistaken when he connected the right to private property with egoism. Marx was mistaken, though, in taking the Lockean theory of rights as entailing the view of the individual as essentially an isolated monad and the view of the relationships between individuals as essentially those of separation and conflict. The only respect in which Machan admits separation as entailed by the Lockean natural right position when it is joined to classical egoism is in the moral sense, whereby each person is responsible for his or her own actions (p. 172). The rights to life, liberty, and property are not instruments of conflict between individuals but “conditions of existence required by man’s nature for his proper survival.” The words within quotation marks are those of Ayn Rand. Although “nature” and “proper” are stressed, the entire clause can be understood, in a purely Hobbesian sense, however, with “proper” meaning “own.” In this way, the clause would not bear the moral weight that Machan wishes it to bear. Indeed, another more lengthy quotation from Ayn Rand is employed by Machan to strengthen the moral foundation he wishes to build for libertarianism, but it too does not seem to fit his needs. As Rand puts it,

‘Rights’ are a moral concept that provides the logical transition from the principles guiding an individual’s actions to the principles guiding his relationship to others—the concept that preserves and protects individual morality in a social context—the link between the moral code of a man and the legal code of a society, between ethics and politics. (P. 172)

This passage does not say enough in order to establish what it claims to establish, namely, “the logical transition from the principles guiding an individual’s actions to the principles guiding his relationship to others.” If there were a mention or suggestion of respecting the rights of others, then Machan would have reason to hope for support from Rand. There is no mention of how the link between the moral code of an individual and the legal code of a society is to be forged. The moral code of the individual may involve only self-interest in a purely hedonistic sense, and the legal code may mean merely the coercion that the government may employ to keep people from interfering with each
other’s pleasure. Without the concept of duty as its correlative, the concept of rights cannot do the job logically, morally, or politically.

Machan considers but rejects a rights theory such as that offered by Alan Gewirth, who defends what he calls the “supportive state” which is supposed to secure for each individual the rights of freedom and well-being. Everyone is equal in possessing these rights. But in the attempt to reconcile the right to liberty with the right to well-being, Gewirth, according to Machan, does not prove that well-being is something others must provide an individual, only that it is vital for the individual’s life (p. 197). Furthermore, Gewirth’s defense of a welfare-state theory of rights fails to take account, says Machan, of the difference between values only others can produce for the individual and those which almost all adults can produce for themselves (p. 198). A right to freedom exists because autonomy is something that an individual possesses if others do not take it away. Freedom cannot be given, only taken and regained. Well-being is different, according to Machan. Individuals may lack it apart from what others do or don’t do to or for them (p. 198). While the value of well-being is not in dispute, regarding it as a right is a mistake. For if it were a right, it would impose on individuals legally enforceable duties that they do not have. The laws which authorized such an imposition would substitute the concept of need for the concept of justice as the basis for legitimacy (p. 199).

John Rawls’ version of the welfare-state theory—that inequalities are morally and legally justified if they raise those people who are the worst off, as far as needs are concerned (i.e., the economically disadvantaged), to a higher standard of living—is paradoxical at best (p. 200). Rawls believes that “no one deserves his greater natural capacity nor merits a more favorable starting place in society.” The welfare state, therefore, must remedy the unfairness of nature. Machan says that the paradox lies in the theory that moral character is essentially obtained by accident. If this is so, then Rawls must deny at least implicitly any merit to individual effort because character is what explains a person’s moral deeds. Character is not obtained through effort but by accident. How then, asks Machan, can a person earn the right to anything of value by improving the lot of the poor and needy, as Rawls’ theory requires. The appeal to character or virtue that Rawls makes to improve the lot of those who have lost out in life must fall on deaf ears unless, of course, the appeal rests not on moral grounds but on sheer force of government to establish and maintain equality which, in turn, is understood as the only index of fairness.

Machan concludes that the welfare state promotes rights and entitlements which are keyed to government interventions because the individuals within a capitalist system need equalizing forces to remedy both nature and a harsh socioeconomic system. A doctrine of natural rights formulated first by Locke and defended by himself and other libertarians limits individual rights to those of life, liberty, and property. These rights are derived from a conception of human nature as having a moral aspect. This is to say that each human individ-
ual has the responsibility to pursue the best possible life for himself and that other individuals may not interfere with either the effort or lack of it to meet that responsibility. The task of remedying the inequalities and harshness of life must be the responsibility of "voluntary cooperating individuals and groups" (p. 203). The worry that individuals will not accept this responsibility cannot be relieved by the appeal to a coercive state which, experience has now taught everyone but the most dogmatic of ideologues, produces only greater inequalities and greater suffering, not to speak of greater injustices. The doctrine of natural rights defended by Machan includes the expectation that a government which protects the rights of life, liberty, and property will produce a society that will be prosperous, decent, and just (p. 203).

III

Professor Machan has written a book that is excellent in every respect but one: the nagging doubt it leaves in the mind of the reader about the central thesis, the ontological priority of the individual with egoism as the basis for ethics. He is quite right and persuasive about the concept of the individual lying implicit in ancient thought only to be discovered by modern thought. Yet the concept of the individual required by an ethical egoism is one that is more compatible with Epicureanism than with Aristotelianism. Stretching the argument to redeem the libertarian concept of the individual from its Hobbes-Lockean origins is even more dubious. Just as the opposition between egoism and altruism is neither an ancient opposition nor a true one, so too the opposition between individualism and collectivism (or between the individual and the state) is neither ancient nor true. In such ancient texts as Plato's Apology and Crito as well as Aristotle's Politics, it is evident that the human individual becomes human, i.e., leads a human life, only in and through the city. This is the meaning of that characteristic sentence of Aristotle's Politics: "Man is a political animal by nature." This is the purport of the characteristic line of Plato's Apology: "The life without inquiry is not a human life." It is the burden of the speech of "The Laws" in the Crito, wherein the city is not only understood as natural but as of higher worth than the individual inasmuch as the individual becomes human only through the city. In the other political associations of the ancient world, the tribe and the empire, neither individuality nor a human life are probable, according to Plato and Aristotle. Tribes do not achieve high civilization. Empires, being large societies, do not manage to generate the kind of freedom an individual must have to lead a human life.

Machan does mention the first opposition, that between egoism and altruism, but does not attend to it, as was pointed out earlier in this review. He refers to the second in the context of responding to those critics who raise the issue of the priority of the family to the individual and those other critics who
say that the concept of the individual is a modern invention (p. 8). He attends to the issue not altogether satisfactorily, for while he is correct about a non-abstract notion of the individual lying implicitly in both ancient and medieval philosophy, the notion is discovered in modern philosophy but then transformed within the context of contractarian political philosophies. In this transformation by Hobbes and Locke "the individual" is just as much an abstraction, an artifice, as is the state. The appearance of concreteness is created by attributing the desires and fears of a person to the abstraction of "the individual." In the Hobbes-Lockean social polity, the individual has a decisive preoccupation for and with himself over any concern he has for the community to which he belongs by social consent. Machan tries to remedy this concept of the abstract and selfish individual by releasing it from its modern context and by tying it to an ancient one, specifically Aristotle's ethics, which in turn he calls an ethical egoism. Since Machan himself is somewhat dubious about such philosophers as Rawls believing that there is no need of any metaphysical and epistemological grounding for ethics, we must assume that he is prepared to drop the mechanistic atomism of Hobbes-Lockean individualism for the teleological and organic individualism of Aristotle. He says as much, but in this case he must and should let go of the notion of egoism. He cannot do so, however, because the notion of egoism is tied to the notion of rights, and Machan may not be prepared to yield the notion of rights. Yet Aristotle got along fairly well without it. And giving up the notion of rights means giving up the libertarian conception of polity. While Machan does replace a modern view of ethics with an ancient one, he can hardly be expected to replace the modern view of polity with an ancient one without being accused of nostalgia, romanticism, or, worse, ahistoricism.

Perhaps Professor Machan might concede a little, at least to understand that egoism is not so untroublesome a basis for ethics. Not only is the egoism-altruism opposition irrelevant for Aristotelian ethics, it is simply irrelevant. If posed as a disjunction—either egoism or altruism—it is a false disjunction because sometimes a person may choose for himself, sometimes for others on the grounds of a different ethic such as that of duty or love. Furthermore, self-interest may be a virtue, but it cannot be the basis for ethics, or as Socrates would say, it is not virtue itself. Still further, if interests are limited to the self as defined by the self (for how else could they be defined in an egoistic system), then it is not evident how the person could distinguish between right and wrong on one hand and self-interest on the other, especially since the self does not irrevocably surrender its natural rights.

Last but not least, even if this self-interest is called rational, as Machan insists on doing, one could still argue, by way of criticism, that even rational self-interest does not do the trick, because reason sometimes fails us in moral choices and often our passions, of either the erotic or aggressive kind, overcome our reason in those choices.
These criticisms are not meant to denigrate a splendid book but solely to enter into a brief philosophical discussion with it. Professor Machan, unlike many libertarians, is not only conscious of the weaknesses of the position but attempts to save it from those weaknesses. The effort is especially laudable and timely, for as millions of the world's people are shedding the shackles of collectivism, whether political, economic or rhetorical, they appear to be yearning for and choosing a political economy based on liberty.
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