<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Howard Moltz</td>
<td>Story and Plot in the Book of Judges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>John S. Treanafelles</td>
<td>On the Teachability of Virtue: Political Philosophy’s Paradox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Steven V. Hicks</td>
<td>Regionalism, Globalism and the Prospects for World Order: A Hegelian Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Heinrich Meier</td>
<td>What is Political Theology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Jacob Howland</td>
<td>Love of Wisdom and Will to Order in Plato’s Timaeus: On Peter Kalkavage’s Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Alex Harvey</td>
<td>A Review of Stephen Wolfram’s A New Kind of Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Fall 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Howard Moltz</td>
<td>Story and Plot in the Book of Judges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>John S. Treantafelles</td>
<td>On the Teachability of Virtue: Political Philosophy’s Paradox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Steven V. Hicks</td>
<td>Regionalism, Globalism and the Prospects for World Order: A Hegelian Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Heinrich Meier</td>
<td>What Is Political Theology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Jacob Howland</td>
<td>Love of Wisdom and Will to Order in Plato’s <em>Timaeus</em>: On Peter Kalkavage’s Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Alex Harvey</td>
<td>A Review of Stephen Wolfram’s <em>A New Kind of Science</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

©2002 Interpretation, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the contents may be reproduced in any form without written permission of the publisher.

ISSN 0020-9635
INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The journal welcomes manuscripts in political philosophy in the broad sense. Submitted articles can be interpretations of literary works, theological works, or writings on jurisprudence with a significant bearing on political philosophy.

Contributors should follow The Chicago Manual of Style. Instead of footnotes or endnotes, the journal has adopted the Author-Date system of documentation described in this manual and illustrated in the present issue of the journal, as distinguished from previous issues.

Words from languages not rooted in Latin should be transliterated to English. Foreign expressions which have not become part of English should be accompanied by translation into English.

To insure impartial judgment, contributors should omit mention of their other publications and put, on the title page only, their name, any affiliation desired, address with postal zip code in full, email address, and telephone number. It is particularly important for the journal to have the present email addresses of those submitting articles.

Please send three clear copies, which will not be returned, and double space the entire text and reference list. Please also send one copy in Word format either on a disk, or else as an attachment to an email message to interpretation_journal@qc.edu.
In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster defined story as a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence—dinner coming after breakfast, Tuesday after Monday, decay after death, and so on (Forster 1954, 47). A story, Forster added, can have only one merit, that of making the reader want to know what happens next. If the reader is not interested, if he or she does not ask, and then?, either we do not have a story or, if we have what purports to be a story, it is seriously flawed.

A story can have a plot and good stories do. A plot adds the element of causality to a story. The king died and then the queen died is a story. The king died and then the queen died of grief is a plot (Forster, p.130). A plot preserves the time sequence of a story and reveals what lies behind the events of the story. To have force, a plot must satisfy the curiosity of the reader.

In the Book of Judges, the actions of its characters unfold over time, these actions have consequences that engage the reader, and, true to the requirements of plot, the Book answers the question why. This is not to deny that it may have been written as an historical account—I do not know what the author or authors had in mind (Boling 1975, 29-38). I say only that the Book goes beyond dates and places and actual happenings. It creates characters and imagines dialogue; it speaks of the will of God and of His wrath and repeated forgiveness—which of course is not the stuff of history.

The present essay offers a literary analysis of the Book of Judges, treating the Book as a story and focusing on the individuality of its
characters and the reasons for their failure. First, there are the judges, each in
his way a man of the sword, and some so warped by power as to commit mur-
der. Second, there is God, the ineffectual sovereign, seemingly unaware of what
it takes to retain the loyalty of an essentially disloyal people. And throughout
there is Israel, slipping into disaster, unable to bridle her lust for sculpted
things.

To begin, the title is a misnomer in that none of the judges lit-
erally judged: none sat at the gate or decided even informally between a man
and his neighbor. Thus, while the verb to judge is used often, the noun, apart
from its use in the introduction (Judg.2:16-18), appears only once (11:27) and
then only in reference to the Lord (Boling, 5).

But if those in the Book of Judges cannot properly be called
judges, might they be called saviors? Yes, but only in a limited sense, for fol-
lowing the death of each warrior/judge, Israel would commit apostasy and be
oppressed by yet another foreign nation. Recognizing, then, that neither judge
nor savior is precise, I will follow common practice and refer to the men of the
Book as judges and say that they judged.

The Book commences with the words, After the death of
Joshua, the Israelites inquired of the Lord, and what they asked was, Who shall
go up first against the Canaanites? (1:1). (Unless otherwise indicated, all trans-
lations are from the New Revised Standard Version, 1989.) Their great leader
had died, but the Israelites appear determined, at least at this point, to drive the
native inhabitants from the land. The tribe of Judah is selected to go up first
and, in fighting against the Canaanites and the Perizzites, realizes a series of
victories, suffering but one defeat: Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of
the plain, because they had chariots of iron (1:19). Then, suddenly, there was a
failure of will, not on the part of Judah who could not drive out, but on the part
of the other tribes who did not drive out. Thus the Benjaminites did not drive
out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem (1:21), nor did Manasseh drive out
those who were in Beth-shean (1:27), nor did Ephraim drive out... (1:29), nor
Zebulun... (1:30), nor Asher... (1:31), nor Naphtali (1:33).

Perhaps this failure of will occurred because the tribes, seeing
that Judah had not prevailed against chariots of iron, came to believe that God
would no longer intervene on their behalf. But whatever the reason, the belief
proved prescient, for soon thereafter an angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal
to Bochim (2:1) to say, I will not drive out [the indigenous peoples] before you (2:3), and their gods will become a snare (2:3). And because their gods did become a snare, the Lord repeatedly sold His people into the power of other nations, only to relent and raise up yet another judge to deliver them.

Othniel, considered by some to be the the first savior judge (Boling, p.57), the model judge-leader, (Klein, 1988, p.34) is made an offer by Caleb, his brother: Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, I will give him my daughter Achsah as wife (1:11). Othniel accepts and achieves victory, thereby acquiring not only Achsah but tillable land and water rights as well. Subsequently, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel, and king Cushan-rishathaim, who was oppressing Israel, was given into his hand (3:10).

While Othniel may have gained courage in battle, there is no evidence that the Spirit instilled knowledge of God, or even prompted the thought that there was but one god; nor is there evidence that Othniel was concerned about Israel. Not surprisingly, he left no lasting moral legacy, nothing to keep the Israelites from alien worship, so when he died, Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (3:12).

This time the Lord strengthened King Eglon of Moab against Israel and, in alliance with the Ammonites and the Amalekites, [Eglon] went and defeated Israel (3:12). After eighteen years of servitude, the Israelites cried out and once again a deliverer was raised up (3:15). The deliverer was Ehud, whose name probably derives from the Hebrew word for majesty. There was little, however, that was majestic about Ehud. He was deceptive, and worse yet, an assassin. He used the name of the Lord as a lure (3:20), stabbing King Eglon and killing him as the King rose from his throne in response to Ehud saying, I have a message from God for you (3:20).

It is difficult to imagine, other than for purposes of war, why Ehud had been raised up. To be sure, he had achieved a great military victory: under his leadership the Israelites killed about ten thousand of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men (3:29). And from this the people came to know war, which, incidentally, God had intended to teach (3:1-2). Given, however, that God’s over-riding concern was with Israel’s infidelity, how could Ehud, who apparently thought only of the sword, keep Israel from lusting after the Baals and the Astartes?
But it has been said that Ehud was more than a warrior, and that there were two occasions in which he openly repudiated the worship of foreign gods (Polzin, 1980, 160). In the first, he turned away from the idols near Gilgal (3:19), and in the second—shortly after he stabbed King Eglon—he passed beyond the sculpted stones (3:26). I think, however, that to take either incident as reflecting repudiation is an over-interpretation, for in the plain sense of the episode, these stones were not idols but landmarks, provisional boundary points (Soggin, 51). Moreover, there is no evidence that Ehud considered his actions as symbolic and intended thereby to instruct the people. In sum, Ehud, as a judge, should not be redrawn—he was a man of war, spirited to be sure, but deeply flawed.

Following Ehud, Shamgar is mentioned but receives only a single verse. It is said that he slew six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad and, in the slaying, delivered Israel (3:31). Presumably, God had selected Shamgar although, as in the case of Ehud, it is not said that he received the Spirit of the Lord. Nonetheless, the land had rest as it had under Ehud.

Then, not surprisingly, the cycle was repeated: the Israelites did what was evil, the Lord put them under the yoke of a foreign power and, when they cried out, the Lord delivered them—this time from the Canaanites and through the agency of a remarkable woman and a reluctant male warrior.

It is said that Deborah was a judge and that the Israelites would come up to her for judgment (4:5). She was also a prophetess, a messenger of God. She sends for Barak and announces that the Lord has commanded him to bring up troops and that He [the Lord] will draw out Sisera, the general of the [Canaanite] army...and give him into your hand (4:7). But Barak replies that he will go into battle only if Deborah will go with him (4:8). Deborah agrees, but then, contradicting what she had just said about Sisera, predicts that the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman, and consequently that the road on which [Barak is] going will not lead to [his] glory (4:9).

The reader assumes that the woman referred to is Deborah, but it is Jael, a Kenite. Jael draws Sisera into her tent after he had fled on foot following the defeat of the Canaanite army; and when he lies down, she kills him by driving a tent peg into his temple (4:21). Barak, coming in pursuit of Sisera, is shown the man he was seeking. Seeing that Sisera has been murdered,
and perhaps recalling the prophecy of Deborah concerning the hand of a woman, Barak is silent.

There are two points to be made about Barak in this brief episode: He went into battle without thought of glory, but, as if in doubt about the divine promise, he insisted that Deborah accompany him. I think this need for Deborah’s presence, evidently as a kind of surety, is the reason Barak is treated almost dismissively in the so-called Song of Deborah at the conclusion of the episode.

It was sung that Deborah was a mother in Israel (5:7) and that Jael, a Kenite and an assassin, was the most blessed of women (5:24). Of Barak, however, there is no praise, just the command, Arise and lead away your captives (5:12). And then, as if to diminish his role as leader, mention is made of the fact that four tribes did not follow him into battle: Reuben tarry[ied] among the sheepfolds (5:16), Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan, Dan abide[ed] with the ships and Asher sat still at the coast of the sea (5:17). Finally, it is the Lord, not Barak, who is declared the savior of Israel: He went out from Seir (5:4) to defeat the Canaanites, and when He did, the earth trembled (5:4), the mountains quaked (5:5) and even the stars fought from heaven (5:20). Clearly the road on which Barak walked had not led to his glory. The land, however, did have rest as it had after the defeat of Aram under Othniel and the defeat of the Moabites under Ehud. But once again, Israel slipped back into apostasy and the Midianites came up as thick as locusts (6:5) and like locusts they wasted the land, leaving no sustenance…and no sheep or ox or donkey (6:4).

At the end of seven years, the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites to remind them that their God had led them out of Egypt and that He had said, you shall not pay reverence to the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live (6:10). Curiously, the Israelites did not respond, so some time later an angel appears in Ophrah where Gideon, the son of Joash, was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites (6:11). And the angel said, the Lord is with you, you mighty warrior (6:12). Gideon, however, was deeply skeptical: if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt’? (6:13). The Lord does not answer the challenge, but simply orders Gideon: Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian (6:14). (Here, as elsewhere in the story,
an angel is not a separate being but is interchangeable with God, a visible manifestation of God [Soggin, 114]).

Clearly, the Lord had commissioned a man who had no thought that the oppression Israel was suffering was in retribution for sin; and indeed, he even doubts that the Lord had addressed him. Arrogantly enough, Gideon commands the speaker to remain until I come to you, and bring out my offering, and set it before you (6:18). When Gideon returns with his offering, the angel reaches out his staff and fire springs up to consume the meat and unleavened cakes that Gideon had brought (6:21). Convinced now of the identity of the speaker, and hearing Him say, do not fear, you shall not die (6:24), Gideon builds an altar to the Lord. But then, when the Lord orders Gideon to pull down the altar of Baal (6:25) that belonged to his father, and to erect in its place an altar to the Lord, Gideon does so by night because he is too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day (6:27).

Shortly thereafter, the Midianites and the Amelekites and the people of the East come together (6:33) and the spirit of the Lord clothes Gideon (6:34, author’s translation); in response, Gideon sounds the trumpet for the Abierzites and calls out to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. Still distrustful, however, he devises two tests, in effect challenging the Lord to demonstrate His power. Evidently intent on saving Israel, the Lord complies, but lest Israel and Gideon vaunt themselves saying, ‘My own hand has delivered me’ (7:2), He commands Gideon to dismiss those who are fearful and those who, when drinking from a stream, lap water with their tongue. Only three hundred warriors remain.

That same night, the Lord commands Gideon to attack the Midianite camp, but then sensing his hesitation, He orders Gideon to go into the camp of the Midianites to hear what they say (7:11). When Gideon reaches the camp, he hears a man recounting a dream, and he interprets it to mean that Israel will prevail against Midian and all the army (7:14). Convinced now of victory, Gideon declares to his men, the Lord has given the army of Midian into your hand (7:15). Blowing trumpets, carrying torches and smashing jars, the men of Israel confound the Midianites, whereupon the Lord sets the sword of every Midianite warrior against his fellow (7:22). But when some Midianites escape, Gideon, ignoring that he had been commanded to retain a reduced force, sends a call throughout Israel to pursue the enemy. With this call, the man who was fearful of family and townspeople and repeatedly sought assur-
ance arrogates the victory. He now looks only to himself, torturing and even killing the Israelites of Succoth and Penuel because they dared doubt him. Clearly, the arrogance the Lord feared had come to pass, and from this point on, the Lord does not speak to Gideon.

The name Gideon probably derives from the Hebrew verb meaning to hew. He had, however, a second name, Jerubbaal, given after he had pulled down his father’s altar at Ophrah. This name, as the story explains, means, let Baal contend (6:32), and indeed Baal does.

When the Israelites say to Gideon, Rule over us; for you have delivered us out of the hand of Midian (8:22), Gideon replies, I will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you (8:23). But then, without pause, Gideon requests of each soldier an earring of gold taken as booty (8:24) and from these earrings he makes an ephod, apparently an idol, that he places in the city of Ophrah and before which all Israel (and Gideon as well) prostitutes themselves (8:27). Thus did Baal contend, not directly of course, but through the man called Jerubbaal, that is, Gideon, for not only did Gideon sanction and, indeed, encourage apostasy by forging an idol, but it is said that after he died, Israel made Baal-berith their god (8:33). (Baal-berith means Baal of the covenant, a name that obviously profanes the covenant.)

Apostasy, however, is only part of the legacy of Gideon, for Gideon had a son, Abimelech (my father is king), and the son was so warped by the pursuit of power that he murdered indiscriminately. To begin, Abimelech leaves Ophrah and goes to Shechem, to the whole clan of his mother’s family (9:1). There, he announces that he is of their bone and their flesh (9:2), and orders them to say in the hearing of all the lords of Shechem, ‘Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one rule over you?’(9:2). His appeal works: the lords of Shechem declare ‘He is our brother’ (9:3) and they give him seventy pieces of silver taken from the temple of Baal-berith. With these pieces of silver, he hires worthless and reckless fellows (9:4), goes to his fathers house at Ophrah, [and] kill[s] his brothers the sons of Jeubbaal, seventy men, on one stone (9:5), whereupon he is made king.

Only the youngest son, Jotham, manages to escape, and from a mountaintop calls to the lords of Shechem to listen to him, and for God to witness their response. At first he speaks allegorically about trees that once went out to anoint a king over themselves (9:8) and ends, not with a tree as
king, but with a shrub that yields neither fruit nor provides shade. He then charges the lords, saying that they have not dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house (9:19), for they have strengthened the hand of a murderer and made the murderer king. Let fire, therefore, come out from Abimelech (9:20), Jotham says. And a fire, or at least an evil spirit (9:23), does come to stand between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem to make the lords act treacherously with Abimelech (9:23). They set up ambushes on mountain-tops (9:25), rob all who pass by and then, in an effort to destroy Abimelech himself, enlists the aid of a mercenary called Gaal, son of Ebed (ironically, son of a servant). Abimelech defeats Gaal, kills the ordinary people of Shechem, burns alive the lords and sows the city with salt. Still insatiable for glory, he goes up against another city and there as well attempts to burn the tower to which the inhabitants of the city have fled. Now, however, it is not an evil spirit but an upper millstone that comes forth, cast by a certain woman from atop a tower, and it falls upon Abimelech’s head crush[ing] his skull (9:53]. Unable to bear the humiliation of dying at the hand of a woman, Abimelech calls upon his armor-bearer to draw his sword and kill him. So of the dynasty of Gideon, only Jotham remained—and he was in hiding, having fled from his brother.

It is suggested that the most heinous of Abimelech’s crimes was the crime of fratricide because at bottom it was a crime against his father (9:56). Thus, while in earlier episodes Yahweh (Lord) had relented following the sin of apostasy, now the offense of Cain had been committed and no mitigation was possible. Accordingly, throughout the Abimelech passages, the Deity is referred to as Elohim (God), which name the ancient rabbis considered expressive of the divine attribute of justice (Brichto 1999, 19). So to execute justice, Elohim, not Yahweh, took the life of Abimelech: Thus God repaid Abimelech (9:56).

Following Abimelech, mention is made briefly of Tola and Jair. Each judged Israel, and during the time of their judging the land had peace. And because there was peace, there likely was the freedom to tend livestock and cultivate fields. (That Jair had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys...and had thirty towns (10:4) appears to suggest great abundance.) But then, after the death of Jair, the Israelites forgot that it was the Lord who had given them rest from those who would oppress them, and in their well-being they bowed down to the gods of other nations. Angered, God sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. And now He said to
them: Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress (10:14). Suffering under the rule of their new masters and evidently desperate for deliverance, the Israelites put away their foreign gods…and worshipped the Lord (10:16). Once again the Lord relents, but not because His people had returned—if they had ever returned—but because He can not bear to see [them] suffer (10:16). Yet this time as well, the Lord responds by selecting a judge.

The Ammonites encamp in the town of Gilead and the elders of Gilead, leaderless and in disarray, appeal to Jephthah, a mighty warrior (11:1) who has about him a band of outlaws and who, when younger, had been driven out of his father’s house because he was the son of a prostitute. To this man they say, Come and be our commander so that we may fight with the Ammonites (11:6). Jephthah resists, reminding the people of Gilead that it was they who had rejected him; but then he agrees, saying, If you bring me home to fight with the Ammonites and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head (11:9). Jephthah had bargained and won: the people made him head and commander over them (11:11).

Jephthah then sends messengers to the king of the Ammonites, ostensibly to negotiate peace, but in fact to seek confrontation. Should you not possess what your god Chemosh gives you to possess? Jephthah asks. And should we not be the ones to possess everything that the Lord our God has conquered for our benefit (11:24). In this there is the implication that the Lord is essentially a warrior god and, like Chemosh, gives or withholds victory without concern for righteousness or fidelity.

Nonetheless, the spirit of the Lord [comes] upon Jephthah and he passe[s] through Gilead and Manasseh…on to the Ammonites (11:29), apparently determined to go into battle. Before engaging the Ammonites, however, he makes a vow: If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord’s, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering (11:30-31). Here again is Jephthah’s conception of the Deity, but now expanded: a god who can be bribed by human sacrifice.

As horrific as it is, there is nothing impulsive or mindless in Jephthah’s vow; on the contrary, given his strong need to prevail and what he imagined would ensure victory, the vow is both calculated and thoughtful. And
in Jephthah’s eyes, it undoubtedly worked: thereafter He inflicted a massive defeat on [the Ammonites]. So [they] were subdued before the people of Israel (11:33).

When Jephthah returned home, there was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and with dancing (11:34). When he saw her, he said, Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low; you have become the cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot take back my vow (11:35). Here, the hardness and insatiable ambition of Jephthah are revealed. First, he expresses concern only for himself, regretting, not that his child was to die, but that he would be deprived of progeny, for he had no son or daughter except her (11:34). And second, in saying that the vow was irrevocable, that he could not take [it] back, Jephthah, I think, was expressing fear that if he failed to make of his daughter a burnt offering, his god, who alone determined winning and losing, would somehow rescind the victory.

Not surprisingly, the daughter echoes the same concern: do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, now that the Lord has given you vengeance against your enemies (11:36). She asks only that she be given two months to go and wander on the mountains and bewail [her] virginity (11:37). The request is granted and, upon her return, Jephthah does with her according to the vow he had made (11:39).

Afterwards he engages in a bitter inter-tribal conflict, setting Gileadites against Ephraimites because the Ephraimites dared challenge his leadership. Jephthah prevails—the Gileadites slay forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites (12:6). It is said that he judged Israel six years and was buried in his town in Gilead (12:7).

The measure of Jephthah as a judge is clear: he was a man warped by ambition, concerned only for himself. In contrast, the intention of the Lord in relation to Jephthah is unclear. If it was to impart courage, then He succeeded: Jephthah went into battle against the Ammonites and dealt them a crushing blow. If His intention, however, was to impart righteousness or to have Jephthah inveigh against apostasy, then He clearly failed, for Jephthah remained committed to the pursuit of power, with no price too high.

Three judges now appear in rapid succession. Of Ibzan it is said that he had thirty sons and thirty daughters, and that He gave his thirty daughters in marriage outside his clan and brought in thirty young women
from outside for his sons, [and that] He judged Israel seven years (12:9). Elon succeeded him, and he judged Israel ten years (12:11). And then Abdon, who had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys (12:14), judged Israel eight years.

These judges, much like Tola and Jair, are not distinctive, for little is said about them. Why, then, are they in the story—or is it that the story all but lost its way? (Webb 1987, 162). Perhaps it did, but I do not think so. First, there was peace in the land, a peace that Ibzan, Elon and Abdon had sustained. Second, there was the blessing of children, which, after the sacrifice of Jephthah’s only child, is all the more dramatic. And finally, there was abundance, for it is said that Abdon’s sons and grandsons rode on seventy donkeys, the donkey at the time being an animal much valued and clearly symbolic of wealth (Soggin, 196). Here, in other words, is a fullness of life, extending over a succession of judges from Ibzan to Elon to Abdon. And I think it implies that well-being ends, not when a judge dies—for another can take his place—but when the people commit evil and Elohim reacts in anger. If this is at all tenable, then the present episode clearly fits the story.

In the past it was the Mesopotamians, the Canaanites, the Midianites and the Ammonites who had conquered Israel. Now it is the Philistines, and this time Israel does not cry out but appears to accept domination, as revealed in the question voiced by the men of Judah: Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? (15:11). Nonetheless, the Lord raises up a judge by announcing to a barren woman that she shall conceive and bear a son, that he shall be a Nazirite from birth...[and]...shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines (13:5).

The son, called Samson, grew and went down among the Philistines, impelled by the Spirit of the Lord [that] began to stir him (13:24). There, in the city of Timnah, he saw a woman who pleased him and he wanted her for a wife. This dismayed his parents, for they did not know that the Lord was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines (14:4), nor did they know that their son had been invested with great strength.

When Samson discovered that the Timnite he finally married was forced to betray the answer to the riddle he had put before the wedding guests, he killed thirty men of Ashkelon and took their garments to pay the wager. And when he returned to find that his wife had been given to another
man, he burned the grain-fields of the town, which in turn led the Philistines to burn Samson’s wife and her father. In retaliation, Samson struck them down with a great slaughter (15:8).

Then, as if weary of killing, he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock at Etam (15:8). The Lord, however, would allow him no rest: three thousand men of Judah brought him up from the rock (15:14) to give him over to their Philistine rulers, and when the Philistines came shouting to meet him (15:14), Samson killed one thousand of them with the jawbone of a donkey.

But once again it seemed that Samson became weary. Now fearing that he would die of thirst, he called on the Lord to give him water. When the Lord split open [a] hollow place (15:19) and Samson drank, he revived and went to Gaza and visited a prostitute. When the Gazites were told, Samson has come here (16:2), they lay in wait for him. This time, however, there was no killing, only humiliation: Samson pulled up the gate of their city and carried [it] to the top of the hill that [was] in front of Hebron (16:3).

After a time, Samson encountered a woman named Delilah. Unlike his former Timnite wife, who had merely pleased him, Samson loved Delilah. Somehow knowing this, the lords of the Philistines said to her, find out what makes his strength so great and [each of us] will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver (16:5). Eager for the silver, Delilah nagged him with her words day after day (16:16), but each time Samson fooled her. Finally, after she said, How can you say ’I love you’ (16:16), he told her the secret of his great strength and added, I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb (16:17).

Clearly, Samson knew that he had been set apart and that his strength lay in his hair—and perhaps he knew also that his strength was rescindable by God at any time. But for all this, Samson was astonishingly naïve about Delilah. Trusting her, he put his head on her lap and fell asleep, whereupon she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of [Samson’s] head (16:19).

When Samson awoke, he was unaware that his locks had been shaved and that he had become like other men. The Philistines quickly seized him, gouged out his eyes and made him grind at the mill in the prison (16:21) in Gaza. But after a time the hair of his head began to grow (16:22), and when the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and called
for Samson to entertain them (16:25), Samson cried out, Lord God, remember me and strengthen me only this once, O God, so that with this one act of revenge I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes (16:28). (Literally, for one of my two eyes.) And the Lord did remember him: Samson strained with all his might; and the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it [and] those [Samson] killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his life (16:30). Thus, in Samson’s love of Delilah, God found yet another opportunity to act against the Philistines (16:30).

It has been said that Samson was ignorant of his own destiny (Polzin, p.190) and oblivious [to] the awesomeness of God (Klein, p. 126). To be sure, he did not lead Israel into battle, but then he was chosen to act alone; he did not glorify the Lord’s name, but that was not his commission. He knew, however, from whom his strength came and he knew who granted victory (15:18). And, when abandoned, left blinded and enslaved, he still trusted, asking that he be remembered but one more time. Thus, while proud and often mindless, Samson was a man who could humble himself before the Lord; and though not able to relinquish the desire for revenge, he evidenced a strength that went beyond muscle and sinew—the strength to choose death over the humiliation of slavery. Perhaps it was in recognition of this choice, and the dignity it expressed, that his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him...in the tomb of his father Manoah (16:31).

In the concluding chapters (17-21) there are no foreign oppressors; now it is Israelite against Israelite, tribe against tribe. God is blamed for this breach, as the people call it, and, in acts of kidnapping, rape and murder, they abandon Him altogether.

There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah (17:1). He was a thief, having stolen eleven hundred pieces of silver from his mother. He returns the silver and is rewarded with an idol of metal that his mother had paid a silversmith to cast. Micah then makes an ephod and teraphim, and equipped with these images he erects a shrine. A wandering Levite becomes Micah’s priest and, as if to underscore his profound ignorance of the divine will, Micah says, Now I know that the Lord will prosper me (17:13). But the Lord, of course, does not prosper him: his priest is lured away, his idols are stolen and he is not heard from again.

This undoing of Micah was perpetrated by Danites passing
on their way to seize land. To that end, they went to a place in which there lived a quiet and unsuspecting people and put them to the sword and burned down the city (18:27). Thereafter, they rebuilt what they had destroyed, took up Micah’s idol—evidently for purposes of worship—and maintained [it] as their own (18:31). The tribe of Dan is not mentioned again apart from the other tribes; their apostasy, however, and the killing they perpetrated set the stage, as it were, for Israel’s final descent into moral chaos.

At this point another Levite comes on the scene. He had taken to himself a concubine who, in anger, had fled to the house of her father. He pursues her and, with the consent of her father, takes her back. On their return, the Levite accepts the hospitality of an old man residing in Gibeah, the city of the Benjaminites. That night worthless men of the town surround the house, demanding that the Levite be brought out so that they may have intercourse with him (19:22). (The parallel with the story of Lot in Gen.19:1-11 is evident.) The old man offers his virgin daughter along with the concubine: Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing (19:24). But before the worthless men can respond, the Levite seizes his concubine and puts her out to them, whereupon she is wantonly raped (19:25).

In the morning, the concubine is seen lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold (19:26). The Levite commands her to get up (19:28) and when she does not answer he puts her on his donkey and sets out for home. Once home, he cut[s] her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and send[s] her throughout all the territory of Israel (19:29) with the message, Has such a thing ever happened since the day that the Israelites came up out of the land of Egypt until this day? (19:30). In response, the Israelites assemble at Mizpah and the Levite is given an audience. What he presents exonerates him (They intended to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she died [20:5]) and implicates the lords of Gibeah (20:5), not the worthless men who in truth had committed the crime.

The Levite is believed and the tribes of Israel sen[d] men through all the tribe of Benjamin (20:12) demanding that the scoundrels in Gibeah (20:13)—presumably the lords the Levite accused—be handed over so that they might be put to death. The Benjaminites refuse, at which point the Israelites inquire of the Lord and twice the Lord urges them to go up against the Benjaminites and twice the Israelites suffer severe losses. It does not occur to them that they are being punished because they were all too ready to believe
the Levite and, for some reason, all too eager to confront the Benjaminites. Then a third inquiry is made, this time at Bethel; after weeping, fasting and sacrificing, the tribes ask, Shall we go out once more to battle against our kindred the Benjaminites, or shall we desist? [and] the Lord answers, ‘Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand’ (20:28). On that day, the tribes put to the sword all but six hundred men of Benjamin and destroy as well the city, the people and the animals, and all that remained. Also, the remaining towns they set on fire (20:48).

Immediately afterward, the tribes raised up their voices to say, O Lord, the God of Israel, why has it come to pass that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel? (21:3). This, of course, is less an inquiry than an attempt at self-exoneration, less a request for information than an effort to shift responsibility onto God. Now blameless in their own eyes, or nearly so, the tribes express compassion for Benjamin, their kin (21:6): How are the Benjaminites to survive, they ask, when they have no wives?

Earlier, the tribes had vowed that they would not give their daughters in marriage to any of the Benjaminites; moreover they had sworn, whoever did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah...that one shall be put to death (21:5). The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead had not assembled at Mizpah and so had not killed Benjaminites. In the eyes of the tribes, this failure to kill was a crime, and it provides an opportunity to keep the oath concerning their own daughters. Thus, they send a force of twelve thousand soldiers with the command to slaughter every male [of Jabesh-gilead] and every woman that has lain with a male (21:11). Only four hundred women remain—all virgins, and each is given to the Benjaminites. But four hundred do not suffice, for six hundred men of Benjamin have survived.

Again there are words of compassion and now self-absolution is complete: the Lord has made a breach in the tribes of Israel (21:15). Then, to repair the breach, the elders of the congregation (21:16) advise the Benjaminites to go to Shiloh, lie in wait and carry off the young women when they come out to dance at the annual festival—in other words, to kidnap them! Furthermore, to avoid reprisal, the Benjaminites are instructed to say to the fathers and brothers—and here is the ultimate in casuistry—that they must be generous (21:22) for the women were not captured in battle. Thus do the Benjaminites have the requisite number of wives, and each tribe, satisfied that the breach has been repaired, returns to its own territory.
Perhaps in later days they will come together as a nation to live in covenant with the Lord, or perhaps they will continue to bow down to sculpted things and brother will keep raging against brother. Here, however, is where the story ends.

**Conclusion**

Dark things are revealed in the Book of Judges. There is deception and disbelief, insatiable ambition and the mindless pursuit of glory. There is sexual lust and betrayal—and such arrogance as to lead to murder. And finally there is indifference to the very transgression that the Lord had inveighed against repeatedly: the people’s worship of sculpted things.

In the literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia, the ideal king is pictured often as a shepherd, in the sense of one who guides and protects (Sohn 1991, 164). The same metaphoric linkage can be found in the Hebrew Bible. The book of Ezekiel, for example, has the Lord announcing His intention to send King David as a shepherd to the people (Ezek.34:23), and in Genesis, Jacob proclaims that God, the King of Kings, has been his shepherd from the time of birth (Gen.48:15). Given this equation of king and shepherd, I think it revealing that the Book of Judges ends with the sentence, In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes (21:25).

When the Lord raised up Ehud, for example, or clothed Gideon with His spirit (6:34; author’s translation), He created warriors, not kings in the image of shepherds. These warriors prevailed against the enemy but did not guide the people as a shepherd might guide a flock. They did not teach righteousness and justice and covenantal fidelity; they did not say, This is what the Lord demands; it is the way in which you are to walk.

But then the Lord Himself used few words and seemed unaware of the need to explain, to articulate His moral demands, in brief to teach in the manner of a shepherd/king. To be sure, He had condemned apostasy, but largely through action, repeatedly imposing the yoke of foreign oppression. And while He encouraged those He raised up, investing some with His spirit, He did not instruct, so there were those who deceived and those who murdered—and of course none brought the people into the covenant.
Finally, to this image of the Deity as neglectful teacher must be added the image of an overlord—distant, often imperious, desperately seeking loyalty for the sake of [His] name (Ezek. 20:9; 36:22); and while it was said that He could not bear to see Israel suffer, that was on but one occasion, immediately after which He appointed yet another warrior/judge. He was not, in other words, the husband, as Hosea pictured the Lord in covenant with Israel (Hos. 2:7, 16, 19-20), nor the father in the conception of Jeremiah (Jer.3:19-20; 31:20). Perhaps, had He been husband or father and had put in place either the closeness of a marriage or the tenderness of a parent for a child, the people would not have strayed. As it was, they bowed time-and-again to sculpted things, only to descend into anarchy. Thus did the King of Kings fail as overlord.

References


The synoptic texts of political philosophers are famous for their creative and often controversial educational plans to teach people virtue. In Plato’s *Republic*, for example, or even Rousseau’s *Emile*, these plans appear to govern the entire text, rivaling if not in fact eclipsing more familiar political themes that have made these texts and their authors equally famous and controversial, and, of course, the subject of much scholarly interest. Thus Rousseau can admire the *Republic* not for its political themes—these he apparently dismisses—but for Plato’s attention to virtue, which like *Emile* governs so much of the argument. Less visible but no less important to these texts is a paradox concerning virtue for which political philosophers have shown great consideration without necessarily adverting to it, and which I will herein call the paradoxical nature of virtue’s teachability. Though present throughout the history of political philosophy, the paradox has not been prominent in our public pronouncements on moral issues, nor, as it seems to me, has our academic community sufficiently consulted political philosophy for instruction on the issue. By this I mean editions on virtue’s teachability generally do not examine the issue in the manner of ancient and modern political philosophy (Darling-Smith 1993; Chapman and Galston 1992). Nor do studies on moral philosophy address the issue (MacIntyre 1984; Lutz 1998). If we assume, for example, that virtue is teachable simply because of some human capacity for virtue (Darling-Smith 1993, 1, 29), then we risk ignoring important passages in Plato’s *Meno* (70A-B) and *Protagoras* (319A-320C), as well as the conclusion of Rousseau’s *Emile*, where that same assumption puts virtue’s teachability into
question. We even risk ignoring important passages in the *locus classicus* of virtue’s teachability, the *Republic*, which, as I will show, draw attention to the problematic founding conditions of the best city precisely to reveal the paradox itself. In effect, my argument will be that political philosophers have with common mind understood virtue’s teachability to be a paradox by reason of obstinate human spiritedness. Accordingly, in this essay I will examine the paradoxical nature of virtue’s teachability as it is expressed in the arguments of political philosophy’s greatest practitioners, not in order to resolve the paradox, but to restore the issue to the prominence it rightly deserves in their thought: as something that is forever compromised by human spiritedness, and for which human caring in the Socratic sense may be the only practical alternative against a cosmos that shows no providential concern for the moral and political needs of mankind (Cropsey 1995, 2, 222-23). With one well-placed example, and from my reading in the history of political philosophy generally, I conclude that if virtue’s teachability is by nature paradoxical, it is because human spiritedness has proven itself to political philosophers to be the obstacle as well as the means to virtue’s teachability, and therefore to any good politics we could reasonably expect given our human condition.

By spiritedness I mean that part of human nature which grants in principle what it vigorously denies in practice. My formulation is intentionally broad enough to encompass spirit understood as anger, pride, vanity, envy, or willfulness, but not so broad as to overlook serious differences within the history of political philosophy itself. I have drawn it from a passage in Plato’s *Republic* that to my knowledge has not been sufficiently examined for its bearing on virtue’s teachability, and therefore on the possibility of the best city itself. By paradox I mean something that is unbelievable or contrary to our senses or to our common practices, but may nevertheless still be true. If what is true is also true *by nature*, meaning by that the truth of something that does not owe its being or essential character to human agency, then any virtue based in nature makes virtue true but paradoxically true. Virtue is paradoxically true because it is so uncommon and unconventional, and so contrary to the way people have always lived their lives that political philosophers rightly reasoned they would never willingly submit themselves to such virtue.

Perhaps people have always been suspicious of the unconventional when their own sense of happiness and the conventional means to it were affected. Or, perhaps most people simply lacked the intellectual capacity
to accept as authoritative in their lives a virtue restricting their individual happiness to that available only from their specific occupation and its contribution to the happiness of the whole city, and for whom death would prove to be an irresponsible liberator of the worst kind (Republic 419A-421C, 619D); or, even more intimately, to accept as authoritative in their lives a virtue defining happiness by their soul’s ability to discriminate life’s excesses and deficiencies with a mean that governed their decisions and pursued them even into death (Ethics 1098A15-20; 1100A10-1101B5). From this I gather that neither in our manifestly public displays nor in our psychic private experiences can our existing non-comprehending conventions sustain in deed political philosophy’s unconventional prescriptions for paradoxical virtue, perhaps for the same reason that the irrational appears incapable of supporting or can never be the basis for the rational or natural itself.

This would mean that the truth about the natural cosmos as a whole is contemplated in the truth about our moral and political lives in particular. If each truth implies the other, then virtue’s teachability should be knowable in some respects from natural science’s investigations into the whole cosmos as the whole cosmos should be knowable in some respects from political science’s investigations into virtue’s teachability. But if both investigations are necessarily interminable, then each science by implication contemplates not only the other’s compromised-because-incomplete knowledge of virtue’s teachability, but its own incompleteness as well. Without sufficient knowledge of virtue, political society would have no recognizable way to perpetuate itself by teaching the next generation virtue, presumably because it cannot teach what it does not know. That political society does survive generational change is too obvious to require comment. But to explain it by appealing to virtue’s teachability, political philosophers reasoned they had to understand the natural cosmos as a whole and man’s place in it, so that they might account for what we cannot simply deny. If virtue proves to be knowledge, following the famous Socratic formula, it should be teachable; if not knowledge, not teachable. Should we determine that virtue is not knowledge but nevertheless is teachable, or that virtue is knowledge but is not at all teachable, in either case we would have before us a conundrum, not some self-evident fact, and in any case, a lot of explaining to do. The conclusion of Plato’s Protagoras warns us this might be our inescapable human predicament, both morally and politically.

Generally speaking, the synoptic texts reveal that the human
good we traditionally call virtue is in principle knowable or made intelligible by human reason guided either by natural or political science, but which by the light of that same reason or science we come to know is practically impossible to realize fully in our human affairs. By itself this disparity was not sufficient reason to agonize over virtue’s precarious status in the world; nor was the rejection of nature and eventually of convention by modernity cause for concern either. Only when reason itself was questioned did a philosophical aporia turn into a practical moral crisis. This happened not so much because reason was powerless to create justice on earth, but because reason had lost its objectivity once the historical conscience became fully conscious of itself. To speak metaphorically, the progressive but invisible hand of reason writing what no one consciously intended, now understood itself to be irrational, without order and direction, and, to continue the metaphor, conceived its own writing to be illiterate and meaningless except within its particular cultural context or genealogy. I mention this not because I wish to pursue the matter, but only to indicate that any understanding of reason does have an affect on our practical moral affairs. Whether we end up practicing a politics of moral resignation, or some cruel elitist virtue of the future, the historical conscience has knowingly or unknowingly put virtue’s teachability into question for us by effectively putting reason itself into question. While this is not necessarily a new discovery of human thought, nevertheless, the legacy of virtue’s teachability as a paradox has not always been recognized despite its prevalence in ancient and modern political philosophy, and despite its continuance into the so-called post-modern era, where it persists irrespective of convenient periodizations of philosophy.

Let me now state the issue more formally: What is conceptually apodictic about virtue is by necessity empirically impossible. It is this fundamental truth about the human condition that political philosophers encounter whenever they prescribe the moral and political instruments needed to overcome it; for if virtue is paradoxically true, its teachability is truly paradoxical.

Political philosophers have traditionally looked to nature, or the truths of nature variously conceived, for knowledge about virtue itself, and for the means to secure virtue in political society against that overwhelming paradox. Nature could provide political philosophers the intellectual authority to instruct the few or wise rulers in the goodness and therefore desirability of political arrangements most conducive to virtue’s prospects. But their imme-
mediate problem was convincing the many or unwise ruled, who were naturally suspicious of any arrangements threatening political society and its institutions as they knew it, as if their alienation and exclusion from political society was imminent by some incomprehensible authority in nature they could never accept: what by necessity persuaded one, by necessity dissuaded the other. Nature evidently spoke to political philosophers in equivocal tones, on the one hand expressing a hard but natural disassociation among men, and on the other revealing their only salvation to lie in the agency of political society itself. And yet nature seemed inclined against any resolution, at least any political kind, because whenever nature instructed political philosophers in the virtue needed to rehabilitate men to each other, nature by that same virtue also instructed them in the limits to political philosophy’s impact on political society itself.

While always mindful of such limits, political philosophers reasoned from nature that their political prescriptions for mankind’s salvation were best secured if, and perhaps only if, virtue was taught to prospective citizens; and if not in its fullest philosophical meaning, then at least sufficiently to integrate them into civil society through various conventional means, that they might submit to virtue’s authority as their rulers had, though not necessarily in the same way or for the same reasons, but always under the moral guidance of nature. Eventually, a more ambitious plan attempted to replace nature altogether with the human will as the only legitimate seat of moral authority, and as the only legitimate way to secure virtue best for all mankind. However, by reasoning away from nature, ultimately by confronting nature’s moral equivocalness with the morally armed human will, political philosophy may have also reasoned and positioned itself against any human teachability in that virtue. That remains to be seen. Here, and only by way of introduction, I want to make the following point now so I can reaffirm it by way of conclusion later: In their own way, nature, convention, and even the human will, expose political society to be confined, indeed, even characterized if not essentially defined by a irresolvable paradox concerning virtue’s teachability.

Furthermore, to discover and understand the paradoxical nature of virtue’s teachability, I believe we must join political philosophers in founding cities of virtue, for it is at the founding moment that the paradox is seen, and, most importantly, that political philosophy’s limited opportunity to influence political society with its paradoxical virtue is recognized. For per-
haps in no other place but at the founding can we learn why conventional civil society of the many unwise naturally resists the few wise rulers’ natural right to rule them. As we will see, this tension between convention and natural right exists primarily because of human spiritedness, or what the ancients called *thymos*, and the moderns called *amour-propre* or vain-glory, or what we today simply call anger in all its manifestations. Anger management was the price the ancients paid to harness obstinate spirit in the interest of virtue’s prospects, in effect, natural right’s concession to the power of convention. But in recent times there is a discernible trend to eliminate spiritedness completely from the human *psyche* in the interest of virtue, now increasingly understood to be freedom, and freedom of the will in particular, perhaps even to historicize that tension in order to transcend it with a moral dispensation no longer founded on natural right or convention, or on some mix of both, but on something today vulgarized into “self-esteem.”

To all this, an objection can reasonably be raised against my intended course. While the ancients’ seemingly transcendent virtue suggests some kind of paradox between man as he is and man as he ought by nature to be, the moderns’ synthesis of philosophy and political power into enlightenment over came all such paradoxes by grounding virtue’s teachability in what was authoritative in most men most of the time: their passions and self-interest. Thus, by attending only to man’s condition as a natural being, as he is instead of as he should be, modern thinkers construed virtue’s teachability to be both universal and authoritative: universal because it acted upon the psychological matrix responsible for most of our actions (our passions), and authoritative because each of us was sufficiently predisposed by nature to weigh our actions (our self-interest) against expectations reflected in the humanity we shared with the rest of mankind. In natural man, modern thinkers discovered a natural fidelity to his species, expressed through the privacy of the passions and the immediacy of shared experiences, and accomplished without infecting his rapport and natural constitution with the kind of political considerations governing ancient political philosophers (Aristotle, most notably: *Politics* 1253A9, *Ethics* 1094A25-B10). For example, let us follow the moderns and assume the instinct for self-preservation instructed men to escape the state of nature and seek civil society. Let us assume further that education in virtue was the means by which men initiated that transition and that by which they were perfected in the civil state. Finally, let us assume that modern thinkers converted classical virtue into political virtue simply, that they
could extend to all through a political process what was once reserved for only a few and pointed beyond the political toward the philosophic life. In effect, man’s entry into civil society affirms his perfectibility precisely because the event itself transforms into law or moral authority what remained only figuratively as long as man persisted in the state of nature (Leviathan 15; De Cive III 33).

Nevertheless, the very proximity of virtue to its object that makes virtue appear preeminently teachable may in fact imperil its communicability. The full expression of what is intimately close may depend less on teaching than on supervision or coercion, or even on cause and effect, for which mankind still bears some or all responsibility; or it may depend on the supernatural or history conceived as nature at work or progress, a blessing as it were, and in this respect, on what is beyond human control and responsibility, perhaps even the prerogative of divinity revealed in human affairs. Accordingly, if the transition from antiquity to modernity is marked by the replacement of the doctrine of the virtues with the manipulation of the passions and self-interest, then teaching virtue is an inaccurate if not misleading explanation of how morality is now conveyed to mankind. Modernity therefore could not and in fact did not presume that by this exchange alone it could resolve what pagan and Scriptural antiquity could not.

In a curious way, modernity’s historicized virtue (if I may speak of virtue that way) and antiquity’s extraordinarily improbable requirements for virtue confirm each other’s wisdom about virtue’s limited prospects in this world. Either mankind must wait for some remote future of freedom it can never intentionally cause, or it must persevere in an endless struggle of insurmountable adversities and inevitable setbacks without being demoralized by the experience. Were our duties to each other ever to issue only from our good dispositions, for example, unaffected and uncoerced by selfish motives, we would, I think, have a difficult if not impossible time establishing if it was through teaching or through necessity of history, or perhaps some mix of both, that we arrived at that condition of virtuous fellowship. Equally difficult would be to attribute blame for our existing moral paralysis, about which there is much public confusion, on failing to teach what in principle cannot be taught, or on expecting the inevitability of what is in no way inevitable, or perhaps on some mix of both. Neither in our moral despair nor in our grandiose expectations, it seems, can we explain how we came to where we are or how to arrive
where we want to be. As the history of political philosophy reveals, virtue’s teachability is in some respects very remote, and in other respects very intimate, but it is in all respects very paradoxical.

Varied, complementary, at times quite opposed, political philosophy’s prescriptions for virtue are nevertheless governed in large part by one seemingly inescapable condition of the paradox: Virtue is best secured when its beneficiaries remain unaware of how they became virtuous. Plato’s Republic (376C-E), for example, inextricably links the just city’s foundation to teaching the virtues that mark its perfection. Despite its comprehensiveness the proposed educational scheme must be supplemented by the noble lie (414B-415D), in effect, an additional teaching designed to convince recipients of virtue they were never taught it, that instead they were born fully equipped and morally prepared for their civic duties. Virtue’s teachability needs auxiliary supports evidently, including what we today would call a favorable gene pool from which the most promising members are selected for mating purposes, the rationale and procedures of which, of course, remaining hidden to all but the city’s rulers (546A-547B). Seriously compromised within the work itself, and by further considerations more fundamentally in Plato’s Protagoras and Meno, virtue’s prospects for the ancients seemed possible only by subordinating society, and in particular education, to the needs and demands of the civil authority. By contrast, modern political philosophy begins when Machiavelli’s Discourses (I 4) demonstrates how the didactic effect of good laws on the moral character of the people inextricably links the foundation of their virtue through good education directly to those good laws without explicitly raising questions about virtue’s teachability and without specifying the content of that good education. Indeed, because circumstances vary so much, Machiavelli warns readers of his Prince (Chapter 9) that there are no set rules a prince can follow in this respect, and accordingly will not discuss them other than to encourage the prince to make himself feared in ways that do not earn him his people’s hatred (Chapter 17).

If early modern society continues to depend on the overwhelming power of the civil authority, the nature of that dependence has changed in at least one important respect affecting the nature of virtue and its communicability: In place of the traditional pedagogy, modernity now relies on a more promising natural philosophy of necessity that manipulates the passions and self-interest more than it educates in virtue. Accordingly, where
the *Republic* (376E-377B) speaks of music and gymnastic education, subordinates the latter to the former, and then focuses almost exclusively on music education in founding the just or virtuous city, the *Discourses* (I 1.4) focuses exclusively on the *necessity to exercise*, and only afterwards reveals that good education is dependent on good laws, essentially reversing the ancient relationship between music and gymnastics in founding the just or virtuous city. But good laws are themselves dependent on *tumults*, on what we today might call interests, and which divide mankind into two fundamentally opposed groups or *humors*: the few who command or oppress and the many who resist command or oppression (*Prince* Chapter 9; *Discourses* 1, 4-5). These humors are not conditions of the soul but physical, pre-rational dispositions determining our individual character, and each with a necessity to rule or resist rule that precludes understanding the other necessity, and therefore precludes any possible reconciliation between the two humors through speech or reason (Mansfield 1979, 42-45; 1996, 19, 24, 28-30, 43; Mansfield and Tarcov 1996, xxviii). In the interest of public good, Machiavelli shows through an ancient Roman example how the insolence of the ruling few was checked in favor of liberty by manipulating the public’s humor in ways the public could not appreciate or understand. Because of its goodness and decency (*Prince* Chapter 9) it is virtually impossible for the public to conceive how public goods arise from the disorder of tumults, and therefore will always assume good ends can arise only from good beginnings. In redefining the traditional relationship between the few and the many, Machiavelli is exposing the public to be essentially ineducable because it is necessarily predisposed to think that goodness is enough, and Machiavelli has no intention of changing that conviction. The traditional view expressed in Plato’s *Crito* (48E-50A) also divides mankind into two fundamentally opposed groups. But there it is the wise few who believe that goodness is enough, who never return wrong for wrong suffered, while it is now the many unwise who could never accept that principle or rule of life as their own, each side apparently as contemptuous and as incomprehensible to each other as are modernity’s two humors to each other.

If the *Republic* reveals the indispensable educational means necessary to reconcile the few and many by uniting them into virtuous political society, the *Prince* and *Discourses* reveal the means to accomplish that unity with an alternative and presumably more effective reconciliation. In either case the paradoxical need to obscure virtue’s true foundations evidently challenges political philosophy with two equally reasoned but mutually exclusive ways to
communicate virtue best: Virtue requires citizens to believe they are never taught what in fact they are surreptitiously taught, and virtue requires citizens to believe they are ostensibly taught what in fact they are never taught.

How then would we decide between the two if those are the only options available? Or would it really matter? In other words, has not our dependence on nature as the foundation of virtue carefully circumscribed for us a paradoxical choice of equally balanced options about which nature must remain deliberately neutral? Or is there not some third way open that can escape what political philosophers mistakenly reasoned was an inescapable paradox of nature?

Indeed, if taken, this third way would allow Machiavelli’s heirs to engage his ambitious designs for mankind, but only after prescribing changes in the nature and administration of virtue itself, that is, only after mitigating Machiavelli’s ambitious requirements for virtue (Strauss 1959, 40-55). This new way now required citizens to know their virtue was in fact taught to them. At the beginning of De Cive, for example, Hobbes explicitly claims men are made fit for civil society not by nature but by education; and in Leviathan (Chapter 30) he makes the supreme civil authority responsible for that education, but not without distinguishing between the educational system and the political system in ways that bear favorably on human teachability. Hobbes, as I understand him, took the sophistic branch of ancient political philosophy regarding virtue, and of which Protagoras was the most distinguished representative, and then grafted it onto the modern roots planted by Machiavelli. As it grew, modernity asserted and enlarged the private sphere against the civil authority in ways that allowed Locke to discuss independently and in separate works the educational system (Some Thoughts Concerning Education) from the political system (Two Treatises of Government); and elsewhere to anticipate morality as demonstrable as any Euclidian principle without need to reference any corresponding political system (An Essay Concerning Human Understanding IV. iii. 18-19). Roughly from the time of Protagoras, ancient sophist and advocate of virtue, the arguments in favor of teachability had by the modern era advanced to a point where virtue as applied science was not an inconceivable project, and its dependence on and obfuscation by the civil authority no longer necessary. Not only had the subject virtue become a very teachable form of knowledge, its object, man, was now considered a most receptive beneficiary to instruction in that knowledge. The Enlightenment,
it seems, had finally arrived.

Nevertheless, serious reservations about the modern project for mankind were raised from within the movement itself. At the end of Book Two of the *Social Contract*, Rousseau ascribes to the most important laws a moral dimension on which all other laws depend, the benefits of which he believes are lost on his contemporary theorists. In *Emile*, Rousseau critically exposes the pretentious moral actor such theorists had made of modern man, the cause of which he attributes to their inferior understanding of human nature and the means to perfect it. When he introduces unconventional but still modern methods designed to cultivate a genuine moral human being without destroying the individual self, Rousseau will intentionally implicate the whole question of teachability implicit in the third way modernity opened. In time, Nietzsche will challenge the whole philosophic tradition with a virtue no imaginable civil authority can cultivate; and if his *Zarathustra* is any indication of modernity’s growth and direction, no imaginable teaching can convey it.

My intent thus far was to identify the paradoxical nature of virtue’s teachability by recognizing an intellectual authority in nature available to those that would consult it, and by which some few are persuaded while many others are not. Determined to make virtue authoritative, political philosophers at first supported virtue’s teachability with moral and political prescriptions that were founded in nature or in conformity to it, and then by contrast, in rebellion against nature or in conquest of it. Judged a failure either way, they abandoned nature altogether, and looked instead increasingly to the human will founded and perfected in unconditional freedom for that effective but elusive morality capable of withstanding nature’s inviolable moral equivocalness, that is, the abyss all previous thinkers seriously underestimated. If the will by some act of introspection consciously frees itself sufficiently to generalize or universalize all its actions, it can in principle socialize itself perfectly to all other self-actualized wills similarly engaged. If as a consequence men no longer need to teach each other morality, then the will on its own has accomplished what in Scripture is possible only by God’s grace of a second covenant, engraving then in the hearts or minds of men what God formerly engraved only in stone (*Jeremiah* 31:31-34; *Hebrews* 8:8-12).

It is important to understand that by this act of human perfection in the universal brotherhood of autonomous wills, the instruments of political society supporting teaching and political society itself are all expected
to wither away. We recall that the paradox of virtue’s teachability first appeared because people would not willingly accept political philosophy’s unconventional prescriptions to secure their moral salvation. So they would have to be taught to accept as authoritative in their lives what they would otherwise repudiate. Accordingly, and by various reasonings, political philosophers charged political society with the responsibility for inculcating virtue as public policy. Now, however, with the freedom of the will at issue, we perceive the paradox anew. This time the will must somehow recognize and accomplish its task of liberation without the traditional and more authoritative resources supported by political philosophy, for they have been variously dismissed in the interest of the will’s autonomy. In their place, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel recommended liberal political regimes based on free institutions and free expression to govern men best, and to enable men to govern themselves best. In their republic of letters it was now possible for the truths available to the more intelligent of men to find their way and influence the less intelligent. In other words, wisdom could rule without wise men actually ruling. How liberal regimes might accomplish this marvelous feat is something we cannot now take up. Suffice it to say, however, that if the will is expected to teach itself to be free under the shelter of liberal regimes, then the will as teacher and the will as student somehow become indistinguishable in the search for that ultimate or universal cause from which the will presumably gains its moral strength, its freedom, and its eventual autonomy (all three being inseparably bound together). All I am suggesting here is that if liberal regimes must also yield to that search, because they too are defective and scheduled for extinction, then the anticipated dissolution of liberal as well as more coercive governments in the interest of any virtue did not necessarily resolve the paradox of virtue’s teachability any more than reinforcing government’s resources did in the interest thereof. We might well wonder if this trickle down theory of liberal regimes deserves to be called a project for teaching humanity its virtue, because a regime so dedicated would not want its people exposed to the ways of corruption but rather to the more preferred ways of amelioration. It is just as likely that the modern liberal effort to free the will from all constraints of nature, convention, and law—the traditional foundations for virtue—will expose the will to be morally empty inside, and its freedom a self-destructive act of moral enervation (Cropsey 1983, 26; 1984, 32-41). Virtue, we are learning, is no more teachable from within than it is from without the individual. Here is wisdom we cannot ignore, for it is as readily available from the pages of Scripture as it
ever was from the pages of philosophy.

There is then in nature, or in the human will, a knowable virtue virtually impossible to realize in our human affairs. And we can know this because we are in principle endowed by nature with reason, with an insatiable desire to know that, in the best Socratic sense, enables us to restrain ourselves once we sufficiently know ourselves. For most of its history, political philosophy regarded the founding moments of political society as indispensable to any self-understanding we might attain. Likewise, the modern preoccupation with the will reaffirms that same self-understanding about virtue’s prospects, but does so without the presence and agency of political society.

But if as knowing beings we are also political beings, or at least social beings, we should find virtue to be teachable and politics to be the sovereign art or science that teaches it. At best, political society would be that human institution through which a natural or intellectual virtue governing only an insignificant few is supplemented, reinforced, or perhaps even replaced by a conventional or practical virtue capable of governing a significant many. We are inclined to call the means whereby we initiate and make that transition teaching virtue, of course, because we believe and have strong evidence to believe that virtue is in fact teachable, and if not as an art then surely as a science for some moderns. But political philosophers have always held reservations about virtue’s teachability: Centuries before Rousseau announced his concerns in *Emile*, Aristotle had already distinguished intellectual virtue, which he reasoned was teachable, from moral virtue, which he reasoned was not (*Ethics* 1103A5-25). Clearly, and with consentient brilliance, the synoptic texts of political philosophy question virtue’s teachability while simultaneously disclosing the conditions to make virtue teachable. Stated differently, for the ancients, and I would even argue for the moderns, a full articulation of virtue disclosed its own improbable realization as public policy. And therein lay the paradox. For example, a self-confessed ignorance once entitled Socrates to distinguish himself from the sophists and any accusations that he was a teacher in their mode or otherwise; for he reasoned that based on what he did not know he could not possibly teach anybody anything (*Apology* 19B-23B, 29D, 33B-C). The same realization came to Zarathustra, but this time through knowledge, not ignorance; for he reasoned that based on what he does know he could not possibly teach anybody anything (*Zarathustra* I 9). Accordingly, if both ignorance and knowledge are excluded,
by what other means then is virtue made teachable?

I would argue that the *Apology* and *Zarathustra* stand as bookends embracing the whole tradition of political philosophy in an irresolvable paradox about virtue’s teachability; that between them, neither the philosophical moderation informing ancient expectations for cities *in speech*, nor the ambitious realism informing modern expectations for cities *in deed* ever claimed to resolve the paradox with unproblematic prescriptions; that instead, at the foundation of cities, political philosophy reconciled itself to an inescapable paradox that made civil and political life based on virtue possible but in no way inevitable. And yet, building virtue on our passions and self-interest seemed like a reasonable and practical alternative to the high-mindedness of the ancients. But what remained as authoritative for men now understood to be naturally disqualified for political society appeared artificial if not pretentious, and could easily implicate modernity in the authorship of a morality clothed in human dignity when our passions and self-interest lay dormant (the exceptional case), but expressed through the dynamics of power once they were affected (the usual case). Worse still, a morality grounded in power would mean our actions are governed more by necessity than by choice (Cropsey 1977, 224, 229). Necessity would make political and moral behavior more intelligible because necessity is more predictable than human choice. But it is unclear if necessity makes virtue more teachable or less teachable when virtue’s foundations are grounded in a mechanistic amoral power that causes moral behavior. Hobbes, of course, asserted both the amorality of nature and the teachability of naturally unfit human beings. Machiavelli before him, however, relied almost exclusively on nature’s necessity expressed in law to influence human behavior where traditional teaching had obviously failed him, apparently satisfied if people did things they should do as if or believing they were taught that behavior. His *Discourses* (I 1.4) nearly opens with an observation that greater virtue is present wherever necessity superintends, that is, wherever human choice is severely limited. And he seeks to preserve and amplify that advantage in and through political society. Yet, by founding virtue on what disqualifies rather than what qualifies us for political society, modern thinkers risked aggravating our natural resistance to the benefits of virtue in political society; and they risked entangling themselves in the very folly they ascribed to the ancients, this time by reaching too low instead of too high to establish a secure base for virtue. The effort to free the will may only be modernity’s most recent imbroglio, from which it has yet to find its way clear.
At this point it is tempting to regard the whole history of political philosophy as a manifest failure by well-intentioned practitioners desperately incapable of shaking virtue’s resistance to teachability. I would argue instead that the inescapable paradox all political philosophers encountered commends to us a very sobering reflection: Virtue is inexplicably learnable while not necessarily explicable teachable. We can acquire virtue, perhaps even learn it, it seems, but we have the greatest difficulty proving we can transmit it or teach it to each other. If that is in any way the natural and inescapably flawed condition of our moral and political lives, we would do well to cultivate as best we can the self-learning mystery shrouding the student while we deprecate any recognizable contributions by the teacher.

Perhaps that is why Socrates could only admonish his fellow citizens to care for virtue, having already excluded himself as a teacher of it, and now by implication the whole populace as well (Apology 30A-31D). A life-long divinely inspired mission of questioning finally converted public frustration against him into enmity and then legal action, his execution a sign that the moral and intellectual resources necessary for philosophical inquiry were beyond general mankind. Convinced that his fellow citizens could not become lovers of wisdom, that is, philosophers, let alone philosopher-kings, Socrates quietly reveals his conviction that they could not become teachers of virtue either. At best however they could become caretakers of virtue. But even then they would suffer Socrates’ judgment of justice as nothing serious if its usefulness was limited simply to keeping secure anything not in use at the moment; after all, caring for someone’s pruning hook requires no great knowledge or effort (Republic 333A-334B). But how does one care for virtue if one does not know what it is, or even how it is, whether teachable or not? Socrates is in the position of admonishing his fellow citizens to care for something he knows they are incapable of knowing in any important respect. And he does so fully aware that he is about to entrust to them and their incomplete knowledge the care of his own neglected sons, expecting that they would be cared for in the same way his knowledge moved him to care for the city. Each citizen then would attend to each other’s neglect of their own as each proceeded to care for each other’s care for virtue, apparently because what they need most they cannot provide for by themselves. Somewhere along the way Socrates’ admonition seemingly ignores teachability altogether, or attempts to confound it in a great scene of caring for it.

Any man so predisposed would be guilty of gross incompe-
tence if his project of caring for other people’s caring was set in motion by visionary expectations of the human capacity to reciprocate care in the interest of virtue. But when designing the city that would teach virtue best, Socrates there requires its citizens to conduct themselves by minding their own instead of each other’s business (Republic 433A-E). Perhaps the best regime is so principled that it can mind its own in the interest of virtue, whereas in all inferior versions the philosopher must plead a policy of caring so wide as to be confused with meddling, while in the best simply he would plead it so narrow as to be confused with indifference. Of course, in the special case of the best city’s guardians, Socrates must reduce to the barest minimum what they can properly mind as their own to guarantee they properly mind the city as a whole. But even then they are not made responsible for monitoring the level of virtue in the body politic. Rather, the city’s rulers, the best of the guardians, deploy the noble lie to convince everyone they were already born morally prepared for their place in society, when in fact they were surreptitiously taught their corresponding virtue. The noble lie, a teaching designed to disguise virtue’s teachability, is apparently a luxury only the best city can afford. For the inferior rest, Socrates can only recommend noble caring.

Virtue then is teachable only under conditions of perfect justice, each minding his own, and through one and only one regime Socrates knows to be highly improbable unless some extraordinary conditions arise no age of man has yet to witness. The rest of us, I believe, are admonished by Socrates to care for virtue by knowing enough to know that we do not know virtue sufficiently to presume we can actually teach it; for if we acted on that presumption, I believe Socrates fears that virtue would suffer unnecessarily. It is indeed ironic that in the best city, the philosopher’s caring requires him to disguise virtue’s teachability on its own behalf, whereas in all inferior forms, the philosopher’s caring requires him to expose virtue’s unteachability on its own behalf. If we consider what must be done for virtue from the highest to the lowest of possibilities, then Socrates’ extraordinary plans to teach virtue in the Republic do not necessarily contradict his exposure of virtue’s unteachability in Meno and Protagoras, especially when we keep in mind how much his caring directed his life’s work (Cropsey 1995, 2).

But if we consider Socrates’ fate, as we cannot help but do, his admonition for noble caring would be as improbable in any actual city as minding our own would be in the best simply. We could exonerate Socrates of
such unwarranted expectations if we knew that in both cases his life’s project was moved by some profound knowledge, especially when even imminent fate could not shake his conviction in the righteousness of that knowledge. Nevertheless, his fate stands as a warning to us that, between the caring rendered and the gratitude received, gross inequity always attends the consequences of the actions of one like himself, regardless of their foundation. Undaunted, Socrates proceeded to care as only others could not, knowing as only others could not that virtue must be its own reward. Perhaps that is why virtue is so difficult to teach, and why Socrates employs the noble lie to inculcate by habit and self-denial what only the philosopher can know by superior wisdom, that is, by a self-conscious knowledge of his own ignorance. Otherwise, those possessing very little themselves, the guardians of the best city, would rebel at being denied so much. Again, noble caring appears to be the best practical alternative always available to us.

Instead of evoking self-denying care from others, perhaps Socrates was better served to follow the lead of the career sophists, whose pedagogies in virtue were not mired in questions about virtue’s ontic status, its various attributes that preoccupied him in both Meno and Protagoras, and predisposed him to care and seek it at large when some other disposition would have been more effective. Protagoras, famous defender of teachability, claimed to show Socrates and anybody else how to manage their private and public affairs best, all without sacrificing their personal fortunes (Protagoras 318E-319A). So communicable is virtue, and so instrumental is its application, that for a fee we can learn to have it all. I believe Socrates had come to realize that such thinking was disastrous for virtue, that instead he could serve virtue better by deflating our pretentious beliefs to be teachers of it. As if to emphasize this, Socrates intentionally excludes himself, of course, but also Protagoras’s name from a list of notable teaching sophists during his trial (Apology 19E). There, by denying assertorically that money can buy virtue (3DB), Socrates is clearly questioning the general claim that virtue is teachable without necessarily naming the sophist most identified with that claim. He then begs the question by asserting that, instead, it is wealth and all good things that come from virtue: If so, then how is virtue acquired in the first place? If only Socrates’ fellow citizens could understand, they would see standing before them the manifestation of the paradox of virtue’s teachability in constant need of care, instead of a meddler who taxed their patience one too many times. Evidently, Plato has left to posterity the burden of reconciling something as important
as virtue with the certainty of never knowing it sufficiently to care for it properly.

Socrates either misappropriated the intent of the divine message that started him questioning others, god remaining blameless throughout, or his manifest failure to impart self-denial, philosophical caring necessarily implicated the whole cosmos as an unindicted co-conspirator. In order to salvage god’s message from utter confusion, Socrates reconstructs its meaning to comport with his acts of caring; for otherwise the cosmos and all its gods would appear morally neutral, even neglectful, and if their meddling ways are in any way responsible for Socrates’ legal problems, then incompetent too. The cosmic gods no less than the poets they inspire (Republic 334A-C) are prone to ambiguity and confusion, and no less than we human beings need philosophy to care for virtue properly in themselves as well as in others. Here we should note, if only parenthetically, that the transition from pagan religion to Christianity did not reconcile religion and virtue, as we can easily see in Machiavelli’s animadversions on Christianity in the name of modern virtue (Discourses II 2.2).

But in the case of the best city, Socrates must ascend directly to the heavens and there reconstruct god’s attributes in order to teach virtue successfully on earth (Republic 377C-383C). He then completes his theology by descending to the underworld to purge it of terrors that threaten our resolve to remain virtuous in adversity (386A-389E). When finished, Socrates will have a theology that by design is no obstacle to human virtue, but, more importantly, a theology that by design is not necessarily providential either. In the interest of virtue’s teachability, Socrates perfects god’s attributes with such superlatives that a sign of caring must be interpreted as weakness, because a caring god exposes himself to be in need and therefore imperfect, and that cannot be allowed. To care by communicating his wisdom for our improvement means god must implicate himself in a volitional act of self-contamination, and no one, let alone a perfect god, intentionally makes himself worse in his condition (381C). At his trial Socrates will argue further that no one intentionally makes another person worse in his condition (Apology 25B-26B). But can anybody make another person better in his condition? In other words, is virtue teachable? Socrates’ requirement of cosmic agency (god causes good only, Republic 179B-D) without cosmic providence must show how in the interest of virtue men can become and remain free and independent (386B-
Virtue’s teachability evidently carries in its affirmation serious implications about the cosmos itself.

In the absence of providence, Socrates must begin by inculcating very young children with stories whose veracity is not as important as their utility: in the interest of virtue, deeds must govern speech (Republic 376E-377B). However, the lessons must convince future guardians that speech governs deeds, the very opposite on which Socrates predicates their education. Accordingly, at that point where he has purged the city of its excesses, Socrates will insist that in matters of rhythm, feet (our deeds) must always follow speech, not the opposite (399E-400A). Socrates is apparently so persuasive that one of his interlocutors understands the steps (or deeds) taken to be supplemental to the speeches (389B), when in fact it is otherwise. To the extent that we must do for ourselves what the gods or cosmos cannot, or even will not, we can think of Socrates’ political philosophy as standing at the beginning of an unbroken tradition that looks to secure virtue in a world that, for the moderns to come, at least, will become increasingly hostile, in no way providential, but nevertheless full of opportunity if understood properly. Socrates’ reconstruction of god’s message so that god’s speech comports with Socrates’ deeds is his exposition of what must be done in less than perfect conditions, whereas, in the best condition for virtue, Socrates must achieve nothing less than a wholesale reconstitution of the gods and the cosmos itself. With the moderns’ thinkers in mind, it is worth speculating if virtue is more teachable or less teachable when nature does not corroborate what we must do to ourselves to achieve the best possible, that is to live virtuously in political society; and not only with them but the ancients as well, for whom the best regime was so improbable as to be forever of dubious possibility, even though it was understood to be by nature. From the earliest times onward, nature for political philosophers was not the simple prescriber of morality for mankind but rather an equivocal obstacle to good government.

Abandoned to cosmic moral indifference, our only salvation may be to draw out patiently what we cannot inscribe right away didactically, and to do it in a way that is highly suggestive if not identical to Socratic midwifery (Theaetetus 149A-151E). Emile, which is Rousseau’s assimilation of Socratic midwifery, makes the best of our human condition on the smallest and perhaps most intimate scale possible for virtue: one person cultivating
another. No warrant is given to proceed with that scheme *writ large*. Plato’s *Republic* of course offers the most ambitious plan for virtue *writ large*, but other dialogues, *Meno* and *Protagoras*, challenge virtue’s teachability even *writ small*. And Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* will do so even more radically.

Not the imaginary truth, not the effectual truth, not even the unconditional truth can rationalize virtue’s teachability sufficiently to overcome its paradox completely. If this cosmic-moral phenomenon is fundamentally our human condition, then political philosophy is and always will be a speculative inquiry into timeless paradoxical issues no age of man can resolve (Cropsey 1977, viii; 1990, 31). Indeed, the prescriptions for virtue our synoptic texts recommend contemplate a longstanding continuous quarrel in political philosophy over how teachable virtue really is as well as the means to make it so. Nonetheless, that quarrel over means and teachability proceeds from a basic or common understanding of the underlying cause responsible for the paradox itself: human spiritedness.

Over the history of political philosophy, this speculative inquiry has developed a more intense, radical, and even crueler understanding of virtue when human spiritedness is seen as both the obstacle and the means to its teachability. Socrates tried to educate spirit by giving it its due, a chance to express itself in ways benefiting the good city. Hobbes judged human spirit as homebuilders judged the *asperity* or sharpness of rocks gathered for construction, chipping away at them until they conformed, or discarding them as too stubborn because the space they occupied was greater than their contribution to the whole structure. Machiavelli assigned rulers god-like powers to mold men from unformed clay, and necessity their tool, even if that meant cruel necessity to mold them in ways teaching never could. Rousseau and Locke may have understood human nature as fluent and therefore more malleable than their predecessors, but they still required rather harsh measures for very young charges to manage unruly spirit. Nietzsche, however, rejected the traditional teacher-pupil relationship for a new Machiavellian cruelty one practices on oneself, rather than on others, a cruel self-discipline so onerous that his *Zarathustra* cannot find one worthy companion.

This rapid review suggests there was an ancient attempt to reconcile spirit with virtue in tenuous balance, which gave way to a modern attempt to demote spirit to a more humble place within the human economy, but that another part of modernity, beginning with Machiavelli and extending
into Nietzsche, clearly intended to reconcile virtue with irreducible spirit by dissolving the former into the latter sufficiently to cause the first and only possible resolution of the paradox itself. However, the possibility of virtue dissolving into spirit over the corpse of teachability by autonomous acts of introspection is, I suppose, about as likely as the combination of philosophy and power materializing into the paradigmatic philosopher-king by acts of chance. Absent either event, or divine agency, the prospects for virtue *writ large* seem poor indeed, and the judgment political philosophy renders, harsh but true: political life as experienced for over two millennia either condones the worst expressions of spirit at the expense of proper virtue, or by its agency undermines that spirit which is the only foundation for proper virtue.

I am not now suggesting that political life is consciously pathological, that it secretly bears ill will against virtue or itself, but only that its management of spirit in the interest of virtue has suffered according to the light political philosophy casts on the question of virtue's teachability. What I am arguing I believe is consistent with our synoptic texts' appraisal of virtue's prospects: only when we determine the proper place of spirit in the human economy can we then determine how teachable virtue really is; only then can we determine the appropriate political arrangements for virtue's apotheosis *writ large*. Accordingly, the management of spirit in the interest of virtue's prospects must be a concern for any city intending to teach people virtue, as it is inimitably for that city designed to do it best, the just city of Plato's *Republic*. There, as the city nears completion, Socrates reveals the obstacle spirit poses to good government in ways that run counter to the main argument of the text, and which in fact contemplates an understanding of spirit more characteristic of modernity than antiquity, or so it would appear. By attending to Socrates' founding of that city we can better understand spirit's place and therefore the paradox that is virtue's teachability, and not only the ancient's expression of it, but, by way of anticipation, evidently the modern alternatives to it as well. (Cf. Bloom 1979, 12-13; Berns 1984, 336, 347, note 48).

Plato shows us the relevance of spirit to virtue's prospects by placing spirit at the beginning as well as at the end of the just city's construction as a paradox in need of resolution. In both places, spirit's submission either to public or private rule is overestimated (Cf. Bloom 1991, 375-76) and, by implication, so is virtue's teachability. In fact, as the just city decays into its inferior forms (for reasons we cannot now consider), virtue's teachability
becomes compromised as spirit reasserts itself, in time only to succumb to the myriad desires themselves. The pattern is unmistakably clear: the more progressive the decay in regimes, the more intractable people become to virtue as spirit increasingly liberates itself from proper rule. Construction of the just city however began with the education of the guardian class, those naturally endowed with spirit and kindness, under the assumption that spirit was teachable and that in teaching it, whatever justice is will emerge *writ large* for all to see. *Writ large* means *taught large*; founding the city and teaching citizens virtue are indistinguishable for Socrates here. I emphasize this because in *Protagoras* (319B) Plato makes Socrates seriously question what here in the *Republic* (376C-E} he makes Socrates seriously assume: virtue’s teachability. But if not his interlocutors, at least Socrates himself knows that the attributes of anything in question cannot be firmly established unless one knows first what that thing is (*Republic* 354B-C; *Protagoras* 361C; *Meno* 71B).

At least in the *Republic* (357A-B), immediately following Socrates recognition of the fundamental “What is...?” question, Plato reveals to us in a decisive and even dramatic moment that courage is required to pursue the fundamental question, and, in a few pages more, that courage is always accompanied by spirit (375B). Let us also note that the assumed parallel between justice in the individual and justice in the city will break down, and the search for justice compromised, unless Socrates can show how spirit is distinct from the calculating and desirous parts of the soul; that, just as in the city, so in the individual soul, spirit cooperates with the calculating part to keep the desires in check; that spirit is superior to the desires but subservient and obedient to reason, and contributes to the unity of the soul (Strauss 1989, 165-66). The experience of Leontius, who struggled to avert his eyes but could not help but look at dead bodies, is the paradigm Socrates invokes to establish a necessary and parallel tripartite hierarchy in the soul and in the city, but which is evidently more problematic than certain (Strauss 1978, 110). By revealing what must be true about the human soul in order to discover justice, this well-placed paradigm also reveals what must be true about the human soul if virtue is to be considered at all teachable. But when considered in light of events surrounding and connected to it, the paradigm also reveals the paradoxical nature of what has been taken for granted throughout the founding and construction of the just city: spirit’s subordination to proper rule, that is, virtue’s teachability.
The paradox becomes visible when Socrates asks Glaucon a question meant to confirm what the Leontius paradigm ostensibly proves: Has Glaucon ever noticed in himself or in anyone else the spirited part of the soul joining the desirous part to resist what speech (presumably the calculating part) declares must not be done (Republic 440B)? The question is in fact a model of Socratic irony; for if we consider events at the very beginning of the Republic as well as what shortly follows the Leontius section, we will see an alignment of the parts of the soul forming that runs counter to the expected alignment implied in Socrates’ question.

Glaucon, who felt that spirit belonged to the class of desires, answers Socrates’ question with a firm “No” supported by an oath, apparently persuaded by the Leontius paradigm that there are three parts to the soul struggling to control each other (Strauss 1978, 110; Platt 1979, 87). Now, readers of the Republic (357A) already know that Socrates thought Glaucon was quite courageous; and many pages later they will hear Adeimantus describe Glaucon to Socrates to be a very spirited man (548C-E). He may indeed be spirit personified, but Glaucon’s actions at the very beginning of the Republic betray the expected alignment of the parts of the soul to which he just acceded. There, Glaucon was very conciliatory toward the many powerful (Polemarchus and all those with him), in fact joining their numerical strength to force Socrates to stay, all contrary to what should have happened if the Leontius paradigm is in any way indicative of the struggle and alignment expected in the soul. Had Glaucon joined Socrates to persuade the others to let them continue homeward as planned, I suppose governing the soul would present no serious problem worth considering, and Plato would have little if any reason to begin the Republic as he did. The Leontius paradigm may confirm the tripartition of the soul, but however much spirited Glaucon is persuaded, it does not confirm spirit’s allegiance to one part more than the other. That remains problematical: Did spirit, for example, join the calculating part to overcome the desires, or did spirit join the desires to overcome the calculating part and force Leontius to look at what moral indignation wanted him to avoid? What is clear is that spirited Glaucon capitulated when confronted by the many desires, and perhaps not unexpectedly for someone who felt spirit really belonged to the class of desires (349E). Glaucon’s answer to Socrates’ question therefore reveals how little he has understood his own actions to be part of a paradox that the experience of Leontius is intended to explicate.
The temperament for looking without the shame moral indignation brings is the courage living and dying Socrates practices, commends, and then admonishes his friends for failing it (Phaedo 115C-118A). In the end, Socrates’ eyes and mouth are fixed wide open, his deeds and speech reconciled, though there is time to cover his expression, if only briefly, in tacit concession to our natural humanity that must forever contemn itself and therefore the flesh it cannot see beyond, and for that reason, can never learn by Socrates’ example what words can never teach (Cropsey 1995, 222-23). The Leontius-like around him cannot endure the sight of his dying and lifeless body, either covering their faces in distress and self pity or removing themselves completely in shame. If antiquity in the guise of Socrates is the project to make men look beyond their fleshy state for their selves and their virtue, modernity is apparently the project to make men find themselves and their virtue by contemplating the lifeless body itself (Platt 1975, 21-23). In a world essentially indifferent to human need, I cannot say which of the two projects manages spiritedness best in the interest of virtue’s teachability (Cf. Cropsey 1977, 229-30).

We might therefore wonder if the presumed teachability of virtue necessary to bring the just city into being is not in fact compromised by dramatic events Plato intentionally made part of the Republic itself. In fact, the discussion will recommence shortly with a dramatic alignment of the interlocutors that differs from the official or formal teaching about the soul, but which is evidently necessary if the investigation into justice is to proceed profitably through the teachability of virtue. Plato has seen fit to move the discussion forward by rearranging the parts to examine something now that would be impossible under the former arrangement, perhaps because the earlier confrontation, on the one hand, and the turmoil Leontius could not resolve, on the other hand, were both real obstacles to further learning and therefore to virtue’s teachability. The rest of the Republic will proceed with an implicit understanding of spirit that modern political philosophers would adapt and enlarge upon to argue virtue’s teachability primarily through institutional means (Machiavelli) rather than character formation in the soul, or by enlightenment (Hobbes and Locke) or some radical transformation through which spirit is reborn purged of everything in civilization that conspired to extinguish it (Nietzsche).

Unlike Leontius, Socrates is able to glide over some conditions of the just city that the others following Leontius find irresistible and
must look at immediately, particularly those things Socrates condensed into a proverb requiring friends to arrange everything in common (Republic 423E), for, like dead bodies to Leontius, this has now piqued their curiosity. Whereas spirit and desire had combined to obstruct Socrates at the beginning, they now combine to encourage an otherwise reluctant Socrates to look on: Adeimantus and Polemarchus confer, implore Socrates to persevere, and Glaucon and even Thrasy machus now add their voices in approval (449B-450B). Contrary to what the Leontius paradigm would have us believe (440E), spirit naturally joins desire against calculation “in deed,” and only upon reflection, “in speech” as it were, does spirit join calculation against desire in an act of self-regulation to restore the expected hierarchy the “natural” alliance would frustrate, given the opportunity. The recommencement, then, confirms the downward pull or tendency of spirit evident from the very beginning, but also virtue as the correcting or countervailing pull upward, and both attractions as the inescapable predicament of moral and political life. But now there is a significant difference that bears on the question of the possibility of virtue’s teachability I have been addressing throughout.

Unlike in the beginning, spirit and desire are now willing to listen (compare Republic 327C-328A and 450C) and learn more about the possibility of the best city, even though the alignment or alliance of the interlocutors remains as before. In other words, knowledge of the best “in speech” is not enough to make spirit align itself with reason “in deed.” And yet, it is only by teaching spirit its proper supporting role to reason that the best becomes possible and virtue therefore becomes teachable. Through these dramatic events, Plato shows us that what is assumed to be true about spirit’s obedience to reason is in fact most problematic for virtue’s prospects; and that the best we can expect is for spirit and desire to listen to reason in a way that makes them care for virtue’s well-being, which, if we recall, is about all that Socrates could reasonably expect from his own fellow citizens. Only chance or fortune can cause spirit’s obedience and allegiance to reason to make virtue’s teachability possible through that city only chance can bring about.

If by this recommencement Plato has found a way for reason to rule by making spirit and desire think they are guiding reason, then he has established a foundation for virtue that would become the mark of modern political philosophy. Hobbes, for example, believed virtue was secured best if reason combined not with spiritedness, but with the most powerful passion.
going in man: fear. Nevertheless, in the same place where he speaks most approvingly of the human capacity to learn, Hobbes also speaks of the dissolution of cities founded on that passion (Leviathan chap. 30). The technical solutions the moderns offered to overcome what Hobbes called asperity, our spirit-edness, all on behalf of virtue, have been as elusive as the moral solutions of the ancients ever were. Rousseau recognized this to be the weakness of the modern project. In Emile he reveals that only those who have virtue without being taught it (the tutor) can actually teach it to those (the young Emile) who do not have it but can learn it, although, as the end makes clear, they are incapable of teaching virtue to anyone else now that they have it. In his own version of Socrates’ denial that he was a teacher, Rousseau will assert that one does everything to the pupil by doing nothing at all. Nietzsche would radicalize this vision by demanding in the name of the only virtue now possible, and against the whole philosophical tradition, the complete liberation and metamorphosis of spirit against all constraints by a process we would scarcely deign to call teaching.

In summary, then, the synoptic texts reveal virtue’s teachability to be a paradox the various instruments of civil society cannot resolve, but which we must struggle with as best we can, for imperfect as they are, life without them would be intolerable and virtue jeopardized. Modernity’s task, it seems to me, is to find a foundation for virtue that restrains us without necessarily despiriting that part in us that makes virtue possible through civil society. In that respect, the teachings of the ancient texts recommend much. What then is the wisdom of political philosophy that makes public a frustrating human condition only our folly would seek to advertise? Perhaps the answer is that knowledge of it is in itself good for the philosopher, indeed, is even his virtue in the sense of the famous Socratic formula. I might then suggest that modernity has rediscovered that paradox on its own terms, and in its own way, and in doing so has rediscovered the timeless paradox that is virtue’s teachability. I might suggest furthermore that a philosopher perfects his understanding of human affairs by knowing the paradox that prevents virtue’s transformation simply on the plane of politics. Perhaps it is only in the contemplative mind of the philosopher that speech or thought about virtue is reconciled with deeds or acts about virtue to cause a level of understanding that is the happiness only the rarest of minds can ever achieve given this universe.
I am grateful to Joseph Cropsey and Gerry Bonetto for their support and good counsel in preparing this essay.


Regionalism, Globalism, and the Prospects for World Order:
A Hegelian Approach

S T E V E N  V.  H I C K S
QUEENS COLLEGE/CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The dramatic political events and economic developments of the past decade should prompt any serious thinker to reconsider the question of world order. Under what conditions is a more peaceful, just, and stable world order possible? What legal, social, economic, and political steps should the concerned citizens and states of the world take in order to move towards a more just international order—an order within which nation-states can carry on a peaceful international life, cooperate with one another to solve their problems rationally, flourish under conditions of cultural and political autonomy, and coordinate their activities to attain other worthwhile ends? In a word, what can be done to create a global atmosphere conducive to (a) dialogue, cooperation, and lasting harmony among the world states, on the one hand, and (b) the richness of cultural diversity and identity, on the other (cf. Mitias 1990b, and 1991)? What practical steps should we take to promote a “global awareness” that can be effective in the gradual emergence of a more decent world order, i.e., a global community in which the various peoples of the world will coexist peacefully and aspire to actualize the highest and richest human values in science, art, education, politics, and social life?

These questions are particularly interesting (and, I think, urgent) for two reasons. First, one can discern, in certain parts of the world, traces of what Hegel, in his lectures on the Philosophy of World History, termed the “trend toward unity” in the modern world, in which “the political inde-
pendence [of nation-states] is becoming a mere formal principle” (Hegel 1988, 761; also cf. Hegel 1994, 254-257). One can see a kind of international regrouping beginning to take place, and this can be interpreted (à la Hegel) as leading towards the formation of a more unified modern social world. For example, one can detect a concerted effort on the part of many nations to reinterpret their political views and aspirations, to rebuild and revitalize their legislative, economic, and educational systems on the basis of more universal principles, and to reevaluate and integrate their customs and culture. Such historical developments are beginning to transform the whole content and structure of international life (see Mitias 1990b, 200). In particular, with the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed a growing sense of cooperation and interconnection among the Western European states. As Hegel predicted, they are gradually forming “a family of sorts with respect to the universal principle of their legislation, customs, and culture. And this principle has begun to modify their international conduct towards one another” (Hegel 1970b, § 339, Addition). For example, they have moved rapidly from the economic and commercial interconnections of the European Economic Community (EEC) to the political, cultural, legal, military, monetary, and educational interdependence of the European Union (EU). This concerted effort by EU countries to integrate and unify is based on what Hegel terms “an inner universality of sorts”: it is based on such things as shared political principles, common underlying legal structures, innovative agreements such as the Maastricht Treaty, and experimental extensions of political identity by way of the conferral of European citizenship (see Hegel 1970b, § 339). Moreover, this effort seems certain to expand to include “reformed” former Eastern block countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia, etc.), and may even include some countries of the former USSR (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

Nor is this international regrouping limited to the European continent. Many parts of the world are becoming more interactive and interconnected. The countries of the North American continent have recently begun to restructure their commercial, economic, and technological ties, and to integrate their shipping, finance, trade, and labor markets (witness the recent NAFTA accord). Many countries in Asia and South America have benefited from transnational investments, the spread of multinational corporations, international trading links and communication networks, scientific and cultural exchanges, greater freedom of movement from one state to another, and some organized effort to deal with problems of overpopulation, poverty,
pollution, and disease. Admittedly, it is the upper echelons in such countries who have benefited the most from NAFTA, transnational investment, etc., and not the workers or the lower classes. Still, there seems to be a greater “cultural openness”—that is, a greater desire on the part of many countries to learn from each other, to share their diverse socio-economic, artistic, and cultural heritages—than at any other time in history. This desire is expressed, for example, in the efforts by some countries to restructure their educational systems in order to make them multicultural and globalist in orientation rather than ethnocentric and local. As one commentator recently observed, “the material and psychological space which separates states from each other is becoming narrower as the years roll on, and the borders which define their territorial and national identities are becoming less and less rigid and restrictive” (Mitias 1990b, 200). This intensification of global interconnectedness and interdependence has culminated of late in the emergence of both (a) effective transnational or supranational regional bodies such as the EU and NATO and (b) relatively effective global bodies, intermediate regulatory agencies, and cooperative organizations such as UNESCO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the World Bank. As Hegel might say, “with this, the relations of the states to one another has become more of a unity of national peoples” (“eine Einheit des Volkes”; Hegel 1983, 278); one can see a gradual process of transnational integration and global cooperation at work in many parts of the world today.

On the other side, however, the contemporary world scene is also characterized by a growing anarchy, disorganization, and fragmentation of previous unities and alliances. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union was followed by the balkanization of formerly unified or federated states in Eastern Europe, such as Yugoslavia. It was also followed, in some parts of the world, by a resurgence of old ethnic hatreds, radical nationalism, religious fanaticism, and outright civil and tribal warfare, as well as by intercultural and interreligious violence and terrorism. The euphoria that seemed to characterize the political and economic spheres of the world in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s has given way to the horrors of the World Trade Center attack, the carnage in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Rwanda, and Chechnya, and the specter of nuclear proliferation (and possible confrontation) in Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Optimistic talk of a “new world order” has been replaced by the sobering
prospect of “new world disorder.” Hegel’s hoped-for “trend toward unity” has given way in many parts of the globe to his worst nightmare: the nation-state’s dissolution into the “heap” (Haufen) and the “mutual infliction of evils (Übel) in international conduct” (Hegel 1970b, §§ 302, and 339, Addition). Suffice it to say, we have not reached the stage of human history where the states’ dealings with one another are grounded on universal principles of mutual respect and recognition, justice, and a practical desire to promote the human good as such (cf. Mitias 1990b, 200). Power politics, power economics, corporate control, nationalist fears, ethnic distrusts, and religious exploitation remain the dominant forces behind many of the world’s events.

Because the end of the twentieth century was marked by this paradoxical mixture of chaos and unity, anarchy and cooperation, it is important to try to identify at least some of the conditions under which a more decent and just world order could be realized in the twenty-first century. Undeniably, the world’s various states are more closely connected and interactive than ever before. Cooperation among many of the countries of the world has become almost second nature—a way of life in the international sphere of the early twenty-first century. So-called “Globalism” is on the rise. As Hegel says, “the deeds and destinies [of the states] in their reciprocal relations with one another are the dialectic of their finitude” (Hegel, 1970b, § 340). That is, despite their claims to sovereignty and independence, we can see various factors at work slowly binding them together in mutually interdependent ways. But for the most part this global connectedness and interdependence remains external and materialistic—mainly a matter of commerce, technology, and finance. Yet if the relations among nations stop at the material level, then they are as likely to foster discord and conflict as amiability and cooperation. Genuine society or community calls for bonds of a “spiritual” kind. As J. L. Brierly observed some decades ago, “a society needs a spiritual as well as a material basis; it cannot exist without what Rousseau called the volonté générale, a sentiment among its members of community and of loyalty, of shared responsibility for the conduct of a common life” (Brierly 1958, 251).

It is unclear what direction the current “external connectedness” between nation-states will take. But as one commentator recently observed, “there is nothing . . . to prevent the scholars, world leaders, and the concerned citizens of the world . . . [from working] together on the construction of a world community, especially if we recognize that the deepest aspira-
tions of all the nations which comprise the mosaic of humanity are aspirations for peace, security, justice, freedom, and prosperity” (Mitias 1990b, 205). It is therefore important to ask what conditions—historical, social, legal, political, educational—would have to prevail in order for a rationalized global order to evolve. What would it take for the world to move from its present all-too-anarchical (Hobbesian) state of international relations to more civil, ethical, and communal relations? In my view, any serious attempt to provide answers to these questions would have to focus on the following broad areas of concern. (For more detailed discussion of these and related issues, see Hicks 1999; see also Hicks 1995.)

I. The Need for a Just International Legal System

The foundation of any political community (be it local, national, or even international) entails the sharing of certain definite values (peace, security, freedom, justice, respect for human rights) and the collective effort to actualize these values in the various spheres of social life (family, civil society). This, in turn, necessitates an institutional framework within which the community can coordinate its sometimes divergent interests, collectively consider its common ends, and determine its own destiny. It may also necessitate a certain internal attitude or habitual outlook on the part of a significant number of the community’s members. This attitude—Hegel called it a “political attitude” (“die politische Gesinnung”)—is one of “trust (which may in time pass over into more or less educated insight) . . . that [at least some] of my substantial and particular interests are preserved and contained in the interest and end of another,” i.e., in the common goods of the political community (Hegel 1970b, § 268).

Some have claimed that what makes this sense of community possible (at least in modern, liberal-democratic nation-states) is that there is a constitution which expresses the unity of these shared values and translates them effectively into operative laws and institutions within which all the citizens (in this case, citizens of the state) conduct their lives in an atmosphere of peace, freedom, respect, civility, mutual recognition, and cooperation. As one scholar recently observed:

The constitution is a fundamental statement of their ideals as an association of human beings; it is a declaration of their desires,
interests, aspirations, and values, that is, of their religious, artistic, economic, social, and educational values. It expresses, moreover, their attitude toward the meaning of human life and how to achieve this sort of life. It is also the ultimate ground of all the laws which determine the structure of the state, viz., its institutions, and consequently the basic relationships between all the citizens in their various spheres of endeavor. These laws are what give unity and coherence to this form of state; they are also the basis of the sense of community which holds the people together and creates in them the feeling of loyalty, political obligation, cooperation, sacrifice, and commitment to the general policies whose realization determines the destiny of the state, primarily because the law which structures their conduct in their economic, social, cultural, and religious life is . . . their law, the law which emanates from their will, but more importantly, because this law is a concrete translation of their values. (Mitias 1990b, 203)

It would seem to follow, then, that a genuine community of nations would have to be organized on similar constitutional principles. These principles, in order to be effective, could not be superimposed on the world states by a group or league of elite, affluent powers. Rather, they would have to emerge from the actual historical conditions of the world states, conditions of increased interconnection, communication, and cooperation, and from mutual respect and a practical desire and will to promote the human good as such. They would have to emerge out of a process of mutual recognition, a process whereby the states undergo what Fred R. Dallmayr calls “a formative learning experience regarding their respective institutions and customs, an experience that counteracts their mutual isolation and prejudices” (Dallmayr 1993, 158). No effective global community is possible without constitutional principles according to which international rights, duties, policies, procedures, and methods of action are expressed and distributed.

Some might argue that various declarations of the UN (e.g., the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) could provide the starting point for constructing a global constitution to guide interstate relations and promote cooperative dialogue among nations. Of course even though there is now a “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” there is considerable disagreement among the states concerning the interpretation of these “universal” rights within particular cultural and political contexts. An important moral and philosophical issue of the day is to determine what counts as a “universal” human
right in the first place, and what would count as a relevant or significant violation of it vis-à-vis different cultural and political contexts. Nevertheless, in order for any constitutional principles to be effective in international affairs, for these to foster a greater sense of world community, they must be translated concretely into a recognized international legal system: this means not only a system of international laws, treaties, and agreements, but also a hierarchy of legal institutions, organizations, and agencies that help regulate and mediate between states in order to achieve common ends and solve common problems. They will also serve as the unifying bond, the “bricks and mortar” between states, creating an actual structural framework for cooperative participation, rather than hostile competition, in global affairs (see Mitias 1990a, 194). In short, they provide an actual expression of the “general will” of the various sovereign nation-states as well as a vehicle for actualizing this will. The states’ cooperative participation, in turn, helps engender a commitment on their part to the international legal system as expressed, e.g., in their willingness to contribute a part of their basic resources towards the maintenance and improvement of that legal system. This commitment would incline the states of the world to solve their differences by dialogue and deliberation instead of confrontation and war.

Since the Second World War, the world has made some progress in establishing the institutional and structural framework for an effective international legal system. (Witness the establishment of an International Court of Justice.) And in some regions of the globe the possibility of cooperative participation is already at work, e.g., in the Scandinavian countries and in the countries of the EU. Still the “tools” of international law are all too subject to “power politics” and the whims of state sovereignty. To be effective, these “tools” need to multiply (both in quality and in quantity) and gradually to be de-nationalized.

In order for an international legal system to be effective in the indicated respects, it should be erected on morally appropriate, even-handed, and generally recognized (universal) principles of justice, e.g., principles which specify that all states are equal before the law; that a state counts as a “legal person,” and as such, should be treated like other states regardless of size, ethnic or historical background, or the degree to which it is economically developed or undeveloped. Without a basic, global conception of justice, violent aggression, domination, and exploitation will remain the moving forces behind many of
the world’s political events. Until very recently, when philosophers and political theorists discussed the notion of “justice”—the sort of justice that should be the basis of a decent and stable world order—“most, if not all . . . [talked] either about international law or about distributive justice, but not about ‘universal justice’” (Mitias, 1991, 13). With few exceptions, they have not talked about “the principle that should be the basis of international law itself and of the just distribution of power, wealth, rights, and burdens among all the nations of the world” (Mitias 1991, 13). (Some notable exceptions to this claim include Anderson, 1997; Mitias 1992; and Pogge 1999).

It seems incumbent upon us to ask how we could construct, at least in outline form, a morally plausible and internationally acceptable conception of universal justice. Increasingly, national institutional structures (and even basic local institutional schemes) are heavily influenced by foreign and supranational institutions. This is particularly evident in the case of economically and politically weaker countries where the viability and effectiveness of their national institutions (e.g., those governing health care, nutrition, security, and finance) depend upon the structures of national institutions of the more powerful states (US, Western Europe) as well as international institutions (IMF, WTO, the World Bank). Clearly, we need a more global (holistic) understanding of how the living conditions of the various peoples of the world are shaped through the interplay and interdependencies of these various (national, supranational) institutions.

These frequently overlooked institutional interconnections are an important aspect of today’s so-called “globalization”; and in the opinion of Thomas W. Pogge and others, they suggest that we need for the contemporary world “a single universal criterion of justice that would allow us to assess together all social institutions of diverse scope whose interplay shapes the living conditions of individual persons [around the world]” (Pogge 1999, 339). However, the “sought universal criterion of justice” must respect the autonomy of diverse cultures and represent a wide range of diverse conceptions of human flourishing:

The requirements of the universal criterion should not be understood as exhaustive. They should, for instance, leave various societies free to impose their own more demanding criteria of justice upon their own national institutions. . . . The supplementary considerations introduced by such more ambitious criteria of justice must not, however, undermine the universality of the modest criterion and therefore must not be allowed to outweigh the latter in situations of conflict or competition (e.g., over scarce
resources). The requirements of the universal criterion ought therefore to be understood as preeminent within any more ambitious national criterion. (Pogge 1999, 342-343)

The daunting task facing moral philosophers, political and social theorists, as well as the educated public, is how to formulate a widely acceptable “core” criterion of basic justice that is “thick” enough and substantial enough to allow us to assess social institutions (e.g., in terms of how they treat the persons affected by those institutions), and yet “thin” and modest enough to allow for a plurality of (particularistic) conceptions of human flourishing and more ambitious (local, national) applications of “richer” criteria of justice.

Finally, in order to be effective and valid, international law must also be relevant to the actual historical circumstances, needs, and concerns of the world states. It cannot be artificially imposed upon the states by an external authority or bureaucracy. Moreover, it must provide mechanisms for solving the global problems that confront all of us as members of a world community: the threat of nuclear war, environmental pollution, poverty, disease, illiteracy, terrorism, etc. In short, international law must possess both universality and empirical relevance (see Mitias 1990a, 192). The world is currently in need of a system of international law that possesses these two essential features and which would be applicable to the various spheres of international life—cultural, scientific, educational, commercial, political, and military.

The development of a conception of a just and effective legal system, however provisional and incomplete, is essential for cultivating a sense of global community. As Aristotle pointed out in the Nicomachean Ethics, justice (reciprocal, proportional justice) is what holds a people together and creates a communal bond of solidarity between them: “in associations that are based on mutual exchange, the just . . . constitutes the bond that holds the association together” (1132b 30-35). A communal atmosphere requires that interaction, exchange, and cooperation between states be founded on basic principles of justice (i.e., equality, rightness, and fairness). If a state thinks that it is being treated wrongly in some way by other states, it will sooner or later resort to war or intrigue in order to secure what it takes to be its due “right.” In the past, international law has often been ineffective precisely because it expressed and served the interests of certain (stronger, more affluent) nation-states at the expense of other less (economically, militarily, or technologically)
advanced states. This has created an international atmosphere ripe for divisiveness, conflict, competition, and confrontation. Particularly in light of the growing transnational interdependence and global cooperation among the states, international law must respond to and articulate the basic interests of all the states. This means it must pay greater heed to the needs, interests, and problems of the smaller developing states. What is currently called “international law” largely reflects the interests, ambitions, and military and economic power of the more powerful Western states. The present system of international law has tended to justify the status quo world order in which the stronger industrialized states preserve their economic, political, and military privileges at the expense of the weaker developing states. (Witness the hierarchical structure of the UN Security Council in which a handful of affluent powers have the final word on what is legal and illegal, just and unjust, in international affairs.) In such a situation, why should a state that is not in the “elite club” of affluent powers feel obligated to abide by the dictates of international law?

As Hegel rightly observed, one of the most important steps for overcoming the Hobbesian “war of all against all” and “maelstrom of external contingency” in international relations is the construction of a valid and just international legal system—one, for example, that can play a positive role in directing the emerging framework of global interdependence (see Hegel 1970b, § 340; for more on Hegel’s theory of international law see Hicks 1999, 18-45). It stands to reason, then, that a system of international law that meets at least some of the above specified conditions would also be the best means for implementing a more workable world order: an international order that can promote global peace, progress, and human solidarity; an order united internally by a growing convergence of political interests, and marked externally by the diminished significance of sovereignty, a decrease in “irreconcilable differences” between states, the increased interconnection and cooperation among the states of the world, and the ineffectiveness of war in solving disputes (see Hegel 1970b, §§ 332-333, 336). Under the right conditions, a valid and effective international legal system would enable us both to maintain our local (national, state, regional) identities and allegiances and to participate in a new and wider pattern of allegiance—in a cooperative, peaceful, and just global order.
II. THE NEED FOR A MORE COOPERATIVE AND HUMAN-DRIVEN GLOBALISM

States are not self-sufficient entities but depend on help and cooperation from other nation-states to secure the goods, resources, materials, and technologies required for human growth and development. While this has always been true, modern technology—in particular modern means of production, communication, and transportation—has altered the basic relationship between states, making them all the more interdependent and interconnected. This interconnectedness is primarily commercial, economic, and military, but it also encompasses cultural, scientific, educational, and artistic factors. As Hegel could already see in the nineteenth century, the modern “medium of communication” creates “trading links between distant countries, legal relationships which give rise to contractual agreements; and at the same time, [international] trade is the greatest education asset (Bildungsmittel) and the source from which commercial relations derive their world-historical significance” (Hegel 1970b, § 247). The most immediate change to occur in the wake of this increased commercial interdependence is that national markets and economies are gradually yielding to the influence of global market forces. As a consequence, local, regional, and national businesses are more closely connected to (or incorporated into) transnational or multinational corporations. Likewise, national policy decisions are often made with an eye to regional and international implications. National educational standards and practices are increasingly being evaluated in light of recognized global standards. And local or national human rights observances are increasingly judged on the basis of more universal standards of human rights. This trend towards globalization is beginning to play a (modest) role in solutions to familiar global problems (pollution, depletion of natural resources, population growth), but it is also generating a host of new global problems.

On the optimistic side, the given historical fact of globalization provides new opportunities for greater international cooperation and reciprocity in which states work together to achieve their common ends. These will require a coordinated effort on the part of government officials, legal scholars, experts in diverse fields, as well as ordinary citizens, to map out (objectively and scientifically) the problems faced by the states in light of the emerging global interdependencies. They will also require a serious attempt on the part of states (e.g., via international forums and summit meetings) to
articulate a concept of the common good among nations and to cooperate in realizing it. As one commentator recently observed:

An agenda of this kind can strengthen the sense of community among nations; this sense, which is a moral power, is the most effective means of preventing war and producing peace; it is, and should be, the ultimate source of obligation in international law. (Mitias 1990a, 193-194)

One might object that the current global trend towards interconnection is mainly economic or corporate in character and tends to fortify the phenomena of nationalism and territoriality. There is some truth in this. Yet even the current market-driven globalism can, under the right set of conditions, provide a hospitable atmosphere for greater international camaraderie and peaceful cooperation. As Kant, Mill, and others have observed, successful economic exchange tends to create a friendly environment between nations conducive to greater degrees of peaceful coexistence. Mill, for example, believes that global interconnection between states in matters of commerce and trade will “rapidly render war obsolete,” or at least impractical, “by strengthening and multiplying the personal interests which are in natural opposition to it” (Mill 1929, 582). And Kant thought that increasing economic and commercial interdependence would eventually push even the most recalcitrant states toward more peaceful relations:

Nations which could not have secured themselves against violence and war by means of the law of world citizenship unite because of mutual self-interest. The spirit of commerce, which is incompatible with war, sooner or later gains the upper hand in every nation. As the power of money is perhaps the most dependable of all the powers (means) included under the state power, states see themselves forced, without any moral urge, to promote honorable peace and by mediation to prevent war whenever [and wherever] it threatens to break out in the world. (Kant 1977, 226)

Successful commercial exchange and cooperation certainly help satisfy two of the main shared interests among the states: survival and prosperity. One need only consider how the attempt to achieve greater economic unity and cooperation in Europe in the 1980’s (under the EEC) paved the way for new means of cooperation in the 1990’s (under the EU)—not only economically, but culturally, legally, and politically. This shows that economic cooperation can play a major role in the development of a sense of community
among states. It can lead to greater openness in other, less materialistic, spheres of human life—e.g., in social, cultural, educational, legal, scientific, and artistic dimensions. It can create new channels of communication between states and offer new opportunities for mutual understanding, recognition, and tolerance: “Thus are taken the first true steps from barbarism to culture... From here all talents gradually develop and taste is refined; through continued enlightenment, the beginnings are laid for a way of thought which can in time... change a society of men driven together by their natural feelings into a moral whole” (Kant 1977, 38).

Such global cooperation is only possible, however, if (rational) world leaders begin to recognize that economic and technological progress is intertwined with (a) political reforms at home (creating socio-political opportunities for citizens to function as free beings) and (b) communication, understanding, and dialogue abroad. Arguably, one of the most urgent needs in the contemporary world is to create an international framework of “secondary” political associations and social organizations analogous, in some ways, to the secondary associations of what Hegel in the Philosophy of Right dubbed “civil society” (“die bürgerliche Gesellschaft”) within which individuals and groups can enter into “transnational” dialogues with one another (cf. Hegel 1970b, §§ 182-256). Such a framework would help the peoples of the globe to explore the commonalities which bind them together. It would also help them to coordinate their divergent interests, determine collective ends, and overcome the cultural, religious, and ideological barriers which separate them. In a word, it would help them to recognize that “the basic needs and yearnings of all human beings are needs and yearnings for life, freedom, justice, prosperity, and self-actualization” (Mitias 1990b, 209). Moreover, the global moral force of human rights can become concrete and “actual” (wirklich) only through the historical emergence of a global scheme of social institutions—what we might term a “global civil society”—which “triggers obligations to promote any feasible reforms of this scheme that would enhance the fulfillment of human rights” (Pogge 1992, 51):

So long as there is a plurality of self-contained cultures, the responsibility for such violations [of human rights] does not extend beyond their boundaries. It is only because all human beings are now participants in a single, global institutional scheme—involving such institutions as the territorial state and a system of international law and diplomacy as well as a world market for capital, goods, and
services—that all human rights violations have come to be, at least potentially, everyone’s concern. (Pogge 1992, 51)

On the less optimistic side, however, many governments of the world are responding primarily to the priorities of global corporate and economic forces and are less than responsive to the human needs of the peoples of the world, especially those who are most economically and politically deprived. At present, there is a curious (dialectical) tension between pressure to achieve greater political unity and stability, and the effective refusal by many states to yield to this pressure and to undertake global structural reforms. Despite some encouraging tendencies in the past few decades (e.g., the collapse of communism and the spread of democratic governance), the structural and normative foundations of world order seem unable to provide even minimum security and well-being for most peoples. In particular, the dynamics of current economic globalism have been undermining the state as an instrument of human well-being, subordinating it to multinational or supranational corporate forces. As Richard Schacht recently observed, “It is not too far-fetched to imagine a summit conference ten years from now attended by representatives of a Germany-led Europe, [a U.S.-led North America], a Japan-led Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and a Saudi-led oil cartel—perhaps hosted by the bankers of Switzerland—which would give the rest of the world its marching-orders” (Schacht 1991, 126). Certainly the current corporate-driven globalism, combined with an uncritical stress on economic growth and consumerism, is beginning to have devastating effects. One need only consider the ecological destruction of the planet or the lack of social accountability in corporate board rooms where, for example, decisions are made that require poor countries, as a precondition for their receiving aid, to dilute the security and welfare programs serving their own citizens. Such unfortunate countries then see their governments recasting their claim for legitimate authority on a willingness to escalate an internal war against their own people beneath the banner of “law and order,” a euphemism for reliance on capital punishment, bigger prisons, and a larger, better armed police force (see Falk 1994a). In some cases, state governments have been overpowered by radical nationalist or extreme fundamentalist factions, resulting in “ethnic cleansing” and expulsion.

There is a real need to restore the integrity of the constitutional state so that it can perform at least some of its traditional ethical functions: providing its citizens with “human rights, political democracy, a sense of community and tradition, and overall security” (Falk 1992, 204). Otherwise,
the state will increasingly operate as an agency for multinational or supranational corporate elitism and oligarchy, or find itself overwhelmed by internal (nationalist, anti-secular) chaos (see Schacht 1991, 126). This will require vision, social initiative, mobilization, and activism across borders in order to institute a more “human-driven” (or “people-oriented”) globalism to counterbalance or neutralize the current corporate-driven globalism. Moreover, given the prevalence of national sentiments among the states, peoples, and cultural groups of the world, a cosmopolitan world government or world state does not seem to be a viable political project for the foreseeable future. (Although one could argue, on Hegelian terms, that the European Union or Scandinavian cooperation provide possible models for a future viable world state which would coordinate a new “global nationality” with local, historical nationalities whose external sovereignties have been dialectically transcended.) For the time being, at least, the nation-state is almost certain to retain its role as the dominant political actor internationally. Therefore, the first step towards implementing a more “human-driven” globalism will almost certainly arise out of social initiatives aimed at giving the state the “political space” it needs to better balance its traditional role of securing the well-being of its citizens as a territorial community and “its new role and identity as an agency for the protection of the global commons and the promotion of human (as distinct from merely national) interests” (Falk 1994a). I am not in a position to analyze or evaluate the various social initiatives needed to implement such a “counter-globalism.” (Indeed, there has lately been a notable absence of practical alternatives to a corporate or market-driven globalism.) I refer to this only to emphasize the complexity of the dialectical tension, at the moment, between territorial sovereign states and global integrative/disintegrative processes that are converging in some cases to undermine the capacity of national governments to secure the well-being of their own citizenry. As Richard Falk observes:

The decisive challenge of the moment is Hegelian in character. What is required is the formation of a consciousness capable of generating ideas and mobilizing support in a manner that facilitates transition to a new stage of . . . globalization. . . . Without the ideational stage-setting, structural solutions will not be politically feasible or will be misappropriated by oppressive, [e.g.] anti-ecological tendencies. (Falk 1994a)

Can the sovereign state be repositioned in order to strike a dialectical balance between securing the well-being and ethical life of its peo-
ple and the successful participation in emerging global markets and a new 
global economy? I would suggest that such a repositioning of the state can 
occur only if “transnational democratic forces” can fashion institutions of a 
global “civil society” strong enough to mediate, with an eye to social justice, the 
influence of global corporate oligarchy. In light of the recent failures of the UN 
(e.g., in Somalia and Bosnia), it is unlikely any time soon that the push towards 
a more people-oriented globalism will come from the top—e.g., from an 
enhanced UN role in international life (in peacekeeping, regulating the world 
economy, protecting the environment), or even from the higher strata of state 
governments. (Certainly, the UN, as it now exists, cannot be viewed as a prom-
ising nucleus of some future League of Nations worthy of its name; and I don’t 
see anything else in existence today which deserves to be so viewed.) Therefore, 
for the time being, at least, the push towards a more civil “global civil society” 
is likely to be found primarily at the grassroots level. I have in mind here vari-
ous transnational civic initiatives and social movements (Amnesty 
International, Doctors Without Borders, Greenpeace, the Green Party, etc.) 
which are attempting to exploit democratizing resources and means of 
communication in order to promote human rights and peace, protect the 
environment, limit population growth, and support more humane approaches 
to world economic growth and development. It remains to be seen whether 
these social movements and civic initiatives will be successful in more than a 
piecemeal fashion, and whether their efforts will result in global structural 
reform at the top. It is clear, however, that the effort to implement a more 
“human-driven” globalism must start from the foundation and work upward 
to the top, and not the other way around.

III. THE NEED FOR GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Essential to cultivating a sense of global community is the 
promotion, strengthening, and consolidation of democratic government 
throughout the world, as a democratic form of government is more repre-
sentative, while authoritarian, non-representational forms of government 
are “state-oriented,” that is, representative of the small group of people in 
power. In a representative democracy, the fundamental principle at work is 
the principle of freedom—freedom being the basic principle of modernity 
and the ultimate end or goal of modern polity. The principle of freedom is 
given rational expression in a democratic society via law and constitution.
A truly democratic society is ruled by law, not by individuals or groups acting arbitrarily or capriciously. In a democratic setting, the basic policy decisions, actions, expenditures, etc., that affect the well-being of the society as a whole are determined by a constitutionally specified body of legislators who represent the interests of the people. Both the elected officials who govern and the governmental institutions are simply means for actualizing the “general will,” the rational interests of the people. Citizens participate, at least indirectly, in the major policy decisions that affect their lives.

It stands to reason, then, that when a democratic state “formally agrees to adhere to the rule of international law,” its agreement will tend to be endorsed by a majority of the citizens; and this sort of democratic endorsement is typically “reasoned, public, and legal, therefore valid” (Mitias 1990a, 199). This is why other states in the international community can generally rely on it.

In a democratic society, constitutional law tends to function as a principle of social order, unity, and stability, especially if this law is fashioned on basic precepts of rightness and justice. As one commentator recently observed:

In this sort of society there is not much room for violence or hostile, destructive competition which breeds chaos and conflict; on the contrary, any violent means for achieving personal or collective ends would [tend to be] avoided at all costs, mainly because violence obstructs the attainment of human purposes, and it would be avoided not only on the national but also on the international level. (Mitias 1990b, 210-211)

It seems reasonable to suggest that in a world populated by democratic states, there would be a greater reluctance to engage in war to solve international conflicts. After all, most citizens of the world now recognize modern warfare—whether nuclear, chemical, or conventional—as massively destructive of human life and of the goods of civic community. There would be more of a tendency to solve conflicts between states by dialogue, diplomacy, and rational persuasion. As John Rawls notes in *The Laws of Peoples*, “constitutional democratic societies” typically do not go to war with one another:

This is not because the citizenry of such societies is peculiarly just and good, but more simply because they have no cause to go to war with one another. . . . The crucial fact of peace among democracies
rests on the internal structure of democratic societies, which are not tempted to go to war except in self-defense or in grave cases of intervention in unjust societies to protect human rights. Since constitutional democratic societies are safe from each other, peace reigns among them. (Rawls 1999, 8)

Likewise, insofar as democratic states allow for free and open deliberation on matters of national and international policy, they are much more likely to meet with other democratic states to develop international rules (e.g., to outlaw the use of violence whether by war, terrorism, intrigue, or exploitation) and to establish a framework which could eventually lead to a more peaceful world community. To date, the best case examples of this are to be found in the achievement of Western European community and Scandinavian cooperation. And it is important to note that, in both cases, “what was achieved first, before community, was . . . democratic government” (Walzer 1994, 65).

It also stands to reason that in such a democratic environment, the states would be more willing to submit their individual sovereign “wills” to the rule of a universally recognized system of international law. This submission would not necessarily undermine or threaten their political integrity or national sovereignty. That is to say, the agreement by sovereign states to (a) adhere to the dictates of a valid system of international law and (b) establish regional or global agencies for the purposes of economic, political, military, or cultural cooperation does not signify a surrender of national sovereignty or political authority. (It rather signifies a transference of these powers to higher or different regional or global agencies which, ideally, are in a better position to achieve the desired goals of the states. For more on this issue, see Hicks 1999, 55-58.) What it does entail is a voluntary contractual agreement on the part of the world states to abide by the international legal system as a binding system of laws, treaties, institutions, and agencies. This consent would express the basic interests and aspirations of the states, which are typically those of peace, stability, prosperity, cooperation, national autonomy, and justice. If a state believes that it is free from external threats because other states are behaving lawfully, and that it can generally rely on assistance from other states in times of distress or in emergency situations, then this belief will typically be conducive to civic stability at home and to the promotion of a more communal atmosphere abroad—an atmosphere in which individuals and groups can freely pursue their basic needs, interests, and rights. It will be
conducive to a global environment in which people can realize their personal
as well as national potentialities in the service of a “common good” that unites
them as an ethical community.

It is of great historical significance that today the citizens of
most states, regardless of cultural, geographical, or constitutional differences,
recognize that democracy is essential for the attainment of fundamental
human goals such as freedom, justice, prosperity, and community. Moreover,
in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, the world witnessed an upsurge in demo-
cratic reform movements in many parts of the globe, e.g., in China, Pakistan,
Nicaragua, Argentina, Chile, the countries of Eastern Europe, and some of the
states of the former USSR. For a short time, there seemed reason for optimism
that democratically oriented governments would continue to spread and that
these governments would be cooperative in their relations with one another,
respectful of their own populations, and thus amenable to establishing an ever-
more-peaceful world. Sad to say, this optimism now seems unwarranted. We
see the domination of global corporate and market-forces, a rise (partly in
response to corporate-driven globalism) of ultranationalism and anti-secular
ethno-religious fanaticism, and an ideological void of commanding responses
(in the wake of the collapse of Soviet communism and the discrediting of
socialism) to these forms of deterioration. Fewer people are now expressing the
confident expectation of a few years ago that democracy (and with it increased
freedom, security, and global structural and normative reform) will be the
wave of the future. Indeed, one of the more disturbing developments in recent
years is the trend in many developing countries towards a “soft authoritarian-
ism”—that is, an attempt on the part of some governments to increase
economic freedom and technological development without any significant
accompanying increase in democratic political reform. And even in many
Western liberal democratic states, we have witnessed, of late, a “downgrading”
of genuine communal bonds, an “atrophy” of civic virtues, and the rampant
“colonization” of the public sphere by private economic and corporate inter-
ests. Too often elections seem to avoid the real issues, while political parties
converge on an uncritical consensus, blind to creative alternatives. As a result,
the electorate is often left bored, apathetic, and cynical. Equally troubling is the
prevalence of what some have termed a “thin democracy,” i.e., a public regime
entirely subservient to claims of individual rights and privileges and held
together only by a minimal set of abstractly formal rules and procedures (see
Barber 1984, xvi; see also Dallmayr 1993, 254-255). As an antidote to these
conditions of social decline and fragmentation, there is a need to strengthen democratic engagement through local and regional groupings, without diluting the liberal democratic commitment to the protection of individual rights. Examples or approximations of such groupings would be civic cooperatives, neighborhood assemblies, multiethnic and multidimensional coalitions, etc., concerned with healing the divisions of contemporary society brought about by crime, racial discrimination, and economic injustices. Other examples would be new social and political movements focused on issues such as environmental protection and nuclear disarmament. As Benjamin Barber observes, what is needed is “a community that does not oppress individuals, a consensus that respects dissent, a politics that recognizes conflict without enthroning permanent factions, and a democracy that is strong without being unitary, rich without being fragmented, and consensual without being monolithic” (Barber 1984, 114).

A democratically oriented system of nation-states remains a very distant ideal indeed. Yet as several contemporary thinkers have stressed, we should not belittle the historical significance of this ideal:

We witness at the present a radical transformation in our conception and practice of power. The older, i.e., statist, model of power, according to which socio-political power originates from a higher authority, viz., the sovereign or the state or the chief executive, is now being replaced by a different model, according to which power originates from the actual system of human interrelationships: the domain of human action is the locus of power. The people can make a difference in what happens, or can happen, at any level of human life—at the institutional, regional, national, and international levels. . . . The concerted efforts of various [democratizing] national and international organizations which support diverse human causes like human rights, disarmament, ecology, poverty, etc., clearly show that political power does not exclusively reside in the highest stratum of government but also in the complex network of human action in the various institutions which make up the structure of the state. (Mitias 1990a, 199)

IV. THE NEED FOR PROMOTING A POSITIVE APPROACH TO REGIONALISM

One can conceive of direct ways of implementing global democratic reforms, and direct modes of democratic accountability for exist-
ing global institutions (the World Bank, IMF, IAEA, WTO), based on something like the cosmopolitan idea of world citizenship on an extra-state or extra-national basis. This would entail, among other things, instituting structural procedures for democratic participation on a global scale, e.g., opportunities for collective deliberation, debate, voting, referenda via viable international forums, representation via elected assemblies empowered to legislate, regulate, and make policy decisions. With respect to the issues addressed within the framework of such international bodies, this would be tantamount to a limited form of world government. (And as Clark Butler and Errol Harris argue, a world government with a new global nationality may be something to which Hegel’s dialectical method eventually leads; see Butler 1997, 170, 231-245; see Harris 1993, and 1995, 87-95.)

It goes without saying, however, that even a limited form of democratic world government is highly unlikely for the foreseeable future. It is questionable whether it would even be desirable, especially if it entailed a diluting of cultural diversity or an abandonment of the self-determination of politically organized communities. At the same time, “state power” and the ability of national governments to perform their traditional ethical functions (human rights protection, political self-determination, etc.) are being seriously and increasingly threatened in some parts of the world by various forms of “pathological anarchy.” By “pathological anarchy” I mean breakdowns of ethical order within states, culminating in extreme nationalism, ethno-religious fanaticism, terrorism, genocidal outbreaks, “ethnic cleansing,” and massive displacement of peoples from their traditional homelands. (The expression “pathological anarchy” comes from Falk 1994b.) These types of anarchy are beginning to have international effects: the prospects of an expanded “civil war” in Kosovo, Macedonia, and elsewhere; massive numbers of refugees causing destabilizing effects in liberal democratic countries (Germany, Great Britain, France, the United States); the growing number of “suicidal bombers” in Israel and elsewhere, etc.

Given that both traditional states and the UN have failed effectively to address this “pathological anarchy,” it seems reasonable to ask whether empowered regional institutions (supranational regional federations and alliances) could work effectively to combat these pathologically anarchistic forms of nationalism and “new world disorder” that are on the scene today. For example, could the EU or NATO or even KFOR successfully challenge ethnic violence in Kosovo, prevent it from spreading to Macedonia, and restore order and stabil-
ity to a multi-ethnic Bosnia or Yugoslavia? Could the newly formed African Union effectively take on ordering tasks in such troubled regions as Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi, reign in the despots and corruption-riddled governments, and begin to pull the beleaguered continent out of conflict and poverty?

Also, from the point of view of promoting global democratic reforms, it seems more reasonable to think in terms of transnational regional organizations as collectively deliberating and deciding on matters of common concern. It seems more realistic to think that they, as opposed to a world government, would offer effective democratic participation to the citizens of the various regional states. To date, at least, the most advanced case of such a development is the European Union with its European Parliament democratically elected by the citizens of member countries. Here we have an actual example of “transnational” democratic participation and even the possibility of regional (European) citizenship. Of course the European Parliament still has very little political authority, and the locus of real political power still rests within the various sovereign European nations. It is also unclear what direction the European Community will take in the future. Will it become the United States of Europe, or will it (as seems more likely) continue to defer complete political integration and remain a less unified federation where state sovereignty and national identity are retained?

Could the EU model be applied to other regions of the world (e.g., to the Asia/Pacific countries, or to the countries of North America), and could it play a positive role in implementing democratic reform as well as a more people-oriented globalism? Scholars and political theorists have only begun to consider these issues. Regional communities have not yet evolved to the point where they have the political will and ability to effectively address the various forms of pathological anarchy which confront them. Still, can or should regional bodies, institutions, associations, or federations be encouraged to take on these ordering (globalizing) tasks? The question poses a number of dilemmas for the contemporary world. In order to be effective and autonomous, supranational regional organizations would have to become more cohesive and capable of commanding loyalty and solidarity from their members, thus coming to resemble nation-states in certain respects. But such a regional “trend toward unity” and cohesiveness would seem likely to generate inter-regional conflicts based, e.g., on different and uneven regional resource bases and on diverse cultural or civilizational identities. As Hegel
might say, a “we” requires a “they”: “even if a number of states join together as a family, this league [or regional alliance], in its individuality, will [typically] generate opposition and create an enemy” (Hegel 1970b, § 324, Addition; cf. also Thompson 1992, 105). Thus to be truly cohesive, regional bodies would tend to define themselves contrastively or “negatively,” leading to potential cases of exclusivism, regional chauvinism, and “clashes of civilizations” (cf. Huntington 1993, 22-49). Also, as Hegel feared would happen in a Kantian “league of nations,” would not regional bodies tend to be dominated by their most powerful member states and hence tend to pursue the narrow self-interests of these states? “A general [Kantian] league of nations for perpetual peace would [often] be dominated by one nation [or a few elite nations]...[and] its universality would be obliterated” (Hegel 1987, 250-251).

As Joseph C. Flay recently observed, “the ideality of the sovereignty of one state in relation to that of another state or states is no longer the external affair it was in Hegel’s time.” Moreover, “a philosophical analysis of the nature of the several general wills which constitute international relations today yields a dialectic (and essentially Hegelian) revision” of Hegel’s own theory of external sovereignty and international relations:

Because of the development of economic, social, and political relations within the independent nation-states, there is an internal relation, in regard to content as well as form, existing between the independent general wills of the independent nation-states. This does not involve a dispute with Hegel’s theory, only a philosophical dialogue with it. . . . (Flay 1980, 170-171)

Moreover, in light of the tragic events of the twentieth century, the peoples and regional communities of the twenty-first century have a greater historical awareness of how the external sovereignty of the (territorially) limited nation-states of the past often resulted in those states taking international law into their own hands, usually with horrendous consequences: the infliction of untold sufferings, recurring retaliation, genocidal outbreaks, etc. Thus regional communities (and possibly even a “global community”) could gradually develop a “dialectical self-identity” of sorts precisely in contrast to this tragic past, and not just (as Hegel would have it) in contrast to the peer nationalities or regional alliances of the present. Such an emergent “regional self-identity” or even “global nationality”—this “new born child” whose “entrance into world history Hegel heralded”—would be something different from a cosmopolitan world state or world government; but as Flay observes, it
is “nevertheless in some way analogous to the [world] state. It would remain to work out in the Concept what this unity would be” (Flay 1980, 170-171).

I cannot address all of the (positive or negative) implications of the current regionalist tendencies around the world. I only suggest that promoting a more positive approach to regionalism is essential to the cultivation of a sense of global community and a globalized ethical culture. To the extent that the EU and other regional bodies can establish effective procedures for wider democratic participation and create effective regional means of accountability to democratic social forces, they can offer an alternative “mitigating” influence to the drift towards “negative globalism,” e.g., the non-accountable power exerted by multinational corporate oligarchy and transnational banking and finance structures. Strengthened regional institutions might also be able to make selective contributions to combating post-Cold War breakdowns of order and in promoting peace, justice, human rights, demilitarization, and ecological sustainability, thereby giving the peoples of the world selective “regional glimpses” of a more desirable world order. For example, when weakened states are not able to deal with problems of disease, famine, ethnic or religious violence, or prevent massacres of their citizens, enhanced regional associations might successfully intervene to remedy these problems without the usual element of narrow national self-interest hindering their work. A “positive” regional approach to international order might also alleviate some of the fears that effective world governance would tend to be excessively centralized, e.g., that it would tend to encroach upon human freedom and political self-determination or threaten constitutional integrity and cultural identity. Regional institutions and associations could be viewed as complementary and subordinate “mediating” tools of global governance that are shaped from the top by various (legitimate, recognized) UN agencies and institutions and from the bottom by various democratic national, local, and grassroots forces.

Will regionalism come to play a positive role in implementing a more just, equitable, and sustainable global political order? Or will regionalism, on the contrary, be instrumentalized by “negative” global corporate/market forces (and other dangerous forms of globalism of which we are all too aware)? This remains to be seen. What seems certain is that regional arenas (in particular, Europe, North America, and Asia/Pacific) will be increasingly important both as sites of the struggle for global order and as exemplifications of the dialectical play of opposed (positive and negative) global forces.
V. Conclusion

Throughout this essay I have tried to discuss some of the (many) legal, social, and political conditions under which communities (states, nations, and regions) in the international world would be more likely to respect the autonomy and integrity of other individuals and communities and to resolve their differences by peaceful means, i.e., by compromise, consensus, conciliation, and appeal to fair and equitable procedures. Some of these conditions include the formation of an effective and workable international legal system, the promulgation of a cooperative and “people-oriented” globalism, the implementation of global democratic reforms, and the promotion of a more positive approach to regionalism.

There are serious problems impeding progress towards these goals. Much of the contemporary world remains divided into armed ethnic and religious enclaves (in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Afghanistan, etc.) or hostile nationalistic camps (Palestine and Israel, North and South Korea, China and Taiwan, India and Pakistan). Many regional conflicts (e.g., in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in Africa, and in Asia) are likely to figure in the world of the immediate future. More often than not, these hostilities are based on longstanding historical grievances and contrary interpretations of past political events. It is often difficult to know how to resolve these disputes or how to determine which side (if either) is right. Indeed, as Hegel observes, there are very few international conflicts where the “rightness” or “justice” of one side is clear and unambiguous (see Hegel 1970c, 540-541). This is why war is so tempting as a resolution: “to see which claim to right will give way” (Hegel 1970c, 541). But this is also why war is ultimately unacceptable. For in addition to the suffering and death that it causes, war does nothing to resolve festering historical grievances; it merely creates new grievances. Thus the only reasonable course of action is to try to envision a global social and political environment in which hostile parties, despite their differing perspectives, would be willing and able to make acceptable compromises and concessions (see Thompson 1992, 194). We need to envision the kind of international environment in which the representatives of two conflicting political perspectives would be prepared to withdraw to some “third” perspective which is “neutral” between them in some ways—e.g., a “third” perspective which suspends judgment on certain aspects of what the disputing parties presently disagree on but which does not beg any other relevant questions of rightness.
or justice. (Here, there is an obvious analogy to Hegel’s methodological recommendations in the “Introduction” to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*; see Hegel 1970a, 68-81. According to his method of “immanent critique” or “internal criticism,” differing perspectival beliefs or claims to knowledge, on the one hand, and differing standards of rational acceptability, e.g., differing standards of justice, on the other, can develop and change in relation to one another.) We need to envision and pursue rules, principles, and institutional applications of “universal justice” in which the basic moral objectives (of individual freedom, the rights of persons, the value of communities, peaceful resolutions of conflicts, etc.) are promoted on a global scale. Important among these would be respect for the independence of national peoples, respect for the freedoms of association and communication, respect for basic human rights, and the observation of a “duty” of non-intervention as well as a “duty” to assist other peoples who are living “under unfavorable conditions that prevent their having a just or decent political and social regime” (see Rawls 1999, 37; and Thompson 1992, 167-187; for more on the controversial issue of “non-intervention” and “assistance” under “unfavorable conditions,” see Rawls 1999, 105-120). Other important and related global institutional amplifications of “universal justice” would include building “secondary” transnational associations and organizations of “civil society,” encouraging the political and judicial structures of a global “political authority,” strengthening existing international bodies and procedures for settling disputes, and fostering global democratic reforms and democratically structured regional alliances.

Still, it must be admitted that not all developments of transnational interdependence and global interconnection are positive ones. Many IMF and WTO policies have benefited the “ruling” classes as opposed to ordinary citizens. NAFTA and other international “free trade” agreements have been opposed by many labor unions and environmental groups as being bad for workers and harmful to the global environment. And while advances in communication and information technologies have helped to forge new transnational communities as well as a huge global economy, they have also helped to amplify and exacerbate many of our current international problems. They have created wider gaps between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and the powerless. They have driven a “high-tech” wedge between those who have access to information technologies and those who do not. Moreover, the combination of a global free market with advanced global communication technologies has created a small minority of “high-tech” informational and
corporate elites and a large majority of “low-tech” free agents who are working long hours for low wages. This is causing greater divisions, dislocations, hardships, and fragmentations. It is leading to greater job insecurity, more corporate “downsizing,” more exclusions for the poor, and the gradual erosion of local communities and settled forms of social organization. Moreover, advances in informational technology are allowing more self-enclosure and isolation for the elites, e.g., by allowing them to build “high-tech” walls around themselves to keep the excluded poor at bay. As the new corporate and informational elites are less able to see beyond themselves, they will be less inclined to distribute resources in a way that benefits the least well-off. They will be less inclined and less prepared to regard sharing as a duty of justice owed to other community members (cf. Thompson 1992, 191). It is not hard to imagine an ominous future where political and economic power are centralized in a few “high-tech” corporate centers (in New York, Tokyo, Frankfurt, Singapore, etc.) and where the corporate elites are answerable to no one (e.g., no democratic procedures, no regulatory oversight) beyond the corporate board room. Thus if it turns out that economic and informational connectedness is the only “social glue” holding us together as a world community, then the new “globalism” will likely lead to new inequalities, more impoverishment, more exclusions, and greater injustices. In the face of such a failed global culture, it is likely that we will continue to see extremist revivals of radical nationalism and anti-secular fundamentalism as “cynical” attempts to fill the global ethical and cultural void. In short, the new “globalism” may herald a new “dark ages” for many of the world’s citizens.

Yet for those who are concerned to promote a more just and peaceful world order, Hegel’s philosophy will continue to be a source of inspiration. Hegel champions a globalized ethical culture and a just international legal framework; he advocates a political universalism and the gradual formation of a rationalized global order. Moreover, he strives to show us how we can have participation in the best of local, national, and regional cultures and traditions, as well as location in much broader cultural and historical contexts— including, perhaps, a universal modern world culture and a world community of nation-states.
The research for this project was supported, in part, by a grant from the City University of New York PSC-CUNY Research Award Program. The author would like to thank Hilail Gildin, James N. Jordan, and Morris Rabinowitz for their helpful comments and suggestions.


What Is Political Theology?

H E I N R I C H M E I E R

UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH

The concept of political theology is most intimately connected with the name of Carl Schmitt. Not only was it “introduced in the literature” by Schmitt, as Erik Peterson wrote in 1935 (p. 158). Today, nearly 70 years later, one has to say that Schmitt has helped the concept “political theology” to gain prominence throughout the world, across disciplinary and national boundaries, as well as across political and theological fronts. Above all, however, Schmitt’s own position is determined by the concept. “Political theology” names the core of Schmitt’s theoretical enterprise. It characterizes the unifying center of an oeuvre rich in historical turns and political convolutions, in deliberate deceptions and involuntary obscurities. The intimate connection with this oeuvre, which has sowed enmity and reaped enmity as only few have, this connection alone would be enough to make political theology a controversial concept.

The cause of political theology is, of course, not to be equated with the concept’s gain in prominence nor entered into the world with the articulation of Schmitt’s theory. Political theology is as old as faith in revelation, and it will continue to exist, as far as human beings can tell, as long as faith in a God who demands obedience continues to exist. The question What is political theology? thus leads and points far beyond the confrontation with, or reflection on, Schmitt’s position. It is of far more fundamental significance. Yet whoever poses the question today, asks it within the horizon of the debate that Schmitt inaugurated. The questioner runs up against opinions, expectations, and prejudices that have emerged from this debate. That is precisely why he
would be prudent to begin at the beginning of the present quarrel. Furthermore, the consideration of the first theoretician in the history of political theology to make that concept his own and to use it for the purpose of self-characterization, sheds light on the cause of political theology itself.

On no less than three occasions, at three quite different stages of his career, and in three very different historical moments, Schmitt raises the flag of Political Theology for all to see. In 1922 he publishes the first book with this title. The subtitle reads: *Four Chapters on the Doctrine of Sovereignty*. In 1934, a year after joining the National Socialist Party, he publishes an abridged and revised edition, which he now opens with a most instructive introduction. Nearly 40 years later, Schmitt presents his final book-length publication under the title *Political Theology II*. Its subtitle, *The Legend of the Disposal of Every Political Theology*, signals to the reader already on the cover that he is faced with a disputed concept and that, in reading the book, he will be dealing with a case surrounded by legends. But the legend Schmitt refers to here—the legend promulgated by Erik Peterson and his followers of the final disposal of all political theology—is only one among many legends that surrounds political theology. Another, rather widespread legend reduces the concept to a simple and narrow technical term to be used by historians interested in the secularization of theological concepts during the different phases of modernity, or it detoxifies and renders political theology a thesis in the fields of the “philosophy of science” and “conceptual history” concerned with certain “correspondences,” “analogies,” or “structural affinities” between theology and jurisprudence. Yet it was precisely this legend that Schmitt tried to support in his last work when, in retrospect, he styled his *Political Theology of 1922* as a “purely juridical text” and asserted that all of his remarks on that topic were “statements of a jurist” who moved in the “sphere of inquiry in the history of law and in sociology” (Schmitt 1970, 30, 101 n. 1; cf. 22, 98, 110. Schmitt does not hesitate to slip into the same passage the statement: “My writing *Politische Theologie* of 1922 bears the subtitle *Vier Kapitel zur Soziologie des Souveränitätsbegriffes [Four Chapters on the Sociology of the Concept of Sovereignty].*” The most obvious reason for self-stylizations of this kind—the indefensibility of which any careful reader of *Political Theology* and *Political Theology II*, to say nothing of Schmitt’s other writings, will readily discern—is alluded to towards the end of the cited note. Concerning the most profound reason for Schmitt’s defensive strategy, see Meier 1995, 57–60; notice the especially blatant instance documented on p. 77 n. 92.).
In order to grasp what kind of flag Schmitt raises when, without any explanation whatsoever, he chooses the title *Political Theology* for a book on the doctrine of sovereignty, one has to know—in keeping with Schmitt’s own, explicitly stated principles of understanding—which enemy it is raised against, which “concrete opposition” he has “in view” when using the concept (Schmitt 1932, 31). Schmitt does not take the expression from the Stoics (cf. Reinhardt 1921, 408 ff.) or from Varro (1976, I, fr. 6, 7, 9, 10, pp. 18–20 and 37; cf. commentary, II, 139–44, and see Fortin 1980), as did Augustine and his followers—and as all of Schmitt’s predecessors had done—with the intention of criticizing political theology. Instead, he takes it from Bakunin. He does not follow the long tradition of the *theologia tripertita* (cf. Lieberg 1973), but responds to the challenge of the Russian anarchist. Bakunin had hurled the concept against Mazzini, attacking what he called “la theologie politique de Mazzini” (Bakunin 1871). He used it as a weapon in a war in which two irreconcilable armies face one another, one under the banner of Satan, the other under the sign of God (Bakunin 1871, 43–44; cf. 45 and 72). Schmitt uses the weapon in the same war. But he wants to help the opposite camp to victory—and whereas everything said about the struggle between God and the Devil was nothing but a man-made fiction for the atheistic anarchist, the very same thing is a God-given reality for the political theologian. Bakunin attacks the truth of revelation and disavows the existence of God; he wants to do away with the State; and he negates the universal claim of Roman Catholicism. Under the slogan *Ni Dieu ni maître*, he revolts “with Scythian fury” against all dominion, all order, all hierarchy, against divine as well as human authority. (Cf. Bakunin 1982, 173: “Toute autorité temporelle ou humaine procède directement de l’autorité spirituelle ou divine.”) In Bakunin Schmitt sees the “true enemy of all traditional concepts of Western European culture” enter the arena. In Bakunin Schmitt believes he discerns, generations ahead of the “barbarians in the Russian republic of soviets,” the most persistent adversary of morality and religion, of the Pope and God, of idea and spirit (Schmitt 1922, 45, 49, 50, 55, 56 [2d ed., 1934, 64–65, 69, 71, 81, 83–84]; 1923, 74–78 and 80 [2d ed., 1925, 49–51 and 53]; 1926, 79, 83, 87; cf. 1932, 60, 64, and esp. the third version [1933], 45). Whereas Bakunin used the term “political theology” to brand and mortally wound the opponent against whom the anarchist is waging his war, Schmitt makes the polemical concept his own so as to answer with the most decisive affirmation what seems to him in 1922 to be the most extreme assault on theology and politics. (Schmitt makes no mention of *La Théologie politique*
de Mazzini. Yet he does say of Bakunin: “His battle against the Italian Mazzini is like the symbolic border skirmish of a vast world-historical upheaval which has greater proportions than the migration of the Germanic peoples [in the late Roman Empire]. For Bakunin, the Free Mason Mazzini’s faith in God was, just as all faith in God, only proof of slavery and the true root of all evil, of all governmental and political authority; it was metaphysical centralism” [Schmitt 1923, 75 (2d ed., 1925, 49); my emphasis]. Furthermore, compare the contrast drawn between Bakunin and Mazzini in the last sentence of the book, which, according to Schmitt’s report in his Political Theology, was written “at the same time” as this “in March 1922.” His Political Theology itself culminates in an attack on the enemy, on whom Schmitt trains his sights in choosing his title: the concluding sentence figures Bakunin as “the theologian of the anti-theological” and “the dictator of an anti-dictatorship.” That Schmitt, precisely as far as the key terms and sentences of his work are concerned, quite consciously abstains from giving “references” can be shown by a number of examples. On this, see Meier 1995, 46, 82 nn. 103 and 104; cf. 61–62.)

The “concrete opposition,” in view of which Schmitt makes the concept “political theology” his own, is thus the opposition between authority and anarchy, faith in revelation and atheism, obedience to and rebellion against the supreme sovereign. But authority, revelation, and obedience are the decisive determinations of the cause of political theology—indeed, the particular actualization of it advanced by Schmitt. Precisely because, with his indictment, Bakunin negated the “right” thing [das Richtige] in the twofold sense of the word (namely, on the one hand, that which is in itself right—for Schmitt that is the authority of God and the State which Bakunin negates; on the other hand, it is the thing whose negation enables Schmitt to transform “political theology” into a positive concept and thereby to reverse the value of a concept that in Bakunin’s parlance is thoroughly negative: “political theology” is the “right thing” because its negation is just what Schmitt needs in order to appropriate it for his own purposes), Schmitt can transform political theology into a positive concept without its remaining—neither for Schmitt himself nor for any other political theologian—polemically dependent on Bakunin or the opposition to anarchism. (Consider the determination of the enemy and of his own identity at the end of the “Afterword” [Schmitt 1970, 124–26] that Schmitt wrote for his Political Theology II and that is by far the most important part of the entire book. Cf. Schmitt 1950, 9–10.) “Political theology,” understood as a political theory or a political doctrine that claims to be founded on
faith in divine revelation, now becomes for the first time a concept of self-identification and self-characterization. Not only political theologians who take up Schmitt’s teaching or refer approvingly to it will use the concept in the future in this new, affirmative sense. (Early examples are the book by the Protestant theologian Alfred de Quervain, *Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Politik. Grundlinien einer politischen Theologie* [1931], or the essay “Politische Theologie” by the Catholic theologian Karl Eschweiler [1931–32]. In the meantime, the flood of books and essays that include “political theology” in their titles has become vast. It is noteworthy that the first essay ever written about Schmitt was entitled “Carl Schmitt’s Politische Theologie.” However, its author—the writer Hugo Ball [1924], who was at first strongly influenced by anarchism and was then adamantly Catholic—was not yet familiar with the conceptual heart of Schmitt’s political theology, the new version of the concept of the political, which was worked out between 1927 and 1933.) This is also and ever more frequently true of those who sharply reject Schmitt’s political options or do not share his faith: political theologians whose basic attitude is conservative or liberal, who have revolutionary or counterrevolutionary convictions, whose creeds may be Catholicism or Protestantism, who may belong to Judaism or Islam. One is tempted to say that the concept of political theology—via Bakunin’s challenge and Schmitt’s response—finally found its way to its true cause.

We must return, however, to Schmitt for a moment. “Political theology” is the apt and solely appropriate characterization of Schmitt’s *doctrine.* (In *The Hidden Dialogue,* I have sought to develop this point at greater length and to argue it with greater precision. In the same work, I have subjected Schmitt’s position to an in-depth critique [see Meier 1995, esp. 41 ff. and 79 ff.]. In the meantime, this interpretation has unexpectedly and quite clearly been confirmed by the publication of *Glossarium* from Schmitt’s Nachlass [cf., e.g., Schmitt 1991, 28, 63, 89, 95, 139, 165, 203, 212, 213, 269, 283]. By the same token, I regard this work as having confirmed my critique in all points. After reading the postwar notes, it should now be difficult to play down Schmitt’s anti-Semitic attacks from the period before 1945 as “opportunism” or as acts of “camouflage” and to deny their connection with his political theology. Cf. Meier 1995, 6–7 n. 5, 43 n. 40, 61–62. n. 64, and 81.) But at the same time the concept serves Schmitt as a universally deployable *weapon* within the framework, and for the promotion of the aims, of his political theology. The concept thus marks, on the one hand, Schmitt’s locus within the political battle of faith.
On the other hand, it is the instrument he uses with the greatest skill in order to force his adversary to join in this battle. For Schmitt does not use the term “political theology” only for political theories that, like his own, claim to be anchored in theology. Rather, he knows how to detect “political theologies” even where all theology is expressly repudiated, where the political is negated, and where all political theology is declared to have been “disposed of.” (On this and what follows, see the references in Meier 1995, 68–79, and esp. Meier 1998a, 151–9. In the text of his *Political Theology*, Schmitt uses the concept “political theology” exactly three times: in 1922, 40, 44, 45 [2d ed., 1934, 56, 63, 64]. The first and third employments refer to the “writers of the Restoration,” the political theologians Maistre, Bonald, Donoso Cortés, Stahl; the second, by contrast, has the concept appear in the context of Kelsen’s view of democracy as the “expression of relativistic, impersonal scientifcicty.”) The adversaries’ positions are either based on “transfers” and “recastings,” or they prove to be forms and products of “secularization,” or they are passed off as metaphysics malgré lui. Schmitt’s political theology, its “pure and whole knowledge” about the “metaphysical core of all politics,” provides the theoretical foundation for a battle in which only faith meets faith—in which the right faith counters the thousand varieties of heretical faith. On the plane of political theology there can be no “neutral parties,” but always only “political theologians,” even if they be “theologians of the antitheological”—as Schmitt likes to refer to Bakunin. Neither indifference nor ignorance offers a way out. The truth of revelation calls for and brings about the distinction between friend and enemy. Whoever denies that truth is a liar. Whoever places it in question obeys the Old Enemy. Whoever does not side with it, sides against it. The truth to which political theology lays claim proves its power to seize everything and to permeate everything precisely by forcing everyone to make a decision, by confronting everyone with an Either-Or that cannot be evaded.

One reason why “political theology” is a controversial concept is that political theologians themselves prefer to use it as a weapon in their battles. Schmitt excelled in this game à deux mains, his peculiarity being that he used the concept of political theology, even after its “positive recasting,” as a weapon to force his enemy to fight on Schmitt’s own battleground. But whereas Schmitt seeks to make his enemies, as it were, “akin” to himself with the concept, it is frequently used by other political theologians with quite the opposite intention: in order to distance themselves from political theologians whose political doctrines they disapprove of, and to attack any political theology
that is not grounded in their own faith.

The most famous example in the twentieth century of this rather common practice is Erik Peterson's 1935 treatise on monotheism, which culminates in his oft-cited thesis of the "theological impossibility of a 'political theology.'" In the guise of a learned book in the center of which stands the critique of the political theology of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, Schmitt's friend from the 1920s attacks all those political applications of theological notions which he considers to be misuses of Christian theology. The Christian theologian reaches the conclusion that "in principle" the Trinitarian dogma marks "the break with every 'political theology' that misuses the Christian Proclamation for the justification of a political situation" (Peterson 1935, 99; my emphasis). Whatever one may think of how persuasive this assertion is from a theological or historical point of view, there can be no doubt that Peterson's treatise attacks a particular kind of political theology. His verdict is aimed at the theological legitimation of a political rule or regime—at least to the extent that the author disapproves of that rule or regime for political-theological reasons—for example, the legitimation expressed in the formula "One God, one ruler of the world." Peterson's theological writing is an attempt to exert influence in a purposive manner both politically and within the Church (cf. Nichtweiß 1992, 764–79). It contains a clear admonition addressed to his old friend, who in the meantime had made himself an advocate of the National Socialist regime. And last but not least the book contains a barely hidden attack on Judaism. (Peterson 1935, 99–100: "There can be something like a 'political theology' only on the ground of Judaism and paganism." Cf. Löwith 1986, 94.) Thus it is a highly political treatise, written by an extraordinarily gifted political theologian, as any unbiased reader of his works can see. (Peterson 1935, 70, 95–97, further 1933a, 289–99, esp. 289 and 298–99, but also 1933b, 24–26, 31, 34, 40, 42, 56, 62, 64, 71 n. 28, as well as 1937, 14–15, 20, 22, 39–45, 58, 60, 68. Nichtweiß has presented a wealth of additional material from Peterson's unpublished papers which shows just how much he was a political theologian; cf. Nichtweiß, 1992, 789–90, 797–98, 805, 807, and esp. 820–26.)

That the concept of political theology is used in many different ways as a weapon does not render hopeless the attempt to clarify the cause of political theology. Of far greater weight is the incontestable fact that the number of political theologies is growing that avail themselves of the concept in characterizing their own positions. Thus it has become possible to employ
the concept in such a way that it, firstly, names the cause aimed at in the question *What is political theology?* without attacking it; secondly, includes the most important representatives of this cause without doing violence to them; and, thirdly, remains a concept of distinction without fostering discrimination in a pejorative sense. I have already defined the cause: a political theory, political doctrine, or a political position for which, according to the self-understanding of the political theologian, divine revelation is the supreme authority and the ultimate ground. Among the most important representatives of political theology in the history of Christianity, Paul may be named (arguing from the standpoint of political theology, Jacob Taubes made “Paul’s political theology” the object of a series of lectures held on the *Epistle to the Romans* at the Forschungstätte der evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft in Heidelberg just a few weeks before his death [Taubes 1993]), as well as Tertullian or Augustine, Luther or Calvin. Finally, “political theology” remains a concept of distinction insofar as it is separated by an ineradicable difference from *political philosophy*.

Political theology and political philosophy are bound together by the critique of the self-forgetful obfuscation or of the intentional bracketing of what is most important. Both agree that the quarrel over what is right—over what is just rule, the best order, real peace—is the fundamental quarrel and that the question *How should I live?* is the first question for man. However, with the answer that each gives to this question, they stand in insuperable opposition to one another. (See the in-depth discussion of this in Meier, 1995, as well as in Meier, 1998. Compare the distinction between political theology and political philosophy that Ralph Lerner and Mushin Mahdi draw in the world of medieval Judaism and Islam [1963, 7–20].) Whereas political theology builds unreservedly on the *unum est necessarium* of faith and finds security in the truth of revelation, political philosophy raises the question of what is right entirely on the ground of “human wisdom” (Plato, *Apology* 20d–e) so as to develop the question in the most fundamental reflection and the most comprehensive way available to man. In the most comprehensive way, insofar as all known answers are examined, all conceivable arguments are taken up, and all demands and objections that claim to be authoritative are included in the philosophical confrontation—in particular those that political theology advances or could advance. In the most fundamental reflection, because the level on which the confrontation takes place cannot be surpassed or outbid by any argument and because the way of life that enables the most comprehensive confrontation with the question “What is right?” is itself made the central
object of that confrontation, or thorough reflection.

From the very beginning, political theology denies the possibility of a rational justification of one’s own way of life. Political theology knows that it is grounded in faith, and wants to be so grounded because it believes in the truth of faith. Political theology subordinates everything to this truth; it traces everything back to this truth. Insofar as political theology champions the binding force of revelation, it places itself in the service of obedience. To obey revelation or be consistent with itself, political theology has to want to be “theory” out of obedience, in support of obedience, and for the sake of obedience. The obedience of faith (cf. Calvin’s commentary on Romans 1:5, in Calvin 1981, 16) is the raison d’être of political theology in the best sense. The fact that the doctrines and demands that the believing obedience is able to derive from revelation can deviate from and even massively contradict one another does not contradict the principle that rules political theology. Political theology may support worldly authority or revolution. In a concrete historical situation it may also abstain from taking up any political option—in the narrower sense of the word “political.”

The answer briefly sketched here to the question What is political theology? is aimed, on the one hand, at restoring to a diffusely employed concept the sharpness that alone enables one to make distinctions regarding the cause. (It helps one to keep apart what does not belong together and yet, disregarding what is most important, is often mixed together. Thus, for example, Rousseau’s religion civile, which long played a prominent role in the discussion surrounding political theology, is a conception informed by political philosophy. The “articles of faith” that Rousseau postulates in Du contrat social IV, 8 “comme sentiments de sociabilité” are proposed by a political theoretician who was most definitely not a political theologian and who subjected the presuppositions of political theology to a far-reaching critique. Cf. Rousseau 1984, xxxii ff., 70 ff., 104, 150, 168, 270, 318 ff., 386 ff.) On the other hand, our answer attempts to take political theology’s own claim to truth radically seriously in order to enter the horizon of its strength. For only when political philosophy engages political theology in the horizon of its strength, or, equivalently, when political philosophy thinks political theology itself, can political philosophy in the confrontation of political theology gain clarity on its own cause and can know what it itself is not, what it cannot be, and what it does not want to be. (The lines of argumentation that I elaborated in Meier 1998a, have been extended and continued in my Epilog “Eine theologische oder eine philosophische Politik der Freundschaft?” to Meier 1998b, 153–90. Part II of
the Epilog confronts Jacques Derrida’s “Politiques de l’amité” in light of the distinction between political theology and political philosophy. Furthermore, see Meier 2000 and Meier 2003.)

If the question What is political theology? first obtains its philosophical significance with respect to the self-knowledge of the political philosopher, then its political relevance arises from the increasing interest political theology has met with in recent years. It gains its sustenance from quite different sources and can be observed in quarters that are separated by great differences. I would like to mention four aspects of this interest. The collapse of the Soviet empire and the worldwide erosion of Marxist hopes that preceded it have in many places inspired the search for a new certainty of faith. Revealed religions not only promise a security that none of the faded ideologies approach, what is more, they seem to offer an effective foothold for resisting the global triumph of the union of liberalism and capitalism, or rather to present an alternative to the secularism of modernity in its entirety. The weight that both moments have in the antiwestern type of political-religious radicalism is obvious. Such radicalism is, however, just one, even if at present the most spectacular, variety of the revival of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian orthodoxies. Both the disenchantment of political-antireligious utopias and the expectations of salvation that are bound up with the establishment of a theocracy have restored an urgency to the question of the relationship between politics and religion that few granted it for a long time. Compared with the three viewpoints just sketched—the free-floating yearnings for a new absolutely binding commitment, the return of orthodoxies, and the reflection on the question of the theological-political foundations of the community—the fourth aspect seems to be of lesser significance. Still, it should not be underestimated given the intellectual climate in which a political theory that claims to be grounded in faith in divine revelation is gaining appeal and an audience. I am thinking of those diffuse expectations that in the broad stream of “postmodernity” revolve around the Ereignis (appropriating event), which, should it occur, will put an end to the “wandering in the deserts,” and yet must not, if it is to show itself openly in its otherness, if it is to occur precisely as the Ereignis, be made the object of a thinking that conceives, distinguishes, and therefore aims at dominance. Jean-François Lyotard has recalled the divine commandment given to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and Abraham’s faithful obedience, as the paradigm of the Ereignis—of the unforeseeable call as well as the attitude in which one must answer it. The proximity of some “postmodern” authors not only to the
famous religious writer from Copenhagen but also to the political theologian from Plettenberg in Westphalia is greater than it may at first seem. In an intricate way—dans un état de latence ou dans un état de langueur—they are turned towards the decisive determinations of the political theologian’s cause: authority, revelation, and obedience.

Translated by Marcus Brainard

REsERENCES


What is Political Theology?


Love of Wisdom and Will to Order in Plato’s *Timaeus*: On Peter Kalkavage’s Translation

**JACOB HOWLAND**

**UNIVERSITY OF TULSA**

---


---

I.

Plato’s *Timaeus*, as everyone knows, is a story of origins. Its theme is the origin of everything: body and soul, man and the animals, gods, planets, and stars, as well as time and the cosmos itself. Like the whole that it mythologizes, the *Timaeus* is a grand, shimmering, multiplex cosmos—a decorous construction of speeches metaphysical, astronomical, musical, geometrical, and medical. Perhaps because the *Timaeus* has something for everyone, it has proven to be a most fecund origin in its own right. Its geometrical expression of cosmic harmony captured the imagination of Kepler, who tried to explain the orbits of the planets in terms of Plato’s five regular solids. Its metaphysical expression of the same influenced Leibniz, whose attempt to reconcile final and efficient causes recalls the *Timaeus*’s interweaving of the two fundamental explanatory principles of the necessary and the good. And its most basic teachings—that the fashioner of the whole was unstintingly good, that the sphere of Becoming (the world of existence, in which all things come to be and pass away in time) is a necessarily imperfect image of eternal and unchanging Being, and that the hallmarks of the cosmos are hierarchical order and purposiveness—have influenced countless readers, and are memorably echoed
in the masterworks of the Christian authors Augustine and Dante.

The *Timaeus* that everyone knows and the *Timaeus* that Plato wrote are, however, two different things. This is because the famous story about the whole is only part of the dialogue. It is the part spoken by the character Timaeus, which takes up slightly less than the last seven-eighths of the work. Read by itself, the cosmology is a monologue out of context; it is the oft-forgotten first eighth of the *Timaeus*—the conversation between Socrates, Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates—that makes the work a dialogue. In the course of this conversation, we are told that Timaeus’s speech is organically connected with two other speeches: it is the sequel to a discourse by Socrates and the prologue to one by Critias. Yet even this trilogy comes down to us as something less than whole. Its beginning and its end—like the beginning and end of the cosmos, one is tempted to say—are obscure: Socrates provides only a perplexing summary of his remarks of “yesterday,” while Critias’s speech breaks off just as it really gets going (*Timaeus* 17c-19a, *Critias* 121c).

Most scholars seem not to have heeded these warnings about the curious incompleteness of Timaeus’s account of the whole. Indeed, it would appear that the dialogue has rarely been carefully studied in its entirety. The *Timaeus* was known to the Latin West only through the partial translations of Cicero and, later, of Calcidius (a 4th century scholar). The former covered only the first parts of Timaeus’s speech (27d-47b); the latter started at the beginning of the work, but broke off roughly halfway through, at 53c (Novotny 1977, 72, 171-172). Greekless medieval readers were consequently able to study only a fragment of the dialogue. Today, the whole dialogue is once again universally available; yet a piecemeal approach to the *Timaeus* persists even among those who can read the original text. Two of the most influential commentaries on the dialogue, F. M. Cornford’s *Plato’s Cosmology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1937) and A. E. Taylor’s *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), pay scant attention to the portion of the text prior to the beginning of Timaeus’s speech at 27c. The otherwise extensive introduction to the recent Hackett edition of the *Timaeus* follows the same pattern. Its author asks, but makes no attempt to answer, a question that is fundamental to our understanding of the dialogue: “Why should Plato preface his cosmological discourse with this story [about Atlantis], which, whether factual or fictitious, seems totally irrelevant to it?” (Zeyl 2000, xxviii). Worse still is the treatment the dialogue suffered at the 1995 Fourth Symposium
Platonicum of the International Plato Society, which was devoted entirely to the *Timaeus*. The conference organizers—leading Plato scholars all—divided up the text into sections and solicited papers on every part, with the exception of the opening pages (17a-27b); this section of the dialogue was left out of consideration altogether. From the point of view of the *Timaeus* Symposium, the first ten Stephanus pages of the dialogue may as well not have existed.

To mistake a part for a whole is a critical error in any endeavor. To do so in reading a Platonic dialogue guarantees misinterpretation. In the case of the *Timaeus*, any interpretation that does not come to grips with the emphatically political context of Timaeus’s cosmology is simply inadequate. As a rule, however, this context is all but invisible in commentaries on the dialogue.

The Kalkavage edition of the *Timaeus* is an important exception to this rule. (Two other exceptions are Welliver 1977, and Sallis 1999. Welliver criticizes the usual piecemeal approach to the dialogue in his opening chapter, “The Present State of Interpretation,” 1-7.) Kalkavage has produced an inexpensive translation of the *Timaeus* that is aimed at “the adventurous beginner,” but that has something to teach students of Plato at every level of accomplishment. This edition has a host of features that aid in the study of the dialogue, including a long introductory essay, an outline of the *Timaeus*, a translation with footnotes, an extensive glossary of important terms (which is intended “to introduce the reader to the Greek of the *Timaeus* and to convey a sense of the dialogue’s central philosophic themes”), and appendices on music, astronomy, and geometry. The clarity, precision, and intellectual breadth of the translation and commentary are perhaps not surprising, given Kalkavage’s years of experience as a Tutor at St. John’s College. But what is most noteworthy about this edition of the *Timaeus* is its attention to the dialogue as a whole, i.e., as a dialogue. In particular, Kalkavage’s introductory essay—especially when read in conjunction with the glossary—renders visible the dramatic and philosophical context of Timaeus’s cosmology in a way that makes possible a fresh understanding of the *Timaeus*’s deepest implications.
II.

In the opening lines of the *Timaeus*, Socrates alerts us to the theme of absence: “One, two, three . . . but now where’s our fourth, my dear Timaeus, of yesterday’s feasters and hosts of today?” The absence of the unnamed fourth means that something may be left out of the anticipated feast of speeches. Socrates accordingly instructs his companions to take up “the task of filling the missing one’s part” (17a). The dialogue thus begins with a puzzle. What is missing in the *Timaeus*? In what way do the speakers respond to the phenomenon of absence, and what, if anything, is left out of their speeches? Socrates goes on to recapitulate the main points of a discourse he delivered “yesterday” about the best regime. Socrates has conceived a desire to see yesterday’s city at war, and today’s hosts have agreed to try to satisfy him. Critias follows Socrates by recounting the story of Solon’s visit to the Egyptian district of Sais, during which Solon learned from certain priests about a war between the ancient Athenians and the invading armies of Atlantis. Critias proposes to satisfy Socrates’ desire by telling the story of this ancient conflict. In preparation for this story, which Critias begins to narrate in the *Critias*, Timaeus will first speak “about the nature of the all . . . beginning from the birth of the cosmos and ending in the nature of mankind” (27a). The game-plan for the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, as Kalkavage notes, presents us with yet another puzzle: “Why is the greatest philosophic work on the cosmos framed by politics?” (p. 4, italics in original).

The very fact that Timaeus’s cosmology is framed by politics should be enough to alert the thoughtful reader to a basic problem of interpretation. The situation is analogous to the one that obtains in the *Republic*, in which the philosopher is introduced as the solution to the problem of political rule. Any interpretation of Socrates’ subsequent description of the nature of the philosopher must take into account the demands posed by this political context. In book 6 of the *Republic*, for example, Socrates presents the philosopher not as a seeker of wisdom, but as a wise man; the reason for this exaggeration is that the best regime requires wise rulers. Similarly, we should expect to find in Timaeus’s cosmological discourse certain excesses or deficiencies, certain telling emphases or omissions, that can at least in part be traced to the richly-drawn context in which he fashions his speech. But again, we will not be able to understand (and perhaps in some cases even to detect) these features of his speech if we remain insensitive to its context.
In his introductory essay, Kalkavage reflects on the opening sections of the *Timaeus* with a view to both of the puzzles mentioned above. What is absent in the political speeches of Socrates and Critias? The answer, in a nutshell, is *erôs*, and in particular the philosophical desire to transcend *Becoming*. What remains—what is left behind when *erôs* has been removed from the context of politics—is spiritedness or *thumos*, which manifests itself in the speeches of Socrates and Critias in multiple guises. All of this, as Kalkavage makes clear, provides a fitting introduction to Timaeus’s cosmology. Most important, the prelude to Timaeus’s speech anticipates the peculiarly *thumotic* and practical, as opposed to erotic and contemplative, character of his intellectual endeavor.

Socrates’ summary of yesterday’s speech about the best regime is clearly intended to remind us of the *Republic* (regardless of problems with respect to the relative dramatic dates of the two dialogues: cf. Sallis 1999, 21-23). But his summary is manifestly incomplete. It makes no mention of philosophy, and it “omits everything that involves an ascent beyond the strictly political” (p. 8). On the other hand, Socrates wants to see the city engaged in *the* *thumotic* activity *par excellence*, namely, war. We are perhaps meant to recall that the *Republic*’s city in speech has its roots in *thumos*, and especially in Adeimantus’s indignation at injustice (362d-367e). Socrates’ request is furthermore itself oddly spirited. As Kalkavage notes in his glossary (134-135, s.v. “disorder” and “desire”), Socrates “orders” his hosts to depict the city at war (the verb is *epitattein*) and thereby satisfy his *epithumia*; the latter word for “desire” builds upon the term *thumos*. The wars of a healthy regime, unlike those of actual, “feverish” cities, must be purely defensive (cf. *Rep.* 373d-e); the war that Socrates wishes to hear about—the war that Critias identifies with the struggle of the virtuous ancient Athenians against the invading Atlantids—will therefore be a protective response to the encroachment of disorder. As such, this war beautifully exemplifies what Timaeus will later suggest is nothing less than the human vocation: the imposition of order within an intrinsically disordered field.

A mere list of the dialogue’s other *dramatis personae* is sufficient to suggest the thematic presence of *thumos* in the *Timaeus*. The character of Timaeus seems to be a Platonic invention. Perhaps his existence in the dialogue exemplifies a poetic response to absence—a creative attempt on Plato’s part to fill in that which is missing. Hermocrates and Critias are in any
case historical persons. Hermocrates is a Syracusan statesman who helped to defeat Athens in the Sicilian expedition of 415-413, some years after the probable dramatic date of the *Timaeus* (see Welliver 1977, 54). His participation in the dialogue lends a cautionary and ironic undercurrent to Critias’s tale of Atlantis: perhaps, as Kalkavage suggests, we should regard contemporary, imperialistic Athens as “a new Atlantis” (p. 7). As for Critias, he seems to be the grandfather of the eponymous leader of the Thirty at Athens, an oligarchic regime that executed some fifteen hundred Athenians during its eight-month rule in 404-403. Critias’s very presence thus looks forward to a time “when ambitious aristocrats tried to impose the rule of the best, when a presumed ideal was tyrannically forced upon the humanly real” (p. 6; cf. *Seventh Letter* 324d). As if to underscore this point, Critias is portrayed in *Timaeus* and *Critias* as a competitive and overreaching lover of honor (Welliver 1977, 8-28).

More important, Critias’s approach to the task that Socrates has assigned his hosts echoes Socrates’—and anticipates Timaeus’s—curious valuation of *thumos* over *erôs* and Becoming over Being. Critias promises Socrates that he will transfer yesterday’s mythical city into “the truth” (26d). For Critias, then, “truth is fact” (p. 13); and fact is, as Timaeus will reiterate, a consequence of the deed that orders. Critias is initially struck by the impression that Socrates’ speech about the best regime “wasn’t far off the mark from agreeing for the most part with what Solon said” about ancient Athens (25e). If ancient Athens does not precisely fit the mold of the regime of which Socrates spoke yesterday, Critias will nevertheless *make* it fit:

As for the citizens and the city you went through for us yesterday as though in a story, we, having now carried them here into the truth, shall set down that city as being this very one I was talking about; and we shall declare that the citizens you had in mind are those true ancestors of ours about whom the priest was speaking. In all ways they will fit one another, and we will not sing out of tune in declaring that they are the very ones who existed at that time. (26c-d)

If Critias’s legend about the feverish imperialism and subsequent destruction of Atlantis is a cautionary tale, his story of Egypt seems to be one of another sort. Egyptian Sais, said to be a sister-city to ancient Athens (23d-e), is characterized by “a rigidly observed caste system in which a scientifically-enlightened priesthood plays a hierarchical role that mimics the philosopher-kings in the *Republic.*” Sais is furthermore a place devoid of *erôs*, a place where “everything . . . seems weirdly ossified and dead”: “we meet very
old men (that is, human males on the brink of death) but no young males and no women and children” (p. 15). Perhaps not coincidentally, the priests with whom Solon speaks are demythologizers who explain the periodic destructions of mankind in other parts of the world in purely scientific terms (22c-d; cf. Phaedrus 229c-230a). Geographical accident has protected Egypt from destruction by natural disaster (22d); beyond this, Sais exemplifies the successful conquest of disorder by technical means (including the arts of legislation and war [cf. 24a-b]), and thus the most permanent solution to the political problem. Just as the priestly art of writing has saved the ancient things from slipping into the sea of forgetfulness, the law of Sais, having paid attention “to the cosmos,” has “discovered all that accrues to human things from those that are divine, down to divination and medicine . . . [and] all the other studies that follow them” (24c). In sum, Egyptian Sais is a monument to the technical and political expression of thumos as the “will to order” in the sphere of Becoming (p. 42). In this respect, it is not unlike the best regime of “yesterday,” which Socrates presents as “a technical city, one to be fabricated by and submitted to a certain know-how” (Sallis 1999, 20). We may also note that the priest says nothing about the realm of Being beyond Becoming—not, in other words, about the ultimate objects of philosophic erôs that dwell beyond the cosmos itself: the Ideas of the Republic or the hyperuranian beings of the Phaedrus (247b-c).

III.

At one point, Kalkavage pauses to reflect on Socrates’ “uncharacteristic silence and receptivity” in the Timaeus. These features of his behavior, which are evidenced in his description of his desire to see the city at war as a chance “feeling” or “affection” (pathos: 19b) and in his hesitation to interrupt or cross-examine Timaeus, function in part “to make a receptive space for the designs of men who think of truth in terms of doing or making” (p. 10). Foremost among these men is Timaeus himself, whose cosmological discourse functions in an analogous way: Timaeus “renovate[s] Becoming in order to make the world at large receptive to noble designs” (p. 42). According to him, the cosmos is receptive to productive practice, to the fabrications of moral and political craftsmanship, precisely because of the way in which it was artfully pre-fabricated by its divine maker. “The world according to Timaeus comes about not through chance and necessity . . . but through the sober professionalism of technê or art” (p. 17).
The role of the mathematical arts in Timaeus’s cosmology bears special consideration. As Kalkavage observes, mathematics is in the *Republic* the study whereby the soul is turned toward Being. But Timaeus, unlike Socrates, is not moved by the philosophical longing to come into the presence of Being; there is, as he says, no need to search for anything beyond the “likely story” that he tells about the cosmos (29c-d; cf. Kalkavage’s reflections on the nature of sexual erôs in Timaeus’s cosmology, pp. 39 with 37, n. 58). His likely story makes the same point in another way. Timaeus explains that, after the divine craftsman fashioned our minds, he placed them in the stars and “showed them the nature of the all.” He told them that they would be implanted in bodies, and that he who was able to master the disorderly motions that are necessarily induced by union with the body (and with the other, lower parts of the soul) would “make his way back to the dwelling of his lawful star” (41e-42d). The soul’s original intellectual endowment thus consists not in a vision of the hyperuranian beings, as in the *Phaedrus*, but in a tour of the cosmos. According to Timaeus, then, the soul is at home in the cosmos, and the cosmos is by itself adequate to the fulfillment of its vocation; it neither desires, nor is able to achieve, the philosophical transcendence of Becoming. If the philosophical movement of the *Republic* is from Becoming to Being, the movement of the *Timaeus* is “back down from Being to Becoming.” Being is above all “useful” with respect to the artful renovation of Becoming: as a “changeless model” for the construction of the cosmos, it “guarantees the stability and fine formation of a likeness.” Mathematics is the primary instrument of the divine craftsman’s fabrication of the cosmos. In the *Timaeus*, mathematics is “not valued for its theoretical or contemplative power”; rather, “it is the means by which world and soul are made law-abiding and well-behaved” (p. 19). So, too, Timaeus exemplifies “the mathematical temperament of problem-solving,” a temperament that is more closely connected with thumos than with philosophical erôs (p. 135).

In fine, mathematical physics is “a form of poiësis or poetry” by which Timaeus “rationalizes body,” or by which he makes it thinkable and thus receptive to our technical designs. Given its role in Timaeus’s likely story, one should perhaps speak of “mythematical physics” (pp. 21, 33). In this connection, Kalkavage offers some particularly illuminating reflections on what might at first seem to be an offhand remark by Socrates. After Timaeus delivers what Socrates calls a “prelude” to his cosmological discourse, Socrates urges him to “perform the song [nomos] itself” (29d). Nomos, as Kalkavage alerts us
in the glossary (p. 138, s.v. “law,” with specific reference to this passage), means both “song” and “law.” (In the Hackett edition, the passage reads “let us have the work itself”; Socrates’ double reference to song and law is thus rendered invisible. This is indicative of the overall superiority of Kalkavage’s translation to that of Zeyl. See also Kalkavage’s discussion of the proper translation of the dialogue’s opening line, pp. 41-42.) Like Solon, Timaeus is both a poet and a lawgiver. His cosmic myth is a “scientific song” whose primary function is “more musical than theoretical”; just as singing “binds us to our political place,” Timaeus’s “intellectual hymn” appeals to thumos in that it “roots us in the laws and customs of our cosmic fatherland” (pp. 20, 23). Beyond this, his discourse is an act of cosmological legislation as much as explanation. Because Timaeus is concerned above all with artful doing and making, with reshaping Becoming rather than with knowing Being, his likely story is essentially something to live by. In the end, Kalkavage writes, 

Timaeus casts his vote for the forms (51d). This is an emphatic reminder that cosmological discourse for Timaeus is governed by a certain political or statesmanlike attitude toward even the highest objects of contemplation. To think is ultimately to judge. (P. 31, italics in original.)

Although Socrates opines that Timaeus has “reached the peak of all philosophy” (20a), he is not exactly a philosopher. Indeed, as the bringer of a nomos that reveals, secures, and exemplifies the human vocation of giving order, he bears a strong resemblance to what in the religious traditions of the West would be called a prophet.

IV.

Perhaps the deepest question posed by the Timaeus concerns the vocation of man. In thinking about our natural (or God-given) aptitudes and ends, it is instructive to compare Timaeus’s account of our origins with what is said in the first chapters of Genesis. Whereas the God of Genesis forms the whole human being, the divine craftsman of the Timaeus fashions only the human intellect, and farms out to lesser gods the job of fabricating the lower parts of the soul and the body (41c-d). The double origin of man in the Timaeus is nonetheless reflected in Genesis in another way: in 1:27, man and woman are created in the image of God, whereas in 2:7, man is formed from the dust of the earth. In the Timaeus, the divine craftsman informs our intel-
lect that human beings are to master the disorderly motions of their bodies and the lower parts of their souls (42a-d). In Genesis, God enjoins human beings to exercise dominion over the natural world and to till and tend the Garden of Eden (1:28, 2:15). In both texts, however, our lower nature interferes with the fulfillment of our appointed tasks. The divine craftsman of the Timaeus is so certain that men will fail to impose order on body and soul that he makes this failure the means by which the cosmos will be populated by women and beasts (42c). In this way, “vice itself is a kind of demiurge or craftsman” (p. 40); moreover, what is seen to be evil when viewed from the human perspective or the perspective of the part is another thing altogether when viewed from the perspective of the whole (cf. Augustine, Confessions 7, 12-16). In Genesis, man’s disobedience is connected with “his desires of the imagination and the pleasures of his corporeal senses—inasmuch as it is said: that the tree was good for food and a delight to the eyes” (Maimonides 1963, 25). It is also said, however, that the tree was “desirable as a source of wisdom” (Genesis 3:6). Perhaps the aspirations of the human intellect are in themselves a source of rebellion against divine commands; this is denied by Maimonides, who claims that prelapsarian man enjoyed the “ultimate perfection” of theoretical contemplation, and asserted by Hegel, who argues for a version of what has come to be known as the “Fortunate Fall” (Maimonides 1963, 24-25; Hegel 1991, 61-63).

These sorts of intertextual resonances guaranteed that the Timaeus would find a receptive audience among readers who approached Plato from the vantage point of scripture. Yet it is surely a historical curiosity that the medieval Christian thinkers who found so much in the Timaeus that was congenial to them also held that happiness consists in the encounter with God who is the Word, and thus in the contemplation of a transcendent reality (Augustine, Confessions 9.10; cf. Summa Theologica, II-I, Q. 3, A. 8, where Aquinas maintains that happiness consists in the intellectual vision of the God’s essence). The defense of the philosophical life that Socrates sets forth in dialogues such as the Republic and the Phaedrus lies at, or near, the roots of this religious teaching: Augustine tells us that Cicero’s Hortensius changed his life by inflaming him with the love of wisdom and the longing for eternal truth (Confessions 3.4). The Timaeus, on the other hand, experiments with the notion that man is by nature fitted for, and fulfilled by, practical and productive action rather than contemplation. For Timaeus, even theòria is a kind of practico-productive activity. In this respect, the spirit of Timaeus’s cosmology is captured less by the opening words of the Gospel of John than by the revised version
proposed by Goethe’s Faust: “Im Anfang war die Tat!”—“In the beginning was the deed!” (Faust, Erster Teil, Studierzimmer I). As an ancient anticipation of modern expressions of this Faustian principle, the Timaeus prepares the ground for works as diverse as Bacon’s New Atlantis, Descartes’ Discourse on Method, Fichte’s Vocation of Man, and Marx’s German Ideology.

We do well to remember at this juncture the questions to which Socrates alludes at the beginning of the Timaeus. What is missing in our lives, and how can we make up for its absence? Plato suggests that there are two fundamental responses to our perceptions of absence and incompleteness. One—let us call it “philosophy”—is essentially erotic, and involves the quest for wisdom. The other—let us call it “poetry,” after the Greek poiein, “to make”—is essentially thumotic, and involves the will to order. Should we strive to find that which we lack in the domain of Being? Or should we strive to produce it in the sphere of Becoming? And are we in any case adequately equipped by nature, or can we become equipped, to do either of these things? In his dialogues, Plato repeatedly invites us to consider both sides of this coin. The Timaeus is accordingly an exploration of the nature and consequences of the will to order in the light of an awareness of the fundamental alternative, the quest for wisdom. As such, it extends and deepens the examination of the “ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” (Republic 607b) that we may imagine to have taken place as recently as “yesterday.”

Kalkavage concludes his introductory essay by returning to the question of why the greatest philosophic work on the cosmos is framed by politics. The Timaeus, he suggests, explores what happens when the love of wisdom is replaced by the will to order. With this in mind, the political frame may be seen to call attention to the perils of order (p. 41-43). This is a fruitful suggestion, as it allows us to perceive what Egyptian Sais and Atlantis have in common. Egypt stands apart from the rest of the world in that it is not subject to cyclical destruction. Yet Sais, in which human life is virtually mummified, is a moribund dystopia that results from the all-too-successful imposition of order. Critias’s tale of Egyptian Sais thus answers the question “What happens if we permanently succeed in imposing order on Becoming?” in a way that anticipates a certain strain of modern anti-utopian literature. At first blush, Critias’s tale of the doomed island of Atlantis would seem to stand at the opposite end of the spectrum, and to reflect the failure of the attempt to conquer disorder. The destruction of Atlantis, however, is a consequence of the success
of the will to order. Atlantis is a technically advanced society with abundant natural resources and good laws (*Critias* 113c-120d). As such, it seems to be a perfect reflection, on the political level, of the artful imposition of order that Timaeus’s divine craftsman has assigned to human beings as their proper and characteristic activity. Yet the luxury that the Atlantids inevitably enjoy as a result of their cultivation of practical and productive *technai* ultimately helps to make them arrogant and grasping, and thus contributes to inward disorder or vice.

Taken together, the stories of Sais and Atlantis seem to have a tragic implication. Our world is one in which things fall apart. The attempt to prevent things from falling apart on the level of the body (Atlantis) causes them to fall apart on the level of the soul. Yet were we to succeed in doing the impossible—namely, in permanently imposing order on our souls and bodies (Sais)—life would be excessively sterile. Are we to conclude that there is no solution to the problem of disorder that is both possible and desirable? Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* proposes a solution, rule by a scientific priesthood, that seems to combine elements of the regimes of Sais and Atlantis. Bacon’s response, however, fails to find a middle ground. It is immoderate in a way that is characteristic of the moderns in general, but that has its roots in the thought of Timaeus: it emphasizes poetry to the exclusion of philosophy. If I read Kalkavage correctly, the *Timaeus* teaches that the will to order cannot moderate itself, but must be moderated by the love of wisdom. It is true that the love of wisdom offers no solution to the problem of disorder. In part, however, this is because it rejects the terms in which the will to order understands the phenomenon of disorder. In particular, it is only from the vantage point of the love of wisdom that we may appreciate the limitations inherent in approaching human existence as a set of “problems” to be “solved.”


A New Science?

ALEX HARVEY
EMERITUS, QUEENS COLLEGE

A New Kind of Science, Stephen Wolfram (Wolfram Media, Champaign, IL), ISBN 1-57955-008-8. 1197 pp., $44.95.

Dr. Wolfram’s credentials and accomplishments are impressive. He was educated at Eton, Oxford, and Caltech where he took a PhD in theoretical physics at the age of 20. He was the creator of Mathematica, a widely used, powerful, symbolic algebra software package for the personal computer and then founded a very successful company to market the package. Most of his work since has been devoted to further development of Mathematica and other aspects of computer science particularly with respect to complexity, cellular automata and related matters. And, in 1981, he was the youngest recipient ever of a MacArthur award.

A New Kind of Science starts with the stunning claim, “Three centuries ago science was transformed by the dramatic new idea that rules based on mathematical equations could be used to describe the natural world. My purpose in this book is to introduce a new kind of science based on the much more general types of rules that can be embodied in a simple computer program.” The new kind of science is described as “... one of the more important single discoveries in the whole history of the physical sciences”. Dr. Wolfram proposes to dispense entirely with the commonly accepted scheme of a system of laws expressible in systems of equations governing the behavior of various aspects of the physical universe from the infinitesimal to the cosmological in favor of computer algorithms. This is a very large claim. Master
Galileo said that the language of nature is mathematics; Dr. Wolfram says it is a computer program based on cellular automata. Were it not for Dr. Wolfram’s credentials the book would probably be widely ignored. As it is, it will be widely read by computer scientists and other interested professionals.

The systems of equations which Dr. Wolfram proposes to supersede are usually written in the language of calculus. They are so written because the variables with which physicists deal, such as length, time, electric fields, etc., are all believed to vary smoothly. Time does not move by discrete increments; space is not a discrete lattice. The natural language for discussing such variables is the calculus which is based on the concept of continuity; everything varies smoothly. There have, however, been formulations based on the hypothesis that space and time are in fact discrete. For these schemes the calculus is not suitable. This hypothesis has not as yet proven to be fruitful. Calculus remains the essential tool.

Motivated in part by his discovery that very simple computer programs involving cellular automata can lead to results of remarkable complexity, Dr. Wolfram proposes that such structures as the Maxwell equations which describe with admirable precision the dynamics of the electromagnetic field, the extremely successful theory of general relativity descriptive of the classical gravitational field, and the remarkably successful quantum theory all be replaced by computer programs using self-replicating cellular automata. It should be noted that the fractal set is another simple scheme that can lead to extremely elaborate results.

Cellular automata are a species of algorithm—a recipe. To construct the simplest of these, take a sheet of graph paper and, in the topmost line, black out a single square or none at all. Each square in the next row, in accord with a specified rule, derives its character (black or white) from that of the triplet centered immediately above. This is then propagated by the same rule into the third and successive rows. It is readily determined that there are 256 distinct rules of the simple kind noted above. Most of them are not of interest; they lead to simple repetitive patterns. However, there are some rules which lead to extremely complex, seemingly random patterns. There are obviously a large variety of more complicated schemes, e.g., instead of just black and white, several colors might be used or several of the squares in the topmost row might be filled in. Obviously, a computer could be easily programmed to apply a given rule. In the “Notes” at the end
of the book, Dr. Wolfram provides specific examples of such programs written in Mathematica.

The concept of cellular automata was first put forward by John von Neumann in the 1940s to model in vastly simplified form, self-replicating biological systems, and has been the subject of continuous study since then. The ultimate aim here is to understand the manner in which a living organism depends on the self-replication of a finite amount of DNA, i.e., a finite amount of initial information. *A New Kind of Science* is a comprehensive treatise on the behavior of cellular automata and is without peer. There is no treatment in the (existing substantial) literature which is simultaneously so extensive and intensive. Much of the material is the product of Dr. Wolfram’s own research and has advanced tremendously our understanding of cellular automata and related structures.

Chapters 1 through 7 constitute the “treatise” on the properties of cellular automata. Chapter 8 explores how a cellular automaton can exhibit the behavior of ordinary physical and biological systems such as crystal growth and the onset of turbulence in fluid flow. He shows how very complex structures can be generated by very simple rules and initial conditions. For instance, he can model, with startling accuracy, the growth of patterns resembling spiral sea shells, the forms of plants, and the coloration patterns in animals. Dr. Wolfram correctly states, “Any model is ultimately an idealization in which only certain aspects of a system are captured and others ignored....In most cases there have in the past never really been models that can even reproduce the most obvious feature of the behavior we see. So it is already major progress that the models I discuss yield pictures that even look roughly right.” This claim is definitely justified.

All this is foundation for the subsequent chapters. In “Fundamental Physics” (Chapter 9) Dr. Wolfram explores first the concept of “reversibility.” It is well known that at the *microscopic* level the equations for dynamical processes are reversible, i.e., if one changes the sign of the time variable, the equations still run without a hitch. That is, time can run either forward or backward. This, however is not true of *macroscopic* processes; all those we know are irreversible. They all run, time wise, in the same direction. Hence, the picturesque phrase: “The Arrow of Time”. Every living organism grows older, not younger. We remember yesterday much better than we remember tomorrow.
In the section “The Nature of Space,” the second paragraph states, “Present day physics almost always assumes that space is a perfect continuum.” “Almost always” does not give an accurate assessment. There is a growing view that at a sufficiently small scale, space exhibits the character of froth, and the smaller the scale the more pronounced the frothiness. This derives from well-founded opinion that the equations of general relativity should be quantized, as is the rest of physical theory, and, in such scheme, spacetime would be quantized and, at a sufficiently small scale, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle would manifest itself in frothiness.

Dr. Wolfram then proceeds to discuss inter alia the conservation of energy, modeling the universe, the structure of space-time, elementary particles, quantum phenomena, and gravity in terms of computer algorithms.

Chapter 10 (Processes of Perception and Analysis) explores the various facets of sensory perception and the processing of these stimuli by the brain. Dr. Wolfram attempts to show that the relevant brain functions can be captured by “simple programs based on simple rules.” Here Dr. Wolfram is on more certain ground. It is well known that the operation of the brain involves the firing of neurons, a discrete process. This fact has long since been the basis for a vast area of research under the rubric “artificial intelligence,” an area in which computer modeling is the major research tool. All biological systems also proceed discretely.

Chapter 11 explores the concept of computation itself in the light of cellular automata. He notes that if one takes the initial conditions for a cellular automaton to be the input for a computation, then after a number of steps, what one has is the output. He presents a very good discussion of Turing machines, the abstract minimal, universal computer invented by Alan Turing. Dr. Wolfram shows how a cellular automaton can represent a Turing machine.

Finally, in Chapter 12, Dr. Wolfram presents “The Principle of Computational Equivalence” that all processes, whether they are produced by human effort or occur spontaneously in nature, can be viewed as computations.” This he takes to be a fundamental principle of nature. He also discusses how it is that a simple rule and initial conditions can result in enormous complexity. He asserts that all natural phenomena can be described by computer programs which are equal in complexity. Part of this discussion is about “reducible” and “irreducible” computations. The former are those in which the
results at any step can be readily predicted. The latter are computations for which this is impossible. As analogies for the former, consider the expansion of \( \frac{1}{7} \). It is the repeating decimal 0.142857.... This is obviously reducible. As an example of the latter, consider \( \pi \). Its expansion is a non-repeating decimal and only by actual calculation can one know what the \( n \)th digit is. It cannot be predicted. The implication is that although a computer program is rigid, its outcome cannot be known if it is irreducible. The chapter treats, among other things, free will and how it fits into his general scheme. The chapter ends on p. 846.

The book is well written in a lucid style. Its daunting length is necessitated by Dr. Wolfram’s desire to present an accessible, comprehensive grounding for his theses. The first 7 chapters (the “treatise”) and the 8th require little background. Thereafter, the going gets a bit harder. Beginning with Chapter 9, Fundamental Physics, some background in general science, biology, physics, and computer science is definitely helpful. The occasional usage of technical terms such as “ergodicity” or “Ricci scalar,” which may not be understood by the uninitiated, is not a serious impediment.

A text on a technical topic, whether or not intended for an educated lay audience minimally knowledgeable in the field, will customarily have explanatory footnotes and citations of the work of other researchers. Lamentably, A New Kind of Science has none at all. This makes it difficult to search the literature. This lack is partly compensated for in a huge set of “General Notes” following Chapter 12 (pp. 849-1197). In these, one will find mention of some, but not all, important contributors to the field. This makes it difficult to distinguish Dr. Wolfram’s contributions to the subject from those of his contemporaries and predecessors. This is unfortunate because Dr. Wolfram’s contributions are original and important. Nonetheless, the Notes are very useful and should be consulted by the reader. What the book does do is provide a comprehensive picture of “the state of the art.” The volume closes with a substantial index.

Understanding this book demands close attention and an open mind throughout. As Dr. Wolfram says of potential readers, “At first probably they will think that parts of it cannot possibly be correct—for they seem so at odds with existing science. And indeed if I myself were just to pick up this book today without having spent twenty years thinking about its content, I have little doubt that I too would not believe many of the things it says.” Were he not possessed of the outstanding credentials he brings to this enter-
prise, this judgement might well be accurate. Nonetheless, the book offers considerable intellectual rewards to those who are willing to explore it thoroughly.

Independently of whether or not Dr. Wolfram’s claim of having found a “A New Kind of Science” is ultimately justified, he has assembled an overwhelming mass of material in support of his thesis. With the appropriate rule and initial condition, Dr. Wolfram is able to *mimic* the behavior of virtually any biological or physical phenomena in the everyday universe. This is quite an achievement. Ultimately, though, the question is: does Dr. Wolfram present “A New Kind of Science”? He asserts that “Underneath the laws of physics as we know them today it could be that there lies a very simple program from which all the known laws and ultimately all the complexity we see in the universe emerges.” However, he does not present a “new science.” What he does present is the outline of a structure that he believes the new science must have. Everything must be expressible in terms of cellular automata. To show that this can either produce directly the scientific results we already have achieved, or, in approximation, produce the equations that can, would seem at best to be a long way off. Whether his claim that the work describes “… one of the more important single discoveries in the whole history of the physical sciences” is valid, remains to be seen.

**References**

N.B. All sorts of tutorial material on cellular automata is accessible on the Internet. Look for “cellular automata” with a search engine such as Google.
By turns wickedly funny and profoundly illuminating, Encounters and Reflections presents a captivating and unconventional portrait of the life and works of Seth Benardete. The book discloses vignettes about fellow students and colleagues who were to become major intellectual figures—including glimpses into the student days of Allan Bloom, Stanley Rosen, and George Steiner, and encounters with the minds of David Grene, Jacob Klein, and Benardete’s mentor Leo Strauss. The book’s second part visits Benardete’s reflections on his own intellectual growth and on his ever-evolving understanding of the texts and ideas he spent a lifetime studying. This book is the closest thing we will have to an autobiography of one of the twentieth century’s leading intellectuals.

“Seth Benardete was a scholar, a philosopher, and a most extraordinary man. . . . Before he died on November 14, 2001, at the age of seventy-one, he was the most learned man alive and, I venture to assert, the deepest thinker as well.”
—Harvey Mansfield, The Weekly Standard

“There is in the United States one man who is as comfortable with the art of interpreting Homer, Herodotus, or Euripides as he is with that of understanding the most difficult problems raised by Plato’s dialogues, a man who follows texts step by step and discovers their hidden meanings. That man is Seth Benardete. I have long believed that he deserves glory—that of the heroes of Homer to be precise.”
—Pierre Vidal-Naquet
Subscription rates per volume (3 issues):
  Individuals $29
  Libraries and all other institutions $48
  Students (four year limit) $18
Single copies available. Postage outside U.S.: Canada: add $4.50; all other countries add $5.40 for surface mail (8 weeks or longer) or $11 for airmail. Payments: in U.S. dollars and payable by a financial institution located within the U.S.A. (or the U.S. Postal Service).

New Subscription Order Form
(not to be used for renewals—current subscribers will be billed annually)
YES! Please send me Interpretation

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
City _______ State _____ Zip__________
Country (if outside U.S.) ______________________

Gift Subscription Order Form
YES! Please send a gift subscription of Interpretation to:

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
City _______ State _____ Zip__________
Country (if outside U.S.) ______________________

Gift from: ________________________________
Address ________________________________
City _______ State _____ Zip__________

Recommendation to the Library
I recommend that our library subscribe to Interpretation, A Journal of Political Philosophy [ISSN 0220-9635] at the institutional rate of $48 per year (3 issues per volume)

Signature ________________________________ Date __________
Name ________________________________
Title ________________________________

Interpretation, Queens College, Flushing, New York 11367-1597, U.S.A.
Upcoming articles in Volume 30, Issue 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jules Gleicher</th>
<th>Moses Dikastes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eric Buzzetti</td>
<td>New Developments in Xenophon Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Thomas</td>
<td>The Parasite as Virtuoso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexual Desire and Political Order in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Machiavelli’s Mandragola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>