

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2007

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Leo Strauss on the Understanding of the Politically Better and Worse

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Encountering Strauss at the University of Chicago in the 1950s was a liberating experience. The University, under the leadership of Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, had already made a strong commitment to the study of the great books. Studying them, however, was accompanied by some uneasiness on the part of thoughtful students. Powerful common beliefs assured us in advance that the knowledge these books claimed to provide could simply not be found in them. These books after all, *The Federalist* no less than Aristotle's *Politics*, abounded in political conclusions concerning what was better and worse. Believing that such judgments could be true was considered very naïve and due either to a lack of any sense of history, a lack which had led even the greatest thinkers of the past to regard as true of human beings at all times what was at most true of human beings in their own time, or it was due to a failure to appreciate the models of genuine knowledge provided by the exact sciences. In the light of these models, whatever seemed doomed to remain endlessly controversial, and proved unable to command even tentative agreement for the time being, could not be taken seriously as an example of genuine knowledge. (Those urging this objection ignored Hobbes' observations that, in matters affecting men's honor and profit, "as oft as reason is against a man, so oft will a man be against reason.") Strauss devoted a considerable amount of time in his lectures to removing convincingly the obstacles created by the idea of History and the idea of Science to taking the claims of the great authors of the past seriously. The effect was, again, liberating. It gave us back Pascal as well as Voltaire, Rousseau as well as Nietzsche, and also Plato and Aristotle. Not only could we again approach these authors as we had not been able to previously, but in his classes we experienced a living example of what it

meant to study a work like Hobbes' *Leviathan* in a serious, competent, intellectually honest and open-minded way. At the very time that we became aware of how much we still had to learn, we felt that we had been released from a spell that had prevented us from learning it. One should add that this might not have been the way others viewed us.

Did Strauss come to any conclusions, for which he claimed rational justification, concerning what is politically better and worse and even politically good and bad? His works abound in such conclusions and we don't see how it can be reasonably denied that he did. Moreover, his conclusions invoke standards, which not many of us would be inclined to dispute. Here is one example, taken from his explanation of why so many political philosophers chose to think of the good society as a city rather than a nation:

Classical political philosophy is not refuted, as some seem to believe, by the mere fact that the city, the central subject of classical political philosophy, has been superseded by the modern state. Most classical philosophers considered the city the most perfect form of political organization, not because they were ignorant of any other form, nor because they followed blindly the lead given by their ancestors or contemporaries, but because they realized, at least as clearly as we realize it today, that the city is essentially superior to the other forms of political association known to classical antiquity, the tribe and the Eastern monarchy. The tribe, we may say tentatively, is characterized by freedom (public spirit) and lack of civilization (high development of the arts and sciences), and the Eastern monarchy is characterized by civilization and lack of freedom. Classical political philosophers consciously and reasonably preferred the city to other forms of political association, in the light of the standards of freedom and civilization. And this preference was not a peculiarity bound up with their particular historical situation. Up to and including the eighteenth century some of the most outstanding political philosophers quite justifiably preferred the city to the modern state which had emerged since the sixteenth century precisely because they measured the state of their time by the standards of freedom and civilization. Only in the nineteenth century did classical political philosophy in a sense become obsolete. The reason was that the state of the nineteenth century, as distinguished from the Macedonian and Roman empires, the feudal monarchy, and the absolute monarchy of the modern period, could plausibly claim to be at least as much in accordance with the standards of freedom and civilization as the Greek city had been. Even then classical political philosophy did not become completely obsolete, since it was classical political philosophy which had expounded in a "classic" manner the standards of freedom and civilization. (Strauss 1959, 65)

Strauss goes on to speak of the reinterpretation of “freedom” and “civilization” that took place with the emergence of modern democracy and notes that its true importance resides in its claim to be superior to the original interpretation without renouncing the criteria of the original interpretation. Whatever additional discussions may be called for regarding this point, the standards of freedom and civilization are definite enough. To the extent that we reasonably desire to live in societies that are both civilized and free we will not want to live in either North Korea or a restored seventh-century caliphate.

Strauss explains why he uses the term “civilization” rather than the term “culture” in a passage from his lecture “German Nihilism”:

I said *civilization*, and not: *culture*. For I noticed that many nihilists are great lovers of culture, as distinguished from, and opposed to, civilization. Besides, the term *culture* leaves it undetermined what the thing is which is to be cultivated (blood and soil or the mind), whereas the term civilization designates at once the process of making man a citizen, and not a slave; an inhabitant of cities, and not a rustic; a lover of peace, and not of war; a polite being, and not a ruffian. (Strauss 1999, 364–65)

Numerous passages similar to those quoted above should leave little doubt that Strauss regarded knowledge of what one should strive for politically to be not only attainable but also tacitly claimed to have attained it. To quote Jacob Klein regarding this point, Strauss’s “main interest throughout his life was the way man has to live here on earth...He achieved an understanding not only of what is written about political life, but also about what it *is* and *can be*” (Klein 1974). Given the examples cited above of what the content of such knowledge would be, there is no reason why anyone should find this possibility upsetting, frightening, or “vulgar.” Nevertheless, reluctance to acknowledge that this is indeed his claim and that it might even be a valid claim seems to be motivated in part by the belief that it is bad for democracy for knowledge of good and bad or right and wrong to be possible. The reason given, when it is given, is that if it were possible, someone might feel justified in imposing it. This argument overlooks the possibility that deadly serious resolute acts of will can easily move into any empty space vacated by reason’s alleged incompetence regarding these matters and that they can do so with very undemocratic consequences. When the National Socialists came to power in Germany, their victory was celebrated in a movie that was called “The Triumph of the Will.” Acts of will that are heroic in the eyes of those who perform them and that serve a fanatically obscurantist cause, a cause which does

not feel burdened by the need to defend itself rationally, are not unknown in the twenty-first century. Perhaps it is not such a bad thing after all for those proposing to make things better politically to feel obliged to show that what they are proposing makes sense and is defensible rationally.

Strauss on occasion expressed his views regarding the quarrel between ancient and modern philosophy by paraphrasing an observation of Lessing's: we know more than the ancients did, but they understood what they knew better than we understand what we know (Strauss 1986, 59 note 37). With this observation, Lessing concluded, in Strauss's paraphrase, I think I have settled the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. For Strauss, recovering what the ancients understood better than we do required a return to Socratic knowledge of ignorance:

What Pascal said with antiphilosophic intent about the impotence of both dogmatism and skepticism [that we know too much to be skeptics and too little to be dogmatists] is the only possible justification of philosophy which as such is neither dogmatic, nor skeptic, and still less "decisionist," but zetetic (or skeptic in the original sense of the term). Philosophy as such is nothing but genuine awareness of the problems, i.e., of the fundamental and comprehensive problems. It is impossible to think about these problems without becoming inclined toward a solution, toward one or the other of the very few typical solutions. Yet as long as there is no wisdom but only quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems. (Strauss 1991, 277)

To what extent is such zetetic skepticism compatible with the knowledge of what is politically better and worse implied in the passages quoted above or with the kind of knowledge of political life ascribed to Strauss by Klein? How does the zetetic skepticism Strauss endorses differ from the skepticism he rejects? Is it compatible with the conclusions at which we say he arrived?

In a course Strauss gave on the *Protagoras* in 1965, Strauss explained the difference between skepticism and zetetic skepticism in responding to a question by a student who asked: "Isn't it possible that we must always be skeptics as to our abilities?" Strauss answered:

No, but always willing to reconsider. I mean skepticism comes from the word *skepsis* and this means considering, looking at. Socrates says, "nothing like having another look at it." This kind of skepticism is the opposite of that kind of lazy skepticism, which says we don't know, we can't know, let's do something else. But the industrious skeptic says let us examine it again, even if we are quite sure of that.

Zetetic skepticism so understood is compatible with arriving at conclusions.

But are such conclusions compatible with the absence of answers to the fundamental and most comprehensive problems? Is knowledge of what political life “is and can be” compatible with the lack of such answers? Did Socrates, as interpreted by Strauss, not possess such knowledge? Did Socrates, according to Strauss, not believe that “the city is the only whole within the whole or the only part of the whole whose essence can be wholly known?” How can such knowledge be ascribed by Strauss to a Socrates who knew he knew nothing (1964, 29)?

Socrates, according to Strauss, believed that “we are more familiar with the situation of man as man than with the ultimate causes of that situation” (1959, 39). It is our understanding of the human condition that enables us to inquire in a proper manner into what its sources might be. It provides us with the initial clues we need in order to undertake a philosophically sound investigation into the whole of which the human condition is a part. Strauss also makes this point by saying that Socrates “viewed man in the light of the *unchangeable* ideas, i.e., of the fundamental and *permanent* problems” (1959, 39; emphasis supplied). The link between “ideas” and “problems” is supplied by Strauss’s description of the whole which philosophy strives to know as “the natures in their totality” (1959, 11). The “natures” are the What’s regarding which Socrates asks his “What is” questions. Strauss describes these What’s as the essentially different and irreducible class characteristics of different kinds of beings. Strauss’s Socrates neither claimed nor possessed knowledge of the whole, but he does seem to have arrived at some conclusions concerning it, which are incompatible with any reductionist accounts. “To understand man in the light of the whole means for modern natural science to understand man in the light of the subhuman. But in that light man as man is wholly unintelligible” (1959, 38). Man as open to the whole is essentially different from the subhuman. Recognizing that difference means acknowledging the existence of essential differences in the whole. To quote Strauss again: “This seems to me to be *the* difference between Plato and Aristotle, a difference which presupposes the acceptance by both of the doctrine of ideas, i.e., of the doctrine that the whole is characterized neither by noetic homogeneity (the exoteric Parmenides and all “mathematical” philosophy) nor by sensible heterogeneity (four elements, &c.) but by noetic heterogeneity” (1991, 277). Neither Strauss nor Socrates as he understands him simply rejects the doctrine of ideas.

Affirming that there is an essential difference between human beings and other beings is by no means peculiar to Strauss among his philo-

sophical contemporaries, however much he and they may differ in the account they give of what it means to be human and what it means to be an essence. Heidegger's Dasein, as thrown project, is essentially different from other kinds of beings. Husserl's transcendental ego cannot be understood as a part of the world studied by the empirical sciences. In the case of Kojève one can even speak of a whole characterized by noetic heterogeneity, provided one bears in mind that the whole in Kojève's case is the Hegelian Concept which comes into being only at the end of historical time. None of these thinkers, however, are adherents of "scientific naturalism" or "scientific materialism."

Late in life Strauss appeared together with his life-long friend, Jacob Klein, at a public gathering at St. John's College during which both spoke about the development of their thought. Both described their encounter with the thought of Heidegger, whom both found impressive. What Strauss has to say about his encounter should be remembered when one tries to understand a later remark he makes, during the question period, about the status of morality.

What I could not stomach was his [Heidegger's] moral teaching, for despite his disclaimer he had such a teaching. The key term is "resoluteness," without any indication as to what are the proper objects of resoluteness. There is a straight line which leads from Heidegger's resoluteness to his siding with the so-called Nazis in 1933. After that I ceased to take any interest in him for about two decades. (1997, 463)

For the weightiest decisions, according to Heidegger, no reason can be given nor should any be required. It would seem that Strauss is not indifferent to moral teachings.

In his "German Nihilism" lecture, Strauss describes what made Heideggerian "resoluteness" so appealing to young German nihilists of the 1930s. They believed that all rational argument would favor communism whose ultimate goal they abhorred. "They opposed to that apparently invincible argument what they called 'irrational decision.'" Moreover, they thought that not only all rational argument but the present world itself was moving inevitably to a "communist-anarchist-pacifist future" and therefore had to be destroyed. Their No was unaccompanied by any Yes. Anything would be better than the approaching future, according to them, "literally anything, the *nothing*, the chaos, the jungle, the Wild West, the Hobbian state of nature" (1999, 360).

"Moral teaching" is an ambiguous expression. Taken broadly, any thought through answer to the question "How should one live?" can be called a moral teaching. In this sense even the shockingly immoral views of a Thrasymachus or a Callicles are moral teachings because they supply answers

to the question “What is the right way of life?” Taken more narrowly, only answers to the question “What is the right way of life?” which include morality as ordinarily understood can be called moral teachings. Kant’s moral philosophy is moral in both the broad and the narrow sense. Aristotle’s moral teaching is a more ambiguous case. To the extent that Aristotle teaches that the life of theoretical understanding is the highest life, ranks the life of intellectual virtue higher than the life of moral virtue, and contrasts them as two ways of life, he endorses an understanding of the right way of life that is transmoral (rather than immoral) in addition to one that is moral. When Strauss writes to Kojève: “I agree: philosophy is just, but I hesitate on the basis of Plato to identify ‘just’ with ‘moral,’” an ambiguity similar to the one we have just found in Aristotle is at work (Strauss 1991, 274). (Does Klein’s remark that “the ultimate consideration of things, as far as one is ever capable of doing that,” never frees man from the compulsion to act rightly mean anything more than this [Strauss 1997, 465]?)

In his preface to the American edition of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, Strauss writes: “I had seen that the modern mind had lost its self-confidence of having made decisive progress beyond pre-modern thought; and I saw that it was turning into nihilism, or what is in practice the same thing, fanatical obscurantism” (1952, xv). As long as the modern belief in Progress remained intact, the modern mind’s self-confidence was not shaken. A crucial component of that belief was the conviction that “once mankind has reached a certain stage of development, there exists a solid floor beneath which man can no longer sink” (1989, 267). That belief was shattered, in Europe, not only by the experiences of the First World War but even more in 1933 by the success in one of the most advanced countries of Europe of a movement dedicated to the destruction of the principles of civilization. The threat to civilization did not vanish with the victory of the allies in World War II, though the threat to freedom diminished. The harm done by the collapse of the full modern belief in Progress has led to disorientation regarding the ends of education (to say nothing of other ends). Strauss’s efforts as a writer addressing contemporary issues of public concern, as well as his private efforts as an admired teacher, were chiefly directed to combating this disorientation, and to encouraging his students to combat it by devoting their lives to teaching. His efforts in the practical sphere were directed more to the crisis of liberal education than to any other urgent practical issue, though he did, on occasion, take public stands on other urgent practical issues.

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Beyond Struggle and Power: Heidegger's Secret Resistance

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The Germans have been torn away from their essential ground—which they have never yet found, much less grounded—and are staggering in the alienation from their essence that was thrust upon them by modernity.

Überlegungen IX

We no longer need to speculate about Heidegger's political ideas during the National Socialist regime, or about the depth and nature of his commitment. Twenty years ago, only some speeches and documents from the rectorate of 1933-1934 and a few, cryptic later statements were publicly available; now, thanks to the ongoing publication of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, we have thousands of pages of lecture courses and private writings that give us a clear picture of his positions.

There is both bad news and good news. On the negative side, for example, the lecture course of winter semester 1933-1934 shows Rector Heidegger at his most chilling: interpreting Heraclitean *polemos* as *Kampf* in a genuinely Hitlerian spirit, he calls for the relentless pursuit of the (unnamed)

internal enemies of the *Volk*—to the point of “complete annihilation,” *völlige Vernichtung* (GA 36/37, 91; see Addendum 1). Perhaps Heidegger could not have known that within a decade, the “dark future” of Germany (GA 36/37, 3) would assume the particular merciless shape of the death camps or *Vernichtungslager*—but it is disingenuous or self-deceptive of him to insist defensively, in a postwar letter to Marcuse, that “the bloody terror of the Nazis in point of fact had been kept a secret from the German people” (GA 16, 431 = Wolin 1993, 163). Terror and annihilation were essential elements of National Socialism; Heidegger knew this, and in the first year of the regime he celebrated it. When Heidegger defines evil on the day after Germany’s surrender as a hidden, self-disguising “uprising” (GA 77, 208), he is evading or repressing the fact that he saw the evil at the time of the uprising of 1933 and explicitly endorsed it. But perhaps these very acts of evasion and repression confirm Heidegger’s definition: dishonesty is part of the concealment that belongs to evil.

And the good news? The private writings now published in the third division of the *Gesamtausgabe* prove that by the outbreak of the war, Heidegger had developed a point of view that was strongly opposed to official National Socialism. His postwar claim that he developed a “spiritual resistance” to Nazism, particularly in his Nietzsche lectures (GA 16, 402), has often been received with skepticism, but we now have good reason to believe it—or at least, we know that in his secret writings, Heidegger applied his interpretation of Nietzsche to a thorough denunciation of totalitarian ideology.

What is more, Heidegger’s intellectual adherence to the party was *never* total; if his political superiors accused him of a “private National Socialism” during his term as rector (GA 16, 381 = Heidegger 1990, 23), the accusation was correct. Already in January 1934 Heidegger speaks in the harshest of terms about writer Erwin Kolbenheyer’s biological interpretation of National Socialism, which was entirely orthodox and was to serve Kolbenheyer well as he pursued his career as an acclaimed ideologue for the duration of the regime. Against Kolbenheyer, Heidegger defends an interpretation of the revolution and its meaning that is not racial but historical (GA 36/37, 209–13; on Kolbenheyer, cf. GA 39, 27).

The most candid and significant statements of Heidegger’s opposition to Nazi ideas can be found in the texts that he composed in private, beginning with the *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1938). These writings continue to rank history over biology—a constant theme in Heidegger’s thought—but also turn away from other typically National Socialist motifs, in

particular struggle and power, and move in the direction of play and letting-be (*Gelassenheit*). There should be no doubt that Heidegger emphatically rejects Nazi ideology in these texts; but does he reach an insightful and appropriate judgment about the politics of the times? We will characterize the general evolution of Heidegger's thoughts and attitudes in the fifteen years following *Being and Time* before we look more closely at the private writings of 1936-1941, and then consider how we should judge what we may call Heidegger's secret resistance to Nazism.

HISTORICITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Heidegger told Karl Löwith in 1936 that his concept of "historicity" (*Geschichtlichkeit*) was the root of his political "engagement" (*Einsatz*) (Wolin 1993, 142). (After the war, Heidegger was to write a very positive recommendation for Löwith—with the significant qualification that "perhaps historical thinking in general" was "alien to him": GA 16, 395.) But why would an insight into historicity bring Heidegger into the vicinity of Hitler? Section 74 of *Being and Time*, on authentic historicity, speaks in brief, abstract, but emphatic terms of the need for a generation to discover the destiny of the *Volk* through "communication" and "struggle" (*Kampf*) (Heidegger 1984 = SZ 384; the German pagination is also provided in both available English translations of *Being and Time*). Presumably, authentic communication and struggle could not take the form of everyday idle talk (SZ §35), but would have to be revolutionary acts that would shatter the complacency of the "they"-self (SZ 129). We can speculate that such acts would not be encouraged by liberalism: elections and guarantees of personal liberties would do nothing more than reproduce the chatter of the day and reinforce the illusion that a people is nothing but a sum of individuals, whereas in fact being-there (*Dasein*) is essentially being-with (SZ §26). When we combine *Being and Time*'s concept of historicity with its talk of choosing a hero (SZ 385) and "leaping ahead" (SZ 122), it is not difficult to read it as National Socialism *in potentia* (Fritsche 1999; Faye 2005, 29–33).

However, the danger in reading these passages in retrospect is that such an interpretation reduces the possibilities of Heidegger's text to their "fate"—the actuality in which they were realized six years later. According to Heidegger's own understanding of possibility, fate, and destiny, this is a mistake. Fate is neither inevitability nor actuality, but "a possibility that *Dasein* has inherited yet has chosen" (SZ 384). A possibility is recognized as such only when it is maintained *as possibility*; it cannot be reduced to the particular acts

or happenings in which it becomes manifest (SZ 145, 262). *Being and Time* is a book that opens possibilities; it does not call for a particular choice or act, but encourages its readers to ask how their community can be defined.

We cannot say, then, that Heidegger's concept of historicity is essentially fascist, but we can certainly say that it played a key role in the transition from *Being and Time* to the later work—the move “from the understanding of being to the happening of being” (GA 40, 219). Heidegger comes to see his analysis of Dasein as too rigid, his account of time as the transcendental horizon of being as too ahistorical (Kisiel 2005). “The Dasein in man” must be explored and chosen as a historical possibility, and our very way of thinking of this possibility must become more historical. This means that philosophy cannot stand above historical happening and describe it in a neutral language, but must understand itself as participating in a historical language and acting within the very history that it is trying to understand.

This point applies not only to philosophy in the abstract, but to the philosopher himself. We can feel Heidegger's restlessness, mingled with some apprehension, when he says in his lectures on Plato's allegory of the cave in 1931-1932: “The philosopher must remain solitary, because he *is* so in his essence. . . . Isolation is nothing that one would wish for. For this very reason, he must always be there in decisive moments and not give way. He will not superficially misunderstand solitude as drawing back and letting things take their course” (GA 34, 86). (When Heidegger revisits this theme during his political engagement as rector, he expresses the precariousness of his situation: “Speaking out from solitude, [the philosopher] speaks at the decisive moment. He speaks with the danger that what he says may suddenly turn into its opposite”—GA 36/37, 183.)

In 1933, Heidegger saw his opportunity to intervene in the cave—on thoroughly anti-Platonist grounds. The movement that had come to power was appropriately historical, or so he thought: it was based not on abstract, universal principles, but on the particular thrownness of this people (Heidegger/Blochmann 1989, 60). It did not call for debate and calculation, but for resolute struggle. For a thinker who viewed primal truth as surging from a moment of disclosive resoluteness, an intersection of possibility and heritage that revealed the present as a “situation” (SZ 299), the opportunity was nearly irresistible. Only by participating in this moment of crisis, when the German destiny was being decided, could he fulfill his dedication to truth. Philosophy itself required an “engagement”: “seizing a necessary possibility, exposing one-

self to the *necessity* of fate, complying with the freedom of a resolute opening” (GA 36/37, 78).

“THE INNER TRUTH AND GREATNESS”

After his acts as rector failed to mesh with political and academic realities, Heidegger became increasingly uneasy with the disjunction between his “private National Socialism” and the ruling party ideology. If he was to carry out a true engagement, it would have to be less direct and more philosophical, more questioning and less obedient to authority.

As we have seen, a key point of difference between Heidegger and mainstream National Socialists concerned the racial interpretation of the *Volk*. Heidegger had adopted some of the *Blut und Boden* language of the party, claiming, for instance, that it was urgent “to draw out the grounding possibilities of the proto-Germanic ethnic essence [*des urgermanischen Stammeswesens*] and bring them to mastery” (GA 36/37, 89). But he increasingly insists on the ambiguity of the very concept of race (GA 38, 65) and on the need to interpret blood and soil not in terms of biology, but in terms of historical *Dasein*. Thus, when he develops the concept of “earth” in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” he does not mean a given, pre-cultural nature that determines an essence, but a dimension of *Dasein* that can be revealed only in “strife” with culture or the “world.” The earth can provide meaning and direction only if the world struggles to reveal it, fails, and learns from this failure (Heidegger 2002, 26–27). The earth is not a fixed ground that could determine a world without such creative struggle. To interpret the earth in racial terms is not to struggle with it, but to subject it unthinkingly to a world—in fact, the nineteenth-century English world of liberalism and Darwinism (GA 36/37, 210).

We can go farther: in the absence of critical reflection, neither an individual nor a people can truly *be*. To be someone requires asking who one is. This is the case because the being of *Dasein* is “existence”—that is, a way of being for which this being itself is an issue (SZ 12, 42). As Heidegger had said as early as 1924, if the being of *Dasein* has this reflexive, self-problematizing character, “Then *Dasein* would mean being questionable” (GA 64, 125).

In 1924 the ultimate question was, “Am I my time?” (GA 64, 125). But in the 1930s, the being of the people as a whole needs to be put into question. Heidegger asks with increasing urgency, “Who are we?” Unless the people struggles with this question, it cannot genuinely be itself. “In the ques-

tion of ‘who we are’ there lies and stands the question of *whether* we are” (GA 65, 51). If the Germans, then, suffer from “alienation from their essence” (Heidegger n.d., IX, epigram), this is not to say that they have been estranged from a predefined *eidōs*. They must learn to embrace the very question of who they are as part of their being. The German mission is not to resurrect or actualize an ideal essence, but to help the people’s destiny be born, in a process that combines creation and discovery.

The imperative to question one’s identity implies that the revolution must maintain its revolutionary spirit, rather than settling into a new everydayness. The revolutionary is the true relation to the inception and thus to history (GA 45, 37). The Germans must feel the urgency that led to the revolution in the first place. But in Heidegger’s judgment, Germany has failed to hold itself within revolutionary urgency. Since 1929-1930, he had been diagnosing his times as suffering from the emergency of the lack of urgency (GA 29/30, 239–49). The new regime is not overcoming this tranquilized self-satisfaction; it is not revolutionary enough. For example, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) repeatedly criticizes current measures as half-hearted or superficial (Heidegger 2000, 40, 50, 54, 56). The “inner truth and greatness” of the National Socialist movement has not yet awakened, and it is certainly not captured by officially sanctioned Nazi “philosophy” (Heidegger 2000, 213).

In order, then, to decide what National Socialism can be—to create and discover its destiny—Heidegger pursues his own confrontation with the philosophical ideas that the political movement echoes or claims to echo. His first lecture course on Nietzsche (GA 43, composed 1936-1937) focuses on the question of art—the question that he wished in 1934 that Kolbenheyer had addressed, instead of resorting to biologism (GA 36/37, 212). Heidegger’s progressively more negative readings of Nietzsche parallel his disillusionment with the quasi-Nietzschean Nazi regime. The most promising contemporary Nietzscheanism, that of Ernst Jünger, proves to be inadequate and one-sided (GA 90, e.g. 213), but even a broader and deeper interpretation of Nietzsche is forced to conclude that his thought is the end of metaphysics, not a new inception (e.g. GA 87, 155). In the emergency of their alienation from their essence, the Germans must turn not to Nietzsche but to Hölderlin, who suggests poetic dwelling and not the exercise of power as the way to come to terms with the supreme difficulty: “Nothing is harder for us to learn than the free use of the national” (GA 39, 294).

FROM POWER TO LETTING-BE

Heidegger's confrontation with the Nietzschean "will to power" is part of his own journey from a fascination with power in the earlier 1930s to a renunciation of both will and power in the 1940s.

Heidegger never had a simplistic understanding of power in terms of activity and passivity. For example, Dasein's use and understanding of ready-to-hand equipment is a "letting-be-involved" (SZ 84–85); this "letting" is not inaction, of course, but neither is it the imposition of human plans and efforts on a valueless material world; in our activities, each of us encounters the teleology of everyday things as a given. "On the Essence of Truth" extends this notion into a general "letting-be" (*Sein-lassen*). To let be is not to detach oneself, but "to engage oneself with the open region and its openness" (Heidegger 1998, 144). In the late 1930s, Heidegger still insists that letting-be requires the highest form of "insistence" or "steadfastness" (*Inständigkeit*: GA 66, 103). Letting-be is not passive: it activates us, as it were, by allowing us to encounter beings—by connecting us to what *is*.

Because of this enduring complexity of Heidegger's thought, we cannot characterize him as moving from a simple "activism" to a simple "quietism." However, it is clear that his enthusiasm for action and power reaches a peak around the time of his own political activity. "Power" (*Macht*) is a relatively insignificant term in *Sein und Zeit* (although it appears at the climax of the text: SZ 384–85). But during his rectorate, Heidegger celebrates *polemos* as "confrontation with and among the *primal powers*" (GA 36/37, 92). By 1935, he is experimenting with a family of words stemming from *Macht* and *Walten* in order to express the relation between being and Dasein. Faced with the overwhelming sway of being, man must use violence and unfold his own powers in the face of the overpowering (Heidegger 2000, 160, 172–74). Although this is an interpretation of *physis* in the tragic age of the Greeks, and not directly of Heidegger's own understanding of being, he seems to embrace the language of power when he says that we need to recapture the archaic sense of *physis* in the face of its "disempowerment" (e.g. GA 65, 126).

But it is not long before he is criticizing the expression "the disempowerment of *physis*": it lends itself too easily to a Nietzschean reading, which itself is possible only because originary *physis* has been lost (see Addendum 2). We must read this remark as part of Heidegger's turn against the dominant National Socialist ideology, a turn that often takes the form of anti-Nietzscheanism and anti-Romanism. Nietzsche writes in a late text that he

admires the Romans more than the Greeks. For him, the hardness of Roman style reflects the hardness of the Roman worldview, which is matched among the Greeks only by the sophistic and Thucydidean interpretation of human action in terms of power struggles (*Twilight of the Idols*, “What I Owe to the Ancients”). But by the late thirties Heidegger has thoroughly rejected this standpoint, and he accordingly condemns Nietzsche’s thought for being “un-Greek” at every crucial point—in its interpretations of being, the good, truth, and humanity. In short, his thought is “*the philosophy of the antiphilosophical Romans*” (GA 67, 102). We need hardly point out that the Nazis borrowed from Italian Fascism and the Roman Empire in their ideology, organization and imagery (consider Speer’s plans for Berlin). When Heidegger writes in 1939, then, that with the Roman translation of *energeia* as *actus*, “with one blow the Greek world was toppled,” he is implicitly criticizing the Nazi worldview (Heidegger 1998, 218). *Energeia* is originally the same as *physis*: the emergence of what is into enduring self-display, the coming-into-being of beings as such. But *actus* misinterprets this coming-into-being in terms of *agere*, acting and leading. This understanding sinks to the level of beings and their effective behavior; at its crudest, it reduces this behavior to the mechanistic impact of an active thing on a passive thing. Being as emergence into unconcealment has been forgotten (GA 66, 187, 195–96, 289).

Heidegger makes the political dimension of these thoughts very clear in the *Überlegungen* (late 1930s?):

What must in the future be called by the name *brutalitas* (not accidentally Roman), the unconditionality of the machination [*Machenschaft*] of being...is the mirror image of the essence of man, of the *animalitas* of the *animal rationale*, and thus also and precisely of *rationalitas*. That man had to be defined as *animal rationale* and that the *brutalitas* of beings should one day drive on to its fulfillment—these have the same, single ground in the metaphysics of being. ...[The many] need the romanticism of the “Reich,” of the people [*Volkstum*], of “soil” and “camaraderie”... The *brutalitas* of being has as a consequence, and not as a ground, that man himself, as a being, makes himself expressly and thoroughly into a *factum brutum* and grounds his animality with the theory of race...[a theory that] apparently affirms everything “spiritual,” and even first makes it “effective,” yet at the same time denies it as deeply as possible in a denial that drives toward the most radical nihilism; for everything is “in the end,” that is, already at the start, an “expression” of the race...the predator is the original form of the “hero”... But the predator equipped with the means of the

highest technology fulfills the actualization of the *brutalitas* of being. ... (Heidegger n.d., XI, §42)

While in the *Contributions* Heidegger is still speaking of the “empowerment” of time-space and be-ing (*Seyn*) (GA 65, 386, 430), in *Besinnung* he claims that be-ing lies beyond both power and powerlessness (GA 66, 83, 187–88). Although he remains interested in the possibility of a kind of philosophical mastery—a “masterful thinking” that participates in an inception—he insists that “the violence that is set loose in the essence of machination always underlies power alone, and never grounds mastery” (GA 66, 16).

Grounding as active founding is gradually deemphasized in Heidegger's thought. In the *Contributions*, “the event of appropriation” (*das Ereignis*) means *das Ereignis der Dagründung* (GA 65, 183, 247); this “event of the grounding of the there” requires us to take up the truth of be-ing and to build Dasein on this ground (GA 65, 307). Our role is to receive the impetus of be-ing and extend it creatively into a world. But Heidegger comes to see this passion for founding as misguided. By the end of the war, he is recommending “pure waiting” (GA 77, 217).

Similarly, he moves away from the concept of will. In the *Contributions* he could endorse a “will to ground and build” (GA 65, 98) and even a “will to the event of appropriation” (GA 65, 58). But it is not long before “willing’ (?) that be-ing essentially happen” no longer sounds appropriate (GA 69, 27; Heidegger's question mark). Heidegger proposes that the essence of modern metaphysics could be understood by completing the sentence, “If being is ‘will’...” (GA 67, 159). Against this tradition, by the mid-forties he turns to *Gelassenheit*. This is not a human act or choice at all, but the fact that humanity primordially belongs to, or is let into, the region of truth. “Man belongs to the region insofar as he is inceptively ad-apted [*ge-eignet*] to it, and indeed by the region itself” (GA 77, 122).

FROM STRUGGLE TO PLAY

The appearance of the word *Kampf* in §74 of *Being and Time* is an omen of a strong polemical motif that develops in Heidegger's thought (Fried 2000). This theme reaches its height in conjunction with the theme of power, but it continues to exert some fascination for Heidegger for some time after his turn away from power. One of its most important developments is the struggle between earth and world in “The Origin of the Work of Art”: unconcealment takes place in the artwork as strife between the disclosive power of the

world and its self-concealing ground in the earth. In the *Contributions*, this strife is fundamental to all truth, and being itself is engaged in strife (GA 65, 269, 322, 349, 484, 497). As he develops these thoughts, Heidegger comes to understand struggle and strife in a sense that is increasingly distant from military reality. Finally, he comes to rely on “play” as a concept that is more suited to suggest the dynamic of being.

We could trace some of these developments in terms of Heidegger’s readings of Heraclitus’ famous fragment 53: “*Polemos* is both the father of all and the king of all; some it has shown as gods, others as men; some it has made slaves and others free.” Heidegger is particularly interested in this fragment at the height of his political engagement, and this is also when he takes *polemos* as “struggle” in a concrete, political sense (GA 36/37, 91). (References to Heraclitean *polemos* were not uncommon among thinkers aligned with National Socialism. Alfred Baeumler, for instance, interprets Nietzsche in “Heraclitean” terms: Baeumler 1937, 59–79. Heidegger’s letter to Carl Schmitt from August 1933 praises Schmitt’s analysis of the *polemos* fragment: GA 16, 156.) But by 1935 Heidegger is translating *polemos* as *Auseinandersetzung* instead of *Kampf*, and emphasizing that it is not a human war (Heidegger 2000, 65, 120, 153). (In Winter Semester 1933-1934 Heidegger already uses the word *Auseinandersetzung* in addition to *Kampf*, and claims that *polemos* is not a “military” question; but he interprets it as “standing against the enemy...of the people” in a highly political sense—GA 36/37, 90–91. This sense has been diluted considerably by 1935; in 1945 Heidegger claims that he always distinguished *polemos* from ordinary war—GA 16, 379–80 = Heidegger 1990, 21.) By the time that war in the literal sense is raging, Heidegger has deemphasized *polemos* to the point that the two great lecture courses on Heraclitus (GA 55) make no mention of fragment 53.

Play—another Heraclitean motif—becomes more important as struggle declines. By the late thirties, Heidegger is writing that philosophy “puts the truth of be-ing into play in the time-play-space of be-ing” (GA 66, 41). He envisions a “play in which, in the future, one must play with the ‘engagement’ of be-ing itself” (GA 66, 45). This development culminates in his postwar descriptions of “the fourfold.” Before the war, Heidegger described the relation of earth, world, gods, and man as the “struggle of struggles” (GA 66, 15). By 1949, the relation of earth, sky, gods, and mortals has become a “mirror-play” (GA 79, 18–21). The polemical tension has largely been superseded by a harmonious cooperation—although it has not disappeared (the 1955 open letter to Jünger, “On the Question of Being,” refers to fragment 53 in con-

nection with Nietzsche and the *Aus-einander-setzung* of being as the four-fold—Heidegger 1998, 321).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILOSOPHY:

THE QUESTION OF GROUNDING THE PEOPLE

We are now ready to take a closer look at the private writings of 1936-1941, beginning with the *Contributions* (1936-1938). This is the text in which Heidegger works most intensely on developing “be-ing-historical thinking”—a way of thinking that enters into and belongs to the event of appropriation as the essential happening of be-ing, initiating the “other inception” of Western thought (57–58, 64; references in this section are all to GA 65). Attuned by “restraint” (§13), the new thinking is “telling silence” (78–80), a way of speaking that never pretends to represent or reproduce the intrinsically self-concealing happening of be-ing, which “can never be said conclusively” (460).

The question in the *Contributions* is “How does be-ing essentially happen?” (78). In other words, how does what there is, as such, come into question for us? How is the questionable gift of meaning and truth given to us? Heidegger’s response is: “be-ing essentially happens as the event of appropriation” (*das Seyn west als das Ereignis*: 30, 256, 260; on the different senses of *Ereignis* in different periods of Heidegger’s thought, see Polt 2005). Appropriation is “the appropriating event of the grounding of the there” (247) and “the happening of owndom” (320). In this happening, it becomes possible for man to enter the condition of Dasein and become a self (245). Thus, the essential happening of be-ing is a requirement for Dasein. The reverse is also true: be-ing can essentially happen only if the there and Dasein are grounded (407). Then the truth of be-ing can be “sheltered” in beings (389–92).

None of this should be understood as an eternal, “always already” given set of relationships; appropriation is a historical possibility that must be experienced as an “emergency” (46; for an extended interpretation of the *Contributions* in these terms, see Polt 2006, especially chapter 1). In an age that is indifferent to emergency, the greatest danger is that be-ing will fail to happen. And in fact, perhaps be-ing has never happened—for man has never yet entered genuinely historical Dasein (492, 454). Heidegger looks to the future as he tries to think of “the passing of the last god” (406) that would take place in the newly grounded “there.”

As the event of the grounding of the there, or the founding of the “site of the moment” (323), be-ing necessarily has a political dimension,

and the *Contributions* are a political text, in a broad sense. Heidegger apparently hopes to create the philosophy of the German people—and make the Germans the people of his philosophy (43). But despite a certain craving for a moment of revolutionary urgency, the text is far from a manifesto; it is hesitant, vague, and focused on the essence of the people rather than on any concrete policies. Heidegger has come to realize that there is a gap between politics and philosophy. Because philosophy “*opens up* experience” rather than directing and constraining it, philosophy can never “*immediately* ground history” (37).

Philosophy should, however, develop a critique of the present; after all, the need for a new grounding implies that contemporary humanity is inadequate and groundless. “The Echo,” the most polemical part of the *Contributions*, thus describes modernity as “the age of complete lack of questioning and bewitchment” (124), an age of “nihilism” (138–41). Modernity is dominated by “machination” (*Machenschaft*)—“an interpretation of beings in which the makeability of beings comes to the forefront, in such a way that beingness defines itself precisely in permanence and presence” (126). Machination is accompanied by a craving for “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*)—subjective stimulation, information, and entertainment (109, 129). The manipulation of the ‘external’ world thus corresponds to a manipulation of the ‘internal’ world. In both cases, we simply control and toy with our representations, instead of opening ourselves to an event greater than we are that calls for genuine decision. A related phenomenon, “the gigantic” (§§70–71), characterizes the contemporary triumph of quantity as quality. To be now means to be measurable, and there are no limits to measuring. Nothing is seen as impossible or unreachable any more, so the possibility of “the in-exhaustible unexhausted” (137) is eliminated (Elden 2006, chapter 3).

Mass rallies and spectacles, such as the 1936 Berlin Olympics, would be convenient examples of machination, lived experience, and the gigantic. However, Heidegger intends to describe a pervasive understanding of being that is not limited to massive objects and displays. Even the most private and inconspicuous experiences have been infected by modernity’s reductive and manipulative relation to beings. We all live in an age of decline.

But this decline, as understood by the few “future ones,” is not simply a disaster but also an opportunity to undergo a destiny; these few are ready to become “those who go under” in order to gain true selfhood (7, 397). Like Nietzsche’s hero in the opening of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, they are willing

to go down so that they may be transformed and reach a new inception. The future ones include thinkers, poets, and men of action—those who ground Dasein by deed and sacrifice (96). Different domains require different ways of grounding, but all the future ones will be united by their awareness of the final god (395) and their masterful knowing (396).

Heidegger quickly deflects the notions of a master race and political control: masterful knowing cannot be applied to current business (396). Mastery is distinct from power and violence—although not incompatible with them (282). Mastery is a free creativity whose “bequest” opens new possibilities (281). To be futural is to be masterful—not by forcing beings to obey one’s will, but by participating in a new event of be-ing.

What about the many who cannot yet take part in such an event? They will be needed—for ultimately only a people can ground the truth of be-ing (97). Conversely, unless the people grounds this truth, it is not yet a true people—so its pioneers, the future ones, must often seem to be its enemies (398). Yet these future ones, not the man on the street, are the genuine voice of the people (319); only they can set the people “free for its law that is to be brought forth in struggle” (43).

The question of what it means to be a people is essential (42), but Heidegger addresses it only tentatively, and for the most part negatively. He insists above all that the people’s highest goal is not to maintain itself as one entity among others, but to watch over the truth of be-ing (99, 321). The people cannot be an end in itself (98–99, 139, 319, 398). Selfhood, for a people as for an individual, does not mean remaining selfsame, but experiencing one’s own being—and thus being as such—as a question. We must ask who we are in order to be who we are (51). Because we fail to put ourselves in question, we take ourselves as examples of a fixed human essence, rather than entering a unique historical moment. Participation in history is then reduced to “presence [*Vorkommen*] within a belonging-together that has come to be” (61).

A deeper belonging could be prepared only through a happening that would bind together the few and the many—“an originary gathering” (97). As for how such a gathering might take place, Heidegger is nearly silent. He no longer has faith that political measures can bring it about—although he does not rule out the possibility (98). The rebirth of the people is more likely to happen through a religious awakening: the people must seek its own god, and the future ones will lead this search (398).

Heidegger's conception of the people as ineluctably *questionable* separates him from official National Socialist ideology. As always, he insists that race and the body are not absolutes. They enter history only as part of the earth: when the earth conflicts with the world, a people can come to belong to its god (399)—but it is grotesque to try to ground history on blood and race (493). Physical traits do not found a people. They are part of the given into which a people is thrown, but the people's leaders must find ways to project possibilities on the basis of this thrownness, drawing the people beyond collective navel-gazing and setting it back into beings (398). The leitmotif of Heidegger's critique of Nazism, then, is that it turns the people into a fixed, self-centered subject, instead of recognizing its potential as Dasein. A "total" worldview typically overlooks its own concealed ground "(e.g. [the] essence of the people)" (40). The Nazis reduce the people to "the communal, the racial, the lower and underlying, the national, the enduring" (117). If a *völkisch* principle is ever to play a role in German destiny, it will have to be handled by those who have reached the "highest rank of be-ing" (42; cf. 24, 319, 479; see Addendum 3).

This is not to say that Heidegger feels any nostalgia for the Weimar Republic. Instead, he groups together all the political ideologies of his time, claiming they all posit man "as what one already knows in its essence" (25). For example, the "innermost essence of 'liberalism'" is self-certainty, presumably because the liberal insistence on individual rights presupposes a settled conviction about what it means to be an individual subject (53, cf. 319). When Nazism exalts the body over the mind and soul it merely becomes "biological liberalism" (53), since it still presupposes that it knows what it means to have a soul, a mind, and a body (Polt 1997). By the time he finishes the *Contributions* in 1938, Heidegger has decided that the ideologies that are about to clash in the looming war are all metaphysically the same.

AFTER THE *CONTRIBUTIONS*:
CRITIQUE OF THE METAPHYSICS OF POWER

The *Contributions* are followed by a series of other private writings, including *Besinnung* (GA 66, 1938–1939, translated under the title *Mindfulness*); "Die Überwindung der Metaphysik" (1938–1939), included in *Metaphysik und Nihilismus* (GA 67); *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (GA 69, 1938–1940); *Über den Anfang* (GA 70, 1941); and a set of notebooks titled *Überlegungen* (scheduled to be published as GA 94–96). These writings go farther along the path begun in the *Contributions*, but place a new emphasis on

the critique of power and make more explicitly political observations—as one might expect from texts written around the outset of the Second World War. The concept of *Ereignis* is somewhat stabilized and formalized, as *Besinnung* develops a thought that was briefly introduced in the *Contributions* (GA 65, 310): the event of appropriation is a “crossing” in which “the encounter of the god and man crosses the *strife* of earth and world.” Heidegger calls this crossing the “out-come” (*Aus-trag*)—an event of clearing in which god, man, earth, and world *come out*, or are drawn out, from concealment *into* the truth of be-ing (GA 66, 84).

Heidegger still employs the word *Kampf*: “*be-ing now demands that its ownmost essence be struggled forth*” (GA 66, 85), and we need a “*struggle for a passing of the god*” (GA 69, 219). As we have seen, unlike the rather idyllic and pastoral “fourfold” of Heidegger’s postwar writings, the out-come is “the struggle of struggles” (GA 66, 15). However, Heidegger distinguishes this “struggle” from modern war, which is nothing but “domination through technical power” (GA 69, 65). He has also moved away from Heraclitus as he searches for a new inception: appropriation and out-come are not *polemos* (GA 67, 36, 77). There may be a “struggle” between the first and other inception (GA 67, 36), or “a decision between be-ing and ‘beings,’” but all this is “what is originally wholly other than *polemos*” (*Überlegungen IX*, §9). Heidegger even begins to suspect that the very concept of struggle is too indebted to the concept of power, as we can see in his comment that there can be no genuine struggle against power—that would just reproduce the machinational essence of power (GA 69, 69).

Heidegger now develops an extensive interpretation of this essence and its implications (for a clear summary, see especially GA 69, §57). Power has become the contemporary meaning of being: beings are now essentially manifestations of power and occasions for the use of power (Dallmayr 2001). Power seeks to overpower itself, overcoming its current level and increasing without limit as it “mobilizes” everything, subjecting all beings to it (GA 66, 62–63, 176; this interpretation of power stems from Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche’s will to power—see “Nietzsche’s Metaphysics,” in Heidegger 1987, 195–96). This is the metaphysical root of contemporary phenomena such as “the ‘total’...the ‘imperial’...the ‘planetary’” (GA 66, 18).

Heidegger expands the *Contributions*’ concept of machination and uses it to indicate “the makeability of beings, that makes and makes up everything” (GA 66, 16)—that is, the fact that beings appear as manipulable

and producible objects. Machination empowers overpowering as the essence of power.

The drive for overpowering creates oppression and devastation (GA 66, 20). Heidegger gives devastation a new meaning: it is not the destruction of objects, but the undermining of the possibility of decision: “beings no longer come into the decision of being” (GA 69, 48). We might hear an echo here of Kierkegaard’s critique of the present age: essential relationships have been reduced to “a reflective tension which leaves everything standing but makes the whole of life ambiguous: so that everything continues to exist factually whilst by a dialectical deceit, *privatissime*, it supplies a secret interpretation—that it does not exist” (Kierkegaard 1962, 42–43).

Power thus destroys everything inceptive and all worth (GA 69, 74). It creates a “total organization” without true “commitment” (GA 69, 83). Under the sway of this organization, all beings and acts are viewed as subject to calculation and planning. However, the plans bring themselves into a wasteland that they cannot control, and necessarily run into the incalculable and unforeseeable (GA 69, 84).

Power manifests itself as both “planetarism” and “idiotism,” where the first is the tendency to extend the rule of power over the entire Earth, while the second is a self-centered subjectivism that is turned in upon what is peculiar to it (*idion*) yet views all individuals through the same lens of the essence of modern subjectivity (GA 69, 74). The planet, we might say, is becoming one huge, greedy, anonymous subject. Heidegger resurrects a famous term from *Being and Time* and claims that this idiotic subject is “the unconditional essence of the ‘they’ in the history of be-ing” (GA 70, 35).

Power knows no goals or standards other than itself; as violence, it uses itself to enhance itself (GA 69, 22, 75). This violence becomes a “brutality” that turns not only against other brutal forces but ultimately against itself (GA 69, 76–77). To call such machination “evil” would be to evade the genuine horror of it: it dissolves the very standards of good and evil, the very concept of a final goal (GA 69, 217).

Heidegger is talking about political power, of course, but also about how being itself is manifested in terms of power, in everything from science to art. (Art is reduced to propaganda and kitsch—GA 66, 31, 174–75; the ideal of manliness becomes a muscle-bound figure with an empty, brutal face—GA 66, 34.) Even specifically political phenomena must be understood

from a metaphysical, not political point of view (GA 69, 66). So Heidegger attributes little responsibility to dictators; we live under the “dictatorship” of power itself (GA 69, 20), not of persons such as Hitler. The so-called possessors of power cannot in fact get power within their grasp—instead, power possesses *us* (GA 69, 63–64). Those who appear to be free because they are powerful are in fact enslaved to power and warped by an interpretation of selfhood in terms of power. Because power destroys all moral and legal standards, the age of power must include the “planetary criminals”—unnamed individuals who Heidegger says can be counted on the fingers of one hand (GA 69, 77–78). Their destructiveness bursts the bounds of ethical judgment and legal punishment; “even Hell and the like is too small” for them (GA 69, 77).

Power does not belong to the “powerful” tyrants, then, but neither does it belong to the people. The public face of power, its propaganda and pageantry, presents the power as belonging to society at large; but this “socialism” covers up the fact that the people is actually disempowered (GA 69, 82). The capacity for decision is obliterated by an atmosphere of declarations and commands (GA 66, 19); these create only a fanaticism that seizes on a ready-made appearance of salvation (GA 66, 119). Political action is then nothing but “calculating how to mobilize the masses as a whole” (Heidegger n.d., IX, §58a) or the “total planning of ‘life’ that is directed to self-securing” (GA 69, 100). The youth is particularly used and abused by this process, because young people are sufficiently ignorant and shameless to carry out “the planned destruction” without question (GA 66, 19). This entire so-called “struggle” is only the evasion of the “questionability of be-ing” (GA 66, 141).

How could the dictatorship of power be overcome? Obviously not by an attempt to overpower it—that would simply be a reaffirmation of power, and our ultimate enslavement to it. But powerlessness is also unsatisfactory—it is simply weakness that thirsts for power (GA 69, 67). We must find “what has no need of power,” a position that no longer allows power to “make” opposition to itself (GA 69, 70). “The master of power is one who transforms its essence. Such a transformation arises only from be-ing” (GA 69, 21). Thus genuine mastery would be the “*charis* of be-ing as be-ing” (GA 69, 69) or the inceptive worth of be-ing (GA 66, 16–17). Only the mastery of be-ing is “mastery in the inceptive sense,” transcending hierarchy and size (GA 66, 193) and lying beyond both power and powerlessness (GA 66, 192).

Clearly, then, Heidegger looks to the event of appropriation for salvation, and not to human action; he now views “activism” with contempt

(GA 67, 40) and says philosophy cannot provide a foundation for “the ‘active life’” (GA 66, 52). He approvingly quotes Heraclitus’ scornful attitude toward *politeuesthai* (Diogenes Laertius IX, 3, quoted in GA 69, 88–89; but see GA 55, 11–12 on the possibility of a higher concern with the *polis* here). Revolutions lead only to “deracination” und “destruction” (GA 66, 66); by trying to reverse the inception, they get stuck unwittingly in the past. Neither conservatism nor revolution is an authentically historical relation to the inception (GA 67, 39; cf. GA 69, 23).

Such remarks reject the practice of National Socialism; Heidegger also attacks its theory, beginning with its deepest source—Nietzsche. Machination and overpowering are the root of Nietzsche’s “yes to ‘becoming’” (GA 66, 26) and, of course, his “will to power,” which reduces all beings to conditions of power, or “values” (GA 67, 48). As for later thinkers inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger takes Spengler and Jünger seriously as visionaries who anticipate or express the political dimension of the will to power. Yet Spengler’s “Caesarism” and Jünger’s concept of the worker do not penetrate far enough into the metaphysical roots of contemporary politics (GA 66, 27–28). We must see how metaphysics culminates in “world-war thinking on the basis of the highest will to power of the predator and the unconditionality of armament” (GA 66, 28).

Other Nazi ideas fare still worse in Heidegger’s analysis. The irrationalist “biological worldview” is not a genuine alternative to rationalism, but simply a different way of calculating with humanity and with beings as a whole (GA 66, 250). The ideal of “heroic realism” propounded by ideologues such as Baeumler and Werner Best leaves no room for genuine *Angst* (GA 67, 114): instead of accepting and affirming the struggle for power as the essence of reality, we must question being once again (GA 66, 19–20). As for the neopagan life-philosophy of Ludwig Klages, which reached the height of its popularity at this time, it vulgarizes the will to power by reducing it to “vitality” (GA 67, 114). Heidegger comments with disgust: “boozing and whoring have received their metaphysical justification” (GA 67, 122). To this we can add the confused Teutonism of militarized “Wagnerism” (*Wagnerei*: Heidegger n.d., VIII, §22, §27; IX, §91).

Heidegger certainly shares the Nazis’ general desire to rescue the Germans as a people, but he disagrees both with their means and with their conception of salvation. The Germans have failed to find and ground their essence, and modernity has driven them farther away from their essence than

ever before (Heidegger n.d., IX, epigram; by willing that the Germans find their essence, Heidegger is thinking with “love” for Germany—GA 66, 63). “The future ones...belong to the hard stock that will rescue the Germans and bring them back into the urgency of their essence” (GA 66, 61). But the way to this essence is not through control and violence, and essence cannot be found in blood and land (GA 66, 167). Heidegger rejects the notion of breeding a strong human type; readiness for be-ing is not a question of breeding (GA 66, 42). Racial calculation is a consequence of subjectivism, as are both nationalism and socialism (GA 69, 44): whether the goal is to save a race or to protect individual freedom, subjectivity and its drive for power are at work (GA 69, 154). Heidegger proposes that any racial thinking will involve ranking some races over others, on the basis of their achievements or expressions (GA 69, 70; see Addendum 4). This racism is unacceptable—not because Heidegger is an egalitarian, but because the racist perspective unhistorically reduces Dasein to a substrate, an underlying thing whose power is manifested in its thoughts and acts. “Peoples and races” are not understood in terms of their relation to being when they are interpreted as “units of life” (GA 66, 282).

The most dramatic political passage in all these writings may be §47 of *Besinnung*, which begins with a sentence from a speech delivered by Hitler on 30 January 1939: “There is no attitude that cannot find its ultimate justification in the utility it provides for the [national] whole.” Heidegger proceeds to attack every concept in this sentence, not in order to impose his own ideology but in order to restore a measure of questioning to a political standpoint that has hardened into a worldview. “Who is the whole? ...What is its goal? ...Who determines the utility? ...What does *attitude* mean?” (GA 66, 122). Heidegger concludes that Hitler is promoting only man’s oblivion of being and entanglement in beings—an obsession with domination in the name of “ideas” that alienate us from our true essence (GA 66, 123).

But any reader who hopes to see Heidegger draw closer to liberal or leftist points of view will be disappointed. All political systems demand a blind “*faith in faith*” (GA 67, 115). All ideology is a thoughtless vulgarization of the metaphysics of ideas that must ultimately be blamed on Plato’s *idea tou agathou* (GA 67, 40–41)—and perhaps, in the case of liberalism and communism, on “Judeo-Christian domination” (GA 66, 39). He looks upon democratic idealism and “cultural optimism” with contempt (GA 66, 39–40), seeing the “‘common sense’ [Heidegger uses the English words] of the democracies” as essentially identical to “the rational conformity to plan of ‘total authority’” (GA 66, 234).

The fate of our subjectivistic age is nihilism—the happening in which being loses its meaning or truth. With Nietzsche, this process has reached its philosophical end, but the completion of nihilism is still to be carried out in culture and politics. Which peoples are destined to fulfill this fate? Heidegger speculates that the encounter between Germany and Russia—not on a military, but on a metaphysical level—will be decisive (GA 69, 120). The future mission of Russia (not of Bolshevism) is the salvation of the “earth”; the mission of the Germans (a mission for their thought, Heidegger emphasizes) is the salvation of the “world” (GA 69, 108, 119). As for the sector of humanity that is destined to bring machination to its acme, it is neither German nor Russian. (Bolshevism is capable only of “destruction,” not of “devastation, for which the highest spirituality remains necessary”: GA 67, 147.) The ultimate devastation, the “erection of the unessence of machination, is reserved for Americanism.” Americanism, for Heidegger, is more horrible than “Asiatic wildness”: it is the ultimate rootless oblivion of being, dressed up in mendacious moralism (GA 67, 150; cf. GA 70, 97–98).

Heidegger broods on the coming war in similarly dark and metaphysical terms. The ideologies of liberalism, fascism, and communism are bound to clash, even though they are metaphysically the same: they are all expressions of the overpowering essence of power, which requires “the invention of a planetary opponent” (GA 66, 18, cf. 20). Such war does not rise above the enemy who is to be overpowered, but sinks into “the lowest level of opposition” (GA 69, 153). This new, boundless kind of war makes the entire reality of a nation subservient to it (GA 69, 44). But this is not to say that Heidegger is a pacifist. “World peace (in the Christian-Jewish-ambiguous sense)” is no less machinational than world war (GA 66, 28): both are attempts to dominate and order beings, to make them available as exploitable resources. In our age, the significance of even the most “peaceful” things lies in power and overpowering.

“KOINON”: METAPHYSICAL COMMUNISM

The essay “*Koinon*: From the History of Be-ing” and the “Draft” of this essay (GA 69, 179–214) are noteworthy efforts to apply be-ing-historical thinking to the start of the Second World War (1939–1940). Heidegger begins “*Koinon*” with the “strange” character of the war, which at this stage did not have constantly visible effects on everyday German life. The strangeness, he suggests, is a distant echo of the worth of be-ing—a questionability that lies beyond the coming “gigantic battles of annihilation” (GA 69, 180). In this strange new form of war, the difference between war and peace

evaporates: peace becomes nothing but the domination of the means and possibilities of war (GA 69, 181).

The new war is a “world war” inasmuch as the world in the Heideggerian sense—the whole of meanings and purposes that orient Dasein—is now intelligible only in terms of power (GA 69, 180–81, cf. 50). Power has taken over the “play of the world” (GA 69, 182) or the “play of being” (GA 69, 186). Beings have been reduced to makeable, replaceable resources; everything is planned, calculated, producible. Our relation to beings has become “readiness for engagement”: we are human resources, ready for productivity (GA 69, 185). (The contrast to Heidegger’s eagerness for “engagement” in 1933 could not be clearer.)

It is impossible to resist power in the name of freedom, morality, values, or law; all such attempts are merely manifestations of power, as is the Nazi ideal of saving the race. All these efforts posit goals that coordinate powers; power is thereby empowered, and the particular goal that is supposedly served is in fact irrelevant. Power needs no ideal or goal to justify it; power makes all justification obsolete, as its Protean process of self-empowerment through subjection and annihilation keeps driving on (GA 69, 182–85, 188, 202).

From this perspective, world wars are only “interludes in a more essential process” (GA 69, 187); the essence of power far exceeds military and political categories. Heidegger’s suprapolitical perspective views totalitarian and democratic systems as essentially the same. Both are based on an “idea” to which reality must conform (such as the idea of democracy or the idea of the people); both are subject to the illusion that power rests with the people (the majority, the race), when in fact, power can belong to no one (GA 69, 188–89). The competing “interests” of the world powers, which they try to defend by launching mass wars, are epiphenomena of metaphysical power (GA 69, 206–7, 210).

It may seem that dictators have power, but in fact they themselves are dominated by the process of power. This process overwhelms the current rank of the despot, as every stage of power is only a stage to be overcome; the power process also demands a uniformity of all beings, thereby destroying the distinctive status of the so-called powerful individuals (GA 69, 190). The “only-a-few” (GA 69, 193–94) are then not so different from the “never-too-many” (GA 69, 190). The elite are bound together only by their anxiety in the face of any possible obstacle to the constant growth of power

(GA 69, 193–95). Heidegger sees this elite as anonymous, and proposes in the “Draft” that even Stalin is only their “front man” (GA 69, 203).

The meaning of the title “*Koinon*” emerges when Heidegger focuses on a metaphysical analysis of communism. As he had commented in a lecture course a few years earlier, the Platonic concept of essence as the universal or *koinon* is relatively superficial: the fact that a number of beings have a characteristic in common is only a possible *consequence* of their essence (GA 45, 60–61). (For example, what makes a tree a tree is not its similarity to other trees—it would still be a tree even if it were the only one in the world.) Yet the superficial interpretation of the essence as a universal has become dominant in Western thought, and has encouraged us to view thought itself as generalization. This metaphysical “communism” assimilates everything to the common and eliminates the incomparable. Our age is communist in this sense, and in this sense communism is the completion of metaphysics in its meaninglessness (GA 69, 37, 191, 201).

Communism, as Heidegger understands it, is not a strictly human affair (GA 69, 195). But he does relate his metaphysical communism to communism as political practice: the Soviet regime reduces everything to the average and interprets Dasein in the reductive terms of work, use, and enjoyment. The Communist Party and its ideology impose a uniformity of “proletarian” attitudes and behavior (GA 69, 191–92). Ownership disappears—not only in the legal sense, and not only in regards to material property, but in regards to the self, which is plunged into anonymity (GA 69, 195). The particular destinies of peoples are ignored; the reliability of beings is destroyed (GA 69, 196).

Soviet Communism cannot be overcome by a supposedly more spiritual understanding of the human condition. Communist “materialism” is itself thoroughly spiritual, in that it is a product of Western metaphysics (GA 69, 204). The very dichotomy between spirit and body must be called into question; we can neither affirm “spirit” in an empty, unquestioned sense nor turn the body into an article of faith for a worldview (GA 69, 206).

What could defeat communism? Heidegger now has little or no hope that National Socialism can overcome it. Race and its cultivation are just more subjectivist power-concepts determined by modernity (GA 69, 223). As for Anglo-American liberalism, Heidegger sees it as little more than a hypocritical communism wearing the masks of Christian and bourgeois morality. Liberalism must be annihilated if modernity is to be overcome (GA 69, 208–9).

Communism can be defeated only by itself: incapable of rising to the level of the history of be-ing, it will annihilate itself by mobilizing for total war (GA 69, 209–10).

Standing apart from this grim spectacle, Heidegger seeks a kind of knowledge that has no utility, but remains within the event of be-ing (GA 69, 197) and awaits the final god (GA 69, 211–14).

CONCLUSION: OUTSIDE THE CAVE

How should we judge Heidegger's secret resistance? It was, of course, inconsequential in its day. Heidegger's public lectures were ambiguous enough that they could hardly be considered a call to revolt, and his private writings remained private. But it is hard to blame Heidegger for not choosing the probably suicidal path of public denunciation of the Nazi regime. His resistance never pretends to be anything but philosophical, and it is on the philosophical level that it needs to be judged. How insightful are his analyses, then? Does he appropriately grasp the meaning of the situation in which he finds himself?

Heidegger's approach to political concepts and rhetoric is almost always illuminating. His metaphysical genealogies of the key elements of political worldviews help us to reflect more deeply on ideologies that tend to cover up their own historical roots. Sometimes he seems prescient: his concept of peace as the domination of the means of war anticipates the Cold War, and his insights can also be applied to the early twenty-first century with little effort. In North Korea, the concept of "total mobilization" has been applied to every aspect of life, keeping the population in a constant state of readiness for war in the name of national survival and an abstract idea (*juche* or "self-reliance"). Attempting to resist the West, Islamic radicals have borrowed Western technology and ideas, creating a religious form of this subjectivist "self-reliance." The American response has been marked by a hubristic confidence in the self-evidence of liberal principles and the irresistibility of American power, a hubris that has been punished by what it could not calculate. Meanwhile, the Earth suffers the effects of being treated as a supply of "natural resources," while the most influential discussions of our environment continue to assume that we face a technical problem—a problem about how to manage resources—and not a question about the very being of nature.

There are certainly questions about being, then, that are relevant to politics and are ignored by ordinary political analysis. But Heidegger

does not simply raise questions about the ontological meaning of political concepts; he insists that the history of be-ing, and not human action, is the root of political events. “Self-reliance” is a subjectivist illusion that ignores our dependence on be-ing. In his view, individual choice has little to do with modern politics; choices occur on the surface of the impersonal movement of being as power. Heidegger can be said to have anticipated Arendt’s insight into “the banality of evil” within the mechanisms of totalitarian regimes: murderous functionaries such as Eichmann may be driven less by personal malice or sadism than by abstractions and power relations that they leave unquestioned. Yet Arendt insists on the importance of rescuing *praxis* from its reduction to theory, work, and labor (Arendt 1998). In contrast, Heidegger puts the very concept of “the ‘active life’” in quotation marks (GA 66, 52). He comes to see the entire thematic of choice and will as fatally indebted to modern subjectivism. His entire interpretation of his times, then, is focused not on human action but on being. Current events are to be grasped not in practical terms, but in relation to the metaphysical essence of modernity (GA 66, 46–47). To the objection that “history has to go on, after all; something, after all, has to happen with man,” he replies that history will go on in any case, no matter what the philosopher does, and that “knowledge of be-ing” is a rich enough source of nobility, sacrifice, and inceptiveness (GA 70, 137–38). “To wish to struggle politically against political worldviews...is to fail to recognize that something is happening in them of which they themselves are not the masters...[i.e.] the abandonment of being” (Heidegger n.d., X, 41).

After his brief venture into the cave, Heidegger has come running back into the light. The events that the public considers significant are only a “shadow” of the history of be-ing (GA 69, 205). To vary the metaphor, we can say that be-ing casts the dice, which fall according to the “incline in which be-ing appropriates itself to beings. Only those who are climbing know the incline” (GA 69, 213). To anyone who may object that Heidegger is ascending only toward abstractions—that he is turning his back on real power relations as he focuses on the essence of power—he replies that power is not an abstraction at all, and that we will know this when the apparently concrete is revealed as fleeting and “spectral” (GA 69, 182).

There is a Hegelian flavor in this turn of phrase, which appropriately warns us that if we focus on the particular while neglecting the essence, we will lose ourselves in a domain that is ephemeral, unintelligible, and more “abstract” than any philosophical concept. But for Hegel, the essence too is abstract, until it is actualized in the concrete. In Heidegger, there is no compa-

rable mutual dependence between be-ing and beings. For all his criticisms of the traditional concept of essence as the abstract *koinon*, Heidegger directs his attention to generalities and disregards the particular. It is true that in the *Contributions* he insists on the importance of mastering the “turn back” from be-ing to beings (GA 65, 453); he speaks of the “simultaneity” of be-ing and beings (GA 65, 13, 223, 349) and the “sheltering” of the truth of be-ing in beings (GA 65, 389–92). Yet all this remains an *abstract* tribute to particular beings: the particular is not described or appreciated, and Heidegger strives almost exclusively to think be-ing *without* beings (GA 65, 75–76).

The essence of politics is itself nothing political, as Heidegger might rightly say. For this very reason, when Heidegger focuses on the essence of politics, he turns away from politics itself—the realm of actual parties, policies, lawmaking, political debate and political power. In Heidegger's view, this is no loss, because such phenomena are nothing but shadows on the wall of the cave. But this attitude prevents him from thinking about crucial practical questions. For instance, what is the proper relation of a people—his own people—to its minorities and its neighbors? (The essay “Wege zur Aussprache” in GA 13 is an unusual attempt to take some steps in this direction.)

It is not that Heidegger should be expected to have an answer to every practical problem. But to deny that such problems exist as such, to reduce them to metaphysics and the history of be-ing, is to obliterate a genuine domain of experience. Without an appreciation for this domain, it is impossible to judge events such as wars and revolutions appropriately.

Perhaps Heidegger's greatest failure is his indifference to political liberty—his inability to see that political freedom is not reducible to the sometimes crude ideologies that support it. The metaphysical basis of modern liberalism is questionable, but the liberties that it provides are crucial if individuals and peoples are to find their way into the questioning thinking that Heidegger desires, and resist the overpowering authority that he condemns (Polt 1997). Heidegger's permanent antiliberalism is a surer sign of his political confusion than is his temporary National Socialism.

Heidegger, who blames Platonism for so much, failed to learn the lesson of Plato's allegory of the cave. The philosophers must return to the cave not only in order to save the *polis*, but also in order to understand the political realm in its particularity after spending time in the light of the intelligible forms. When they first return, they are unable to see in the relative darkness (*Republic* 516e, 518a). Knowledge of essences, then, does not suffice

to understand politics; we must both ascend and descend, and take the time to adjust our understanding to both realms. (Heidegger's reading of this passage completely ignores this point, and simply presents the philosopher as an enlightened liberator who is likely to be killed by the deluded masses: GA 34, 80–94; GA 36/37, 180–85. A further flaw in Heidegger's reading is that it is far from obvious that Plato is really teaching us that we can possess knowledge of essences [Fried 2006].) In his blindness, Heidegger resembles Plato's caricature of the "philosopher": "his next-door neighbor has escaped his sight [*lelèthen*]
—not only what his neighbor is doing, but almost whether he is a man or some other creature. Instead, the question [the philosopher] investigates is: what is man?" (*Theaetetus* 174b; the passage is sometimes read as Plato's sincere praise of the philosophical life, but a little reflection shows that it contradicts Socrates' own behavior in this very dialogue—it is actually a satire on abstract theorists such as Theodorus, the astronomer and mathematician who is Socrates' interlocutor in this passage). Heidegger laments "the annihilation of the essence of humanity" (GA 77, 207), but he fails to face up to the "complete annihilation" of particular human beings that he himself had endorsed in 1933.

To Heidegger's credit, he saw through and passed beyond Nazi ideology and the metaphysics of struggle and power. But in doing so, he also passed beyond and overlooked all concrete struggles and powers. Heidegger passed beyond the political—and never returned.

ADDENDUM 1

“GA” will refer to Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* (Heidegger 1976-). I cite the following volumes: GA 13, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, ed. Hermann Heidegger (1983 [composed 1910-1976]); GA 16, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, ed. Hermann Heidegger (2000 [1910-1976]); GA 29/30, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (1983 [1929-30]); GA 34, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, ed. Hermann Mörchen (1988 [1931-32]); GA 36/37, *Sein und Wahrheit*, ed. Hartmut Tietjen (2001 [1933-34]); GA 38, *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache*, ed. Günter Seubold (1998 [1934]); GA 39, *Hölderlins Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein,”* ed. Susanne Ziegler (1980 [1934-35]); GA 40, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, ed. Petra Jaeger (1983 [1935]); GA 43, *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*, ed. Bernd Heimbüchel (1985 [1936-37]); GA 45, *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik,”* ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (1984 [1937-38]); GA 55, *Heraklit*, ed. Manfred S. Frings (1987 [1943-44]); GA 64, *Der Begriff der Zeit*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (2004 [1924]); GA 65, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (1989 [1936-38]); GA 66, *Besinnung*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (1997 [1938-39]); GA 67, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus*, ed. Hans-Joachim Friedrich (1999 [1938-39, 1946-48]); GA 69, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, ed. Peter Trawny (1998 [1938-40]); GA 70, *Über den Anfang*, ed. Paola-Ludovika Coriando (2005 [1941]); GA 77, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, ed. Ingrid Schüßler (1995 [1944-45]); GA 87, *Nietzsche: Seminare 1937 und 1944*, ed. Peter von Ruckteschell (2004); GA 90, *Zu Ernst Jünger*, ed. Peter Trawny (2004 [1934-54]). Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. For an extended interpretation and contextualization of the passage in GA 36/37 on the “annihilation” of the enemy, see Faye 2005, chapter 6.

ADDENDUM 2

“The *talk* about the disempowerment of *physis* can be misunderstood; the expression properly means that *physis* is displaced from its essence as *arche* (inception and mastery), because this essence remains an inception only in the inceptive beginning that grounds itself back into itself more originally, and *thus* develops the essence—in particular, grounds *aletheia* as belonging to *physis*. The expression ‘disempowerment’ supports the illusion that *physis* belongs to the essence of ‘power,’ but in the sense of the ‘will to power,’ which actually comes to power precisely through the ‘disempower-

ment' of *physis*" (Heidegger ca. 1938). This marginal note refers to §96 of the GA edition (GA 65, 190). Cf. GA 66, 188, 193–94.

ADDENDUM 3

The range of existing interpretations of the statements on Nazism in the *Contributions* is conveniently indicated by the titles of Vietta 1989 and Rockmore 1992. The fifth chapters of both books discuss the *Beiträge*. Vietta's perspective is closer to the truth. Rockmore supports his claim that Heidegger continues to share the Nazis' "end in view" (186) only by defining this goal broadly as "the realization of the Germans as German" (189) or "the realization of the destiny of the German people" (191, cf. 201), even though Rockmore observes that Heidegger denies that the people is an end in itself (192, 196). By these standards, anyone with patriotic sentiments or concern for a community should be called a Nazi. For another interpretation of the *Contributions* as Hitlerian, see Faye 2005, 441–55.

ADDENDUM 4

Faye is at his weakest when he interprets such passages as a "legitimation" of "the racial foundation of Nazism" (Faye 2005, 460). Faye seems incapable of hearing the highly critical tone of Heidegger's account of racism at this point. Such flaws should not distract us from Faye's legitimate achievement in the earlier portions of his book, where he documents the depths of Heidegger's Nazism in the early and mid-thirties.

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This work investigates the views of the medieval philosopher Abu Nasr al Farabi (hereafter Alfarabi), often called “the father of Islamic political philosophy” (also called “the second teacher,” second after Aristotle). While both Alfarabi’s sobriquet and the book’s title refer to his work as “Islamic Philosophy,” the interpretation Parens offers rightly identifies Alfarabi as an inquirer into “virtuous religions”—which may include Islam, but is not confined to it. The fact that Parens is “introducing” Alfarabi prompts the question, “introducing to whom—Muslims or non-Muslims?” This is likely to be a first meeting for most non-Muslims, and many Muslims as well, because in spite of Alfarabi’s noteworthy role in Islam’s history, his works are not widely read among modern Muslims. Parens masterfully addresses both audiences, noting specific applications to Islam, but allotting much of his analysis to Alfarabi’s support of multiple religions. Alfarabi’s works are extensive and multifaceted, but Parens’ focus on religion relies primarily on Alfarabi’s *Book of Religion* and the trilogy *Attainment of Happiness*, *Philosophy of Plato*, and *Philosophy of Aristotle* (in Alfarabi 2002).

Parens reads Alfarabi’s *Attainment of Happiness* as most of us read Plato’s *Republic*—namely, as a demonstration of the impossibility of the ideal state. The format of Parens’ argument is, in fact, derived from the “three waves” of argument in the *Republic* that lead to the conclusion that the republic constructed in speech is neither feasible nor desirable. Parens identifies Alfarabi’s comparable “three waves” as (1) the virtuous regime is impossible; (2) a universal virtuous regime is therefore also impossible; and (3) each nation should have a religion that addresses the specific characteristics of its people, so there should be a multiplicity of religions in the world.

Identifying these “waves” of Alfarabi’s argument is a considerable accomplishment on Parens’ part, because Alfarabi is circumspect, to say the least, about his true meaning. I find even the first sentence of the *Attainment* puzzling:

The human things through which nations and citizens of cities attain earthly happiness in this life and supreme happiness in the life beyond are of four kinds: theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues, and practical arts. (sec. 1)

It is the “human things” wording that strikes me as curious. Why not call the subject “the ways nations and cities attain happiness” or “how citizens attain happiness”? In choosing phraseology I find odd, Alfarabi draws my attention to it: human as opposed to what, for example—natural animal instinct? a deity’s power? certainty? If Alfarabi is referring to the classical understanding of humanity, then the human element might indicate rationality—that Alfarabi is going to explain what our reason can do to assist our efforts toward happiness. That makes sense, since Alfarabi is referring to “happiness” rather than pleasure. Human is also easily counterpoised to godlike, so Alfarabi could be differentiating between how the deity contributes to human happiness (for those readers who are believers) and how people can work toward their own happiness. This would be a smooth move for Alfarabi, deflecting religious critics right off the bat by allowing them to continue reading with at least one foot firmly planted in their intellectual comfort zone. The implication here is that regardless of whether the deity does or does not provide human happiness, there are things humans can do to make themselves happy, and his treatise will confine itself to that aspect. There is also the possibility that Alfarabi uses the term “human” to denote a lack of certainty in outcome, i.e., these are the things people can do to become happy if happiness is even possible.

As already noted, the *Attainment* is actually the first book of a trilogy; the other two books are Alfarabi’s somewhat manipulated renditions of Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophies. The relationship among the three parts is not obvious even though Alfarabi says it is. After describing his own premises for a virtuous city in *Attainment of Happiness*, he asserts, “The philosophy that answers to this description was handed down to us by the Greeks from Plato and Aristotle only... So let it be clear to you that, in what they presented, their purpose is the same, and that they intended to offer one and the same philosophy” (sec. 64). The *Philosophy of Plato* and the *Philosophy of Aristotle*, then,

seem to be included as a demonstration that Plato and Aristotle agree with each other and that both concur with Alfarabi. Parens believes this is a ruse. What Alfarabi is actually offering is a demonstration that all three of the philosophers fail to apprehend theoretical knowledge; each of the three intentionally shows the limits of human knowledge and the resulting absence of grounds for philosophers' ruling society. I like the way Charles Butterworth and Thomas Pangle describe this as a "charade of speaking as if it were the serious purpose of political philosophy to rule directly over a (new) political order...He has intended to arouse the shocked wonder and hence thought of a few readers while allowing most to believe, in self-congratulatory fashion, in political philosophy as a wildly impractical castle-building-in-Spain" (Alfarabi 2002, xi). This conclusion is the basis of Parens' first and second "waves," and here Parens agrees with Christopher Colmo's conclusions in *Breaking With Athens* (Colmo 2005)—absolute truth is inaccessible, the virtuous city is pie in the sky, and the important quality in real life governance is prudence or practical wisdom. There is a difference, though. While Colmo convincingly draws our attention to the force of practical wisdom, Parens reminds us that Alfarabi also values the quest for wisdom. "Alfarabi's persistent shattering of our hopes for certainty is not intended to destroy our love of wisdom" (118). "We must be careful to avoid falling into an unlimited form of skepticism. At a minimum, political philosophy is up to the task of recognizing the limits of human knowledge. It is fully capable of warning us of the dangers of presupposing greater knowledge than we possess" (115). This aspect of Parens' argument is perhaps best supported by Parens' own description of his interpretation of Alfarabi's intention as "a cross between a standard and a cautionary tale" (11).

One of the intriguing aspects of Alfarabi's writings is his penchant for ranking. Souls, causes, beings, religions, and cities are sorted from first to last, highest to lowest, most true to least true, most virtuous to most base. But if, as Parens' Alfarabi contends, there is no certainty of the "First Cause" or of the most virtuous regime, then causes or regimes cannot be ranked in descending order from them. So why bother? It is possible that rankings are there to demonstrate the arrogance behind such an exercise. But it is also possible that Alfarabi is saying what he claims to be saying (granted, this would be unusual for Alfarabi), i.e., that there are some qualitative differences among personal lives and regimes (existing and theoretical). Only a relativist would not see at least some degree of qualitative difference between Hitler's regime and Winston Churchill's, for example, and Parens has argued that Alfarabi is a promoter of wisdom in spite of its limitations and not a relativist.

There is some clarification of the ranking issue in another writing of Alfarabi's, the *Principles of the Opinions of the Citizens of the Virtuous City* (Alfarabi 1985). There Alfarabi is explaining how significant even a small theoretical error can be when applying it to real life. Among several examples of misunderstood theory is the error that Alfarabi says occurs when citizens avidly pursue virtue but mistakenly assume that the nature of virtue is determined by chance or a mere creation of human imagination, which might therefore be effectively designed as something completely different in another society by the imaginations of other citizens. They leap from the observation that truth and virtue can be expressed in a variety of forms (as designed to conform to the "accidents" of individual societies) to the false conclusion that truth and virtue can be expressed in any form. Alfarabi's summation of this error is as follows:

This view and those of its kind make away with philosophy by impressing on the minds that impossible things are true, by claiming that all things can possibly exist in their substances in opposite existences and in an unlimited number of existences with their substances and accidents. And they hold nothing at all to be impossible. (*Virtuous City*, chap.19)

The premise of unlimited intellectual relativism described here is identified as error. Thus, Alfarabi offers two seemingly incongruous pieces of advice: that some ways of life really are better than others and that definitive comparison among them requires more certainty than is humanly possible. Without the first premise, we have no incentive to search for a better life, but the second carefully positions the search under a canopy of caution that restrains aggressive action we might believe we are justified in taking based on thinking our truth is the best truth—an ontology of tolerance, in other words. In Parens' investigation of religious war, this is especially significant. If we are unable to determine with certainty that our own religion is better than another's religion, then there can be no clear justification for waging war with the aim of religious conversion.

On the question of *jihad*, Parens does an excellent job of distinguishing Alfarabi's opinion from the aggressive perspectives of most of his medieval contemporaries. A further distinction is drawn between Alfarabi and modern thinkers who dispute the validity of offensive *jihad* by claiming the focus was meant to be on internal (greater) *jihad*, the personal war against one's own desires. According to Parens' alternative interpretation, Alfarabi's concept of evil challenges both internal and external *jihad*. Desires *per se* are

natural and not inherently evil, says Parens' Alfarabi; it is how we choose to satisfy them that can be good or evil. Hence, when excessive self-denial is demanded as internal *jihad*, “[i]t so reifies its own excessive desires that it is prone to finding them peopling the external world. Internal *jihad* transmogrifies into external and offensive *jihad*” (71). Transmogrifying *jihad* may be exactly what Alfarabi had in mind, but there is even more convincing evidence of Alfarabi's aversion to offensive *jihad* in Parens' account of Alfarabi's overarching denial that the virtuous regime can be created or that any single religion could be appropriate for all societies.

The specific role of religion in society is addressed in Parens' third “wave” multiplicity argument, where a virtuous religion is described by Alfarabi as one that, among other things, creates similitudes of truth for citizens. To adequately express truth to citizens, the images must be specific to a people's local culture, history, and nature in order for it to make sense to them. We might think of these similitudes as truth couched in culturally relevant colloquialisms. If this is true, then every nation's religion will be different. And the idea of one, true, universal religion becomes a *non sequitur*. In fact, the mere pursuit of a single universal religion would be a sign of failure to understand the very nature of religion and its relationship to the not-quite-virtuous regime.

Alfarabi is hardly known for transparency, but he makes an especially opaque statement at the end of *Attainment of Happiness* (sec. 62). After just having spent pages and pages asserting that the true king-imam-philosopher is the person (or group of persons) who creates the virtuous city and attains happiness for it, Alfarabi tells us that a true king and imam is still a king and imam even if no one acknowledges that he is and obeys him (and a true philosopher is still a philosopher even if no city calls upon him to share his wisdom). How could there be an excellent king if he doesn't know how to get anyone to obey him? If, as Alfarabi contends, one of the characteristics of the king-imam-philosopher is that he knows which methods of instruction to use on every segment of society and can bring together the persuasive arguments for some and the compulsion for others to assemble a happy society, what could possibly prevent him from being in charge? Parens interprets this oddity primarily as an explanation to a king that domination is not what a king should be about, even if that usually goes along with being king. This rendering is certainly consistent with the multiplicity argument. Muhsin Mahdi, on the other hand, finds Alfarabi's claim that a philosopher-king could remain a philosopher-king without ruling “not wholly convincing” because excellence in an art or skill requires practice and not just a little of it (Alfarabi 2002, xxxv). Without

power to order the citizens' lives, philosopher-kings could remain philosopher-kings only in their own lives (52). Lacking political power *per se* would not necessarily mean that philosophers were not helping to order the lives of the city. Miriam Galston's "Theoretical and Practical Dimensions of Happiness" poses the possibility of an informal kind of influence for philosophers in the political realm, as educators, for instance (Galston 1992, 148–49). And isn't that what Alfarabi himself is doing?

Still, Alfarabi may intend more. Recall his ambiguous advice in the *Virtuous City*, mentioned earlier: that it is an error to wholly refuse to judge relative truths and that it is also an error to believe definitive truth is humanly accessible. Applying that advice to the king-imam-philosopher in a real life society suggests that the role will vary within each society and over time. It is not merely religions that will differ across societies, according to Alfarabi's logic, but also the extent to which the king-imam-philosopher is incorporated. Arriving at the appropriate influence of each is an objective worthy of our continuing effort. Even with the ultimate effort, no society will be perfectly happy or have a corner on the happiness market, but some societies will be happier than others, depending on how their citizens handle the "human things."

Medieval Muslim society did not take Alfarabi's advice. Parens sees a connection between that and what he describes as "Islam's inability to adapt to the modern world," so he has brought Alfarabi back for a repeat performance (4). Although "inability to adapt" is an overgeneralized characterization of the Muslim world, what Parens has successfully demonstrated in this work is that Islam's own philosophic tradition—in the works of Alfarabi—contains a means of internally consistent adaptation to tolerance and even encouragement of religious diversity in the modern world.

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I.

In his book *Public Vision, Private Lives: Rousseau, Religion, and 21st-Century Democracy*, Mark Cladis brings Rousseau to bear on the debate about private goods vs. public goods in contemporary political theory. The two sides in this debate—communitarians and liberals—agree about the impoverished state of modern life, but disagree about what side of it is more impoverished, private or public. Communitarians view modern life as desperately individualistic, lacking any appreciation for such public goods as citizenship and common culture. Liberals think conformism is the problem, and that what is needed is more respect for diversity and individual rights. Cladis believes Rousseau has a unique contribution to make to this debate because he recognized the usefulness of communitarian means for liberal ends. In order to ensure respect for diversity and individuality, institutions and formal declarations of rights are not enough. A “shared democratic culture” (197) is required, which for Rousseau meant a civic religion. Cladis believes secular liberals in particular (who are inclined to confine religion to the private sphere) have a great deal to learn from Rousseau’s teaching on civic religion. Religion, in Rousseau’s telling, can serve to moderate the conflict between public and private. Not only does it enrich and cultivate our interior private lives, but, as “common moral belief,” it achieves the ends of liberalism more effectively than fear or self-interest (6–7, 193–97). But this does not mean Rousseau thinks an ultimate resolution to the conflict between public and private is possible, or even desirable. What the “characteristically unsystematic” (xii, 9) Rousseau has to teach twenty-first-century democracy above all is that a “fully human”

existence is divided, not whole, and that we must accept the “worthy challenge” to affirm the dividedness of our modern souls (7, 188–89, 214, 231, 241).

The book has two main sections. In chapters 1–6, Cladis discusses Rousseau’s “genealogy of modern alienation and misery” (155)—the *Second Discourse* in other words. Cladis traces the development, stage by stage, from nature to society (or what Cladis calls “From The Garden to The City”), and argues that this movement was neither regrettable nor a departure from our “humanity.” Whatever was lost in the way of wholeness was made up for by a more “fully human” morality and happiness. In chapters 7–11, Cladis looks at Rousseau’s potential solutions to modern dividedness: the extreme public path (*Government of Poland*), extreme private path (*Reveries of the Solitary Walker*) and a fragile combination of the two (*Julie*). Cladis argues that these are merely “strategies for evading conflict” and not intended as true solutions. Due either to fragility or extreme neglect of the private or the public, none provides for “a full, flourishing human existence” (171). Taken as one big *reductio ad absurdum*, these three works demonstrate why a life divided between public and private is both inevitable and desirable. Cladis concludes with a discussion of what he calls Rousseau’s “Middle Way,” a composite of *Emile* and *The Social Contract*, which satisfies both sides of our being, to the extent possible. Rousseau’s thoughts on religion constitute the core of the “Middle Way,” for unlike citizenship, domesticity and reverie, religion is a private good *and* a public good.

Though he does intend to make a contribution to Rousseau scholarship (3), Cladis’s principal aim is not scholarly. Cladis leaves behind what he doesn’t like about Rousseau (such as his thoughts on women and his “essentialist” reliance on the concept of “nature”) and reshapes what is left for his purposes. He considers such liberties justified and necessary due to the urgency of the matter. The quality of private and public life are both in steep decline, yet we fail to understand the significance of this fact because we do not understand their relation to begin with (16, 31, 237, 244). This failure in comprehension is due largely to a failure in speech. Our excessive reliance on rights-discourse, for example, hampers our ability to understand the whole social side of our being, and how integrally bound up with one another the private and public are (4, 30). Cladis takes Rousseau’s philosophy and forges out of it a typology, “a grammar” (229) that will enrich our speech and thought about private vs. public by capturing the conflict in all its fullness. This set of concepts, of “Weberian ideal types” (53, 236), are, in sum, “The Garden,” “The

City,” “The Solitaire,” “The Mountain Village,” “The Middle Way,” and “The Flourishing City.” Cladis freely acknowledges (8–10, 241) these are not Rousseau’s terms, but rather his own inventions. He is somewhat uneasy about reshaping Rousseau, but believes himself justified, first because he does not think his typology does any real violence to Rousseau’s thought (10), and second because it will be of great use in sorting through these supremely confusing yet urgent matters.

II.

The book is, in many ways, an impressive effort. Cladis is perhaps a bit hyperbolic, breathless, even, in his characterization of the modern “crisis” of understanding public vs. private (a point he concedes: 32), but his basic argument is sound. Twenty-first-century democracy *does* seem to have a rough time defining the scope of the “private” and estimating its proper dignity. And as the constitutional history of the right to privacy amply demonstrates, rights-talk is unlikely to resolve the matter for us. Cladis’s book is more uneven in its treatment of Rousseau, although there, too, it possesses distinct virtues. Even when he errs, Cladis’s arguments are often subtle and always intricately developed. His treatment of secondary literature is lacking (which he acknowledges: 3), but he does cover a great deal of Rousseau’s corpus, giving consideration not only to all the major works (*Emile*, *Social Contract*, *Second Discourse*, etc.) but also some fairly obscure ones (such as the letters to Mirabeau, Deschamps, and Vernes). But although he clearly possesses the ambition requisite for understanding Rousseau, it is not clear Cladis fully succeeds, either with respect to Rousseau’s understanding of public vs. private or his understanding of religion.

According to Cladis, Rousseau helps us understand the conflict between private and public goods just as he himself does: as *the* fundamental problem for modern man (ix–xii). Our modern souls are divided because we are torn between our public and private lives. We yearn for domesticity and reverie on the one hand, and citizenship and community on the other, but we can’t have it all. Wholeness eludes us, for we cannot truly satisfy all these desires, nor can we deny them. It is neither possible nor desirable to be whole; we must therefore embrace the tension, and realize that life is better divided than whole. But Cladis fails to convince that Rousseau sees things in this way. Rousseau attributes modern man’s lack of wholeness to a conflict between nature and convention; he recognizes the conflict between private and

public, but as a derivative, not fundamental one. Why is modern man neither virtuous nor happy, according to Rousseau? Well, because he is unable to overcome either his natural selfishness or satisfy his limitless (because unnatural) desires. Only a whole man can be virtuous or happy, but modern man cannot be whole—he is too distant from nature to be self-sufficient yet not distant enough to be fully conventional. To characterize this as a matter of public vs. private is to miss the point, because, for one, private goods can be just as easily unnatural as natural. Domesticity is not natural, and what would it mean to speak of the private life of natural man? Rousseau is more likely to take up the distinction between private and public with relation to such concerns as authorial responsibility, or the importance of respecting others' private beliefs as private ("Letter to Voltaire," Rousseau 1992; "Letter to d'Alembert," Rousseau 1960; and, more generally, Kelly 2001). The connection between private vs. public and the divided modern soul is just not as direct as Cladis makes it out to be.

In all fairness to Cladis, he does announce he intends to drop "nature" in his treatment of Rousseau: "Rousseau, no doubt, was interested in discerning the difference between the natural Solitaire and the artificial, social human. But our interest need not be bound to his" (84). Rousseau will be of more use to us if we scrap his "essentialist" and "metaphysical and epistemological oddities" (85). So, at some level, Cladis knows that he is departing from Rousseau's own intent in emphasizing private vs. public at the expense of nature vs. convention, but two problems remain. First, Cladis is not totally consistent in his scrapping of "nature" or "natural." In his treatment of Rousseau, he often uses the term without quotation marks (which makes it hard to know if he is distancing himself from it or not), and he relies heavily on the concept "human" (as in "fully human existence"). It is not clear why "human" does not suffer from the same essentialism "nature" does. Second, he bases his argument that Rousseau, like him, views modern dividedness as a good thing in part on his reinterpretation of Rousseau's analysis of modern dividedness. It is not logically impossible to base an argument about what a great thinker thought on a prior reinterpretation of his thought, but it is a tough act, for it entails understanding the thinker better than he understood himself. Cladis does seem to believe that he understands Rousseau better than he understood himself (in some respects), but he never attempts to prove this in any sustained, focused way. His reinterpretation comes across as blithe and willful, and thus the conclusions Cladis draws about what Rousseau really thought from what he should have thought remain poorly grounded. In short, Cladis's intention to

reshape Rousseau's thought for his purposes coexists uneasily with his claim to "listen to his voice," that is, get him right.

Cladis argues that Rousseau views modern dividedness as, in itself, a good thing, preferable to all imaginable alternatives. Not only does Rousseau believe it impossible to put modern man together again, he did not desire to; he "refused" to resolve the tension (xii, 214, 230). Poland and St. Peter's Island (and presumably Rome and Sparta, too), are for Cladis's Rousseau so many dead ends, which demonstrate the undesirability of wholeness by showing the extremes that it would require. Now Rousseau performed many revaluations of values in his illustrious career, both by inventing new moral categories like goodness and also by showing why what had been considered bad in the (recent) past was actually good, like his defense of nature against Enlightenment progressivism. But claiming that dividedness is preferable to wholeness was *not* a revaluation of his. Indeed, if anything, Rousseau made dividedness less morally acceptable than it had been in the past, as in the case of his teaching on hypocrisy. Cladis's argument that Rousseau believes dividedness good rests on a somewhat shaky textual basis. He neglects to treat certain famous passages which seem difficult to square with this thesis, such as "Always in contradiction with himself, always floating between his inclinations and his duties, [civil man] will never be either man or citizen. He will be good neither for himself nor for others. He will be one of these men of our days: a Frenchman, an Englishman, a bourgeois. He will be nothing" (Rousseau 1979, 40). Cladis does quote "all institutions that put man in contradiction to himself are worthless" but seems oblivious to the conflict between it and his main thesis (194). Also, on several occasions, Cladis quotes from the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" and passes off the Vicar's views as those of Rousseau himself (6, 106, 110, among others). But Rousseau only claims to be the editor of the "Profession of Faith," and on the issue of dividedness in particular, we have good reason to think these are not his views. The Vicar posits a philosophical basis for his dividedness, namely dualism: human nature is both good and bad, which means all morality is a struggle of nature against nature (Rousseau 1979, 278ff.). This would seem to be in tension with what Rousseau argues elsewhere, that man is naturally whole and good. Moral goodness involves obeying the harmless impulses of our nature, and moral virtue involves the conquest of artificial desires by artificial means. Cladis is of course aware of the natural goodness doctrine; indeed, he argues strenuously against it, or against attributing any real moral weight to it. Cladis's critique of natural goodness is too complicated to go through here in sufficient detail, but, at the

risk of being glib, suffice to say that he under-appreciates the dignity of natural goodness because he neglects the importance of strength vs. weakness in Rousseau's thinking on morality. Both goodness and virtue are legitimately "moral", but the latter implies moral strength whereas the former does not.

Cladis needlessly complicates matters by using terms and categories which are not Rousseau's. This is most obviously so when he replaces nature vs. convention with private vs. public, and gives the latter a significance it does not have for Rousseau. It is also so vis-à-vis his above-mentioned "Weberian ideal types." Whatever limited assistance "The Flourishing City," "The Garden," "The Solitary," etc. may provide in the good fight against right-talk, in the attempt to understand Rousseau, they obscure much more than they clarify. Again, Cladis freely admits they are made up, and they do not *all* represent grievous misunderstandings of Rousseau, but, for one simply interested in what Rousseau thinks, they mislead. Cladis fears he will be accused of systematizing the fundamentally unsystematic thought of Rousseau, but the problem is much simpler: his types combine things which do not belong together and separate things which do. As we know from contemporary experience with postmodern scholars and as the early moderns knew from their experience with the scholastics, inventing new terms without giving adequate justification for their necessity is usually unsound policy in philosophy.

To his credit, Cladis recognizes the importance of the superficial contradictions in Rousseau's thought (9–10). He understands that, not only are they intentional, part of a larger teaching, but also that they show the way to Rousseau's most valuable insights. But one need not conclude from this that, at his deepest level, Rousseau *is* fundamentally unsystematic (xii, 9, 230), and thus a partisan of dividedness, not wholeness. Another approach is possible, such as is pursued by Arthur Melzer in his remarkable book *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought* (Melzer 1990). Melzer, too, appreciates the pedagogical and rhetorical purpose of Rousseau's contradictions, but he makes discoveries Cladis does not because he stresses the fundamentally "systematic" character of Rousseau's thought (such as, for example, the absolute centrality of the sweet sentiment of existence for Rousseau). In our jaded, postmodern times, we forget that it is not such an easy task to develop a system, a theory of the (human) whole convincing in its unity and comprehensiveness. Eighteenth-century systematizing undoubtedly had its excesses, but without some sort of systematic spirit, philosophy runs the risk of being inconsistent, parochial or both.

III.

As for religion, Cladis and Rousseau are more on the same page, though perhaps not as much as Cladis thinks. For Cladis (a professor of religious studies), the term “religion” encompasses a remarkably broad variety of phenomena (6–7). He opposes “essentialism” in religious studies, because to refer to any quality as “essential” to religion implies one religion might be more truly “religion” than others. Otherworldly qualities like belief in God or the afterlife deserve no special stress, and Cladis contends there is great benefit in considering seemingly secular concepts like the general will and the wise legislator as legitimately religious phenomena (191, 197, 212). Generally speaking, Cladis looks for the sacred dimension of worldly phenomena, and the worldly dimension of sacred or otherworldly phenomena. In the religious study at hand, he is especially interested in how both the common moral beliefs which bind individuals to a community and the “cultivated interior life” qualify as forms of religion (7). To some, this approach would seem to strip religion of all meaning, purpose, and, well, recognizability, but Cladis does not see things this way. As mentioned earlier, he sees himself and Rousseau as defenders of religion, particularly against claims by secular liberals that religion should be an exclusively private matter. By broadening “religion” so, he makes it more suitable for its role as a private and public good.

Cladis and Rousseau agree about many elements of civic religion. Rousseau certainly intends the private good sincerity and the public good toleration to reinforce each other much as Cladis envisions. In many of his writings on religion, Rousseau argues that the content of one’s religious belief is less important than that one came to it sincerely (“3rd Promenade,” “Letter to Franquieres,” Rousseau 2000; “Letter to Voltaire,” Rousseau 1992; “Profession of Faith,” Rousseau 1979). Sincerity will then provide people with a moral basis for positively respecting other individuals and communities of different faiths. Toleration at the constitutional or public level will thus be supplemented by sincerity on the private level. People may continue to disagree about transubstantiation, but if they recognize each other as sincere in their respective beliefs, perhaps they will be less apt to reach for the thumbscrew, or worse. It is also true that Rousseau looks for the sacred in the secular and vice versa, like Cladis does. Rousseau sanctifies toleration by making it a dogma, an obligatory article of faith, and he secularizes miracles, revelation and Scripture by casting doubt on their sacred, otherworldly status. And, most similar of all

to Cladis, he insists the proper standard to apply to religious doctrine is its effect on morality, not its truth or falsehood (“Letter to Franquieres,” “3rd Promenade,” Rousseau 2000; “Letter to Voltaire,” Rousseau 1992; “Profession of Faith,” Rousseau 1979; *Social Contract* IV 8, Rousseau 1997; “Letter to Beaumont,” Rousseau 2001).

But on the other hand, in *his* religious studies, Rousseau purports to be an essentialist (“Letter to Beaumont,” Rousseau 2001, 48). In the *Letters Written from the Mountain*, he likens his approach to religious matters to that of a tree surgeon: whereas the religious authorities of his time are willing to sacrifice the true “trunk” of religion to save “the branches,” he, Rousseau, aims to pare away all but its most essential qualities (Rousseau 2001, 227). Cladis discusses at great length how the civil religion outlined in *Social Contract* IV 8 functions as a common faith but says little about its specific content. When he advocates a “common secular faith” for twenty-first-century democracy patterned off of Rousseau’s civil religion, he does not mention belief in God or the afterlife. It is inconceivable that Rousseau would advocate a civic religion that does not include these two elements. When Rousseau looks at religion as a “public good,” he had something more specific in mind than Cladis’s “social cohesion” (189, 192), namely virtue. Citizens need to be virtuous, which means they need to be strong, and religion (in particular a belief in God and the afterlife) makes people strong. Weakness is the root of all vice, and Rousseau often portrays doubt (especially doubt about fundamental matters) as a dangerous form of weakness (“Profession of Faith,” Rousseau 1979; “3rd Promenade,” “Letter to Franquieres,” Rousseau 2000; “Letter to Voltaire,” Rousseau 1992; “Letter to d’Alembert,” Rousseau 1960). Rousseau is even willing to consider the possibility that, although one can be good without religion, virtue is simply impossible without belief in God (“Letter to Franquieres,” Rousseau 2000).

Finally, although Cladis has a deep appreciation for Rousseau’s attempt to find a position distinct from both the pro and anti religious parties of his day, he tips the balance too far in the pro-religious direction. Cladis fails to do justice to the impressively anti-religious side of Rousseau. It was not lost on the theologians Karl Barth (1959) and Jacques Maritain (1929), both of whom considered Rousseau more effective than any of the Enlightenment partisans of humanity in the effort to secularize the modern world. Whether or not the balance ultimately tips more toward pro or anti, at the very least, when one considers the subtly secularizing force of his teachings on sincerity, tolerance as dogma, and the priority of thisworldly

moral concerns, combined with the more forthright denial of original sin and skepticism regarding miracles, revelation and Scripture, one must be struck by the range and sheer power of Rousseau's anti-religious partisanship.

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Otfried Höffe, *Kant's Cosmopolitan Theory of Law and Peace* [*Königliche Völker. Zu Kants Kosmopolitischer Rechts- und Friedenstheorie*]. Trans. Alexandra Newton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 272 pp., \$70 hardcover.

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Otfried Höffe, one of the leading voices in contemporary philosophy and political theory in Germany, is finally gaining recognition in the United States. His largely textual studies of Kant and Aristotle as well as philosophical treatises on justice have already been translated (Höffe 1994, 1995, 2001, 2002). In this excellent newly translated work, Höffe combines textual interpretation and philosophical analysis as part of his overall project to rehabilitate Kant as a canonical political philosopher who can offer a fresh perspective on the pressing contemporary theoretical problems surrounding liberalism. (It is largely true that Kant does not possess the place he deserves alongside other canonical political philosophers in Anglo-American political theory scholarship; there is nonetheless a wealth of English-language scholarship on Kant's political philosophy that should not be overlooked—see Addendum.)

Like other contemporary liberal theorists, Höffe is concerned with finding legitimate grounding for the principles of liberalism. His particular tack, his route through Kant, is to respond to two main problems he encounters in contemporary political philosophy. The first problem has to do with the perennial question of liberalism, that of the extent and justification of government coercion over individuals. Höffe argues that a “practical antinomy” between political dogmatism and skepticism emerges from the usual responses to this question (114; cf. Höffe 1995, 7–8). On the one hand, legal positivism (“political dogmatism”) assumes that there is no extra-legal justification of institutional coercion, and hence all legal norms are “legitimate,” while on the other hand, anarchism and some forms of critical theory (“politi-

cal skepticism”) claim that no legal norms can be legitimately binding on the individual. The resolution of this practical antinomy lies in demanding extra-legal justification of political coercion (against the positivists) while still claiming as just some degree of institutional coercion (against the anarchists).

Seeking this middle way, Höffe is confronted with a second problem: to respond to competing contemporary theories of the grounding of the principles of political justice. He argues that the range of competing theories—from utilitarianism to Rawls to Axelrod to Habermas and Apel—do not adequately ground the principles of liberal justice. Rawls’s theory has become “political, not metaphysical,” gleaned its basic principles from the empirical political culture, whereas Habermas’s discourse ethics does not inquire into the legitimacy of the discourse-oriented process itself (see Höffe 2002, chapter 11 on Rawls, chapter 13 on Habermas). At best, these theories develop rational legal norms, which are perhaps efficient in resolving conflict, but they fail to ground legal norms on the unconditional moral law, or in what is good without qualification.

Höffe’s standard, then, for what counts as a legitimate grounding is very high. Following Kant, he appeals to pure principles of reason, which are universal and necessary, rather than impure empirical observations, which are parochial and contingent. He finds in Kant a political philosopher who is able to meet this high standard. Höffe begins, like Kant, with the bedrock subjective moral law (part I), and follows Kant’s arguments out in detail for the grounding of liberal justice (part II) and cosmopolitan law (part III).

The book does not aim comprehensively to map out the terrain of Kant’s moral and political philosophy (xvii), so in the first part, Höffe does not answer all the objections to Kant’s moral philosophy, but sagely chooses two points of contention (see Höffe 1994, chapter 8, for a fuller defense of Kant’s moral philosophy against the standard objections; his reading of Kant’s view of “maxims,” pp. 149–51, is original and especially enlightening). First, he argues that given the widespread acceptance of a caricature of Kant’s moral philosophy and of its criticisms, as well as a pervasive naturalism in contemporary philosophy, ethicists have come to accept Aristotle as the great alternative to Kant (chapter 2). However, as Höffe points out, the stark alternative—Aristotle or Kant?—masks deep continuities between the two philosophers. Both put forth a separable discipline of philosophy, a practical philosophy, whose end is not knowledge but action. Kant, like Aristotle, praises habituation and virtue as essential to morality. Both argue for a view of the end of human life, happiness, which requires moral excellence. Despite these simi-

larities, according to Kant, morality is separable from, and logically prior to, happiness, whereas for Aristotle, happiness encompasses moral action as the object of moral striving (34–39). Höffe finds Kant victorious over Aristotle in the description of moral action: for Aristotle, all action is performed for the sake of happiness, whereas for Kant, some actions aim at one's happiness, whereas some actions are performed simply because one must do the right thing. According to Höffe, Kant's description of moral action fits our moral vocabulary better than Aristotle's, because sometimes we must do the right thing at the expense of our happiness.

Höffe's discussion of the similarities between Aristotle and Kant is illuminating and insightful, but his judgment of the superiority of Kant over Aristotle is made too hastily. Höffe appeals to a distinctively modern understanding of happiness as a purely personal, conscious state. Aristotle, by contrast, defines happiness as the "active exercise of the soul's faculties in conformity with virtue" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a15). One of these virtues is justice, which involves doing the right or lawful thing. Aristotle thus would reject the modern understanding of happiness as a base view of the good akin to the bovine "life of enjoyment" (*ibid.*, 1095b15). Thus to answer the question—Aristotle or Kant?—we must not remain where Höffe leaves us, at the level of better and worse descriptions of modern moral phenomena, but we must delve into the differences between ancient and modern views of happiness.

Höffe takes up in chapter 3 a second caricature of Kant's moral philosophy, the view that Kant's ethics precludes common sense or prudential judgment, unreasonably demanding that rigid abstract laws be mechanically applied to particular situations (45–47). Kant's insistence on a pure theory of morals seems to rule judgment out of court, since the latter takes experience as its object. However, Höffe argues that we encounter moral situations not immediately as instances of universal laws; rather, individual instances must be made intelligible as "an instantiation of the universal" moral law with practical judgment (51). Experience, then, is essential to moral and political situations in order to refine our ability to deploy the right law at the right time, place, and setting, but we must not allow the complexities of experience to obstruct our duty to the moral law.

With this defense and refinement of Kant's moral philosophy, Höffe paves the way for grounding political right on the moral good in part II. A cursory glance at the *Metaphysics of Morals* and his political essays reveals that Kant explicitly connects political right with the categorical imperative, the

foundational concept of his moral thought. However, it is not clear exactly what the argument is that connects the two.

In chapter 5, Höffe begins to develop such an argument by clarifying the nuanced conceptual terrain of Kant's morals and politics. For Kant, the moral law often fails to motivate human action since a truly moral act must be performed out of respect for the moral law, not out of any empirical inclination. As such, human beings require political laws to restrain unjust behavior. Yet political right cannot force individuals to be moral, because such coercion would violate the fundamental value of autonomy. Nonetheless, political justice must be rooted in morality—it must get its bearings from what is unconditionally or necessarily good, or else what is passed off as right is dependent on a contingent set of desires specific to a time and place.

In chapters 6 and 7, Höffe grounds justice on morality while attempting to meet the standards of pure practical reason. The grounding principle of right, what is unconditionally good, Kant argues, is free human action. However, justice cannot be grounded in the “structure of the subjective faculty of desire,” or subjectively free action, as morality is, but, rather, it must be grounded in an expanded, social structure, that of the “free power of choice from a social perspective” (93). That is, we cannot examine free human action from the inside, but rather from its external manifestation. The question of legitimacy, answered by the categorical imperative, is no longer the strictly moral one—is my subjective maxim universalizable?—but rather a moral-legal one—is my free, public action compatible with the freedom of action of everyone else, or does it interfere with such freedom? The question of political legitimacy, then, inquires into the conditions for the possibility of human coexistence, with each human being enjoying his or her free activity. Kant argues that since we are finite beings occupying a finite space with finite resources, human beings must be ruled by an impartial rule of law. This rule of law allows us to establish spheres in which such free activity is possible and to make sense of what is mine and thine. It ensures that each person have a right to a private sphere of property and activity, which implies a duty on others not to interfere with this sphere. The alternative, the state of nature, contains no impartial standpoint to adjudicate competing claims to possession, but only subjective assertions. It is thus not a condition in which such justice is possible. Thus, Höffe claims that for Kant human beings have a twin moral duty in regard to politics: first, they must create personal rights and public laws, which structure political life and allow the exercise of individual freedom, what Kant calls “universal lawfulness” (112). Second, they must then submit themselves to this law

in their external behavior, and in doing so, their private wills become the general will.

Kant's argument also allows for criticism of the scope of legitimate governmental power, so that Höffe can escape the "practical antinomy" discussed above. Höffe explicates Kant's argument by first claiming that coercion is primarily "protective in nature" (114) in that it restores justice when one pursues one's private will at the expense of the general will. However, the government cannot affect one's internal self-legislation by legislating virtue; it can only regulate the external activity of citizens by maintaining the integrity of the private spheres of non-interference and the impartial rule of law. In short, Kant replaces the philosopher-king with the kingly people: each individual is a sovereign, autonomous individual unto himself. The liberal state is constructed by these kingly people to maintain the integrity of this individual sovereignty and stave off the encroachment of authoritarian governmental power.

Höffe's reconstruction of Kant's moral grounding of politics is impressive and ambitious, but not immune to criticism, especially on the matter of the source of rights. In chapter 7, Höffe insists that "right is not naturally given, but must be created" (130). Kant rejects the Lockean grounding of natural right on self-ownership. He claims instead that basic rights come from fulfilling an original duty to oneself, the duty to "assert oneself as a legal equal" (121). Individual rights, then, "depend on one's own achievement and [are] not granted by others" (122). Höffe does not consider, however, the following questions: what happens when someone fails to attend to the basic duty of legal self-assertion? Does this person not enjoy rights? Further, if this unassertive person is bound by the moral law, does this not mean that this person is already entitled to his autonomy, so that he should be treated as an end of another's action, rather than as a means? The Kingdom of Ends from Kant's *Groundwork* already contains "naturally given" rights, so the idea of legal self-assertion, in addition to being problematic, also seems superfluous.

In part III, Höffe shows how, for Kant, the moral law necessarily extends beyond national borders to concern itself with the relationship among states. Specifically, Kant called for "perpetual peace" among nations, and Höffe applauds Kant for standing apart from his successors such as Hegel, who eschew this desideratum. The conditions for peace require the fulfillment of two duties placed on all states by the moral law. First, just as individuals have a duty to leave the state of nature, states must also seek peace, particularly by abolishing standing armies and refraining from interference in the constitution

of another state. Second, states must submit themselves to a “minimal world state” (199). The grounding of these two duties follows the same argument as above, based on the conditions for the possibility of state coexistence.

However, Höffe addresses two differences between state and cosmopolitan justice which could undermine the possibility of peace. First, unlike individuals in a state of nature, we have no reason to expect that states in the international state of nature will come to realize the value of peace. Kant’s philosophy of history, Höffe suggests in chapters 9 and 10, provides an account of how states will become peaceable in the long run: like Hegel, Kant argues that the “cunning of reason” is at work in human activity (162): the egoism of economic activity unaffected by political competition generates economic benefit for all, competition and war tend toward a balance of power and equilibrium, and the development of the arts and sciences leads to a more moral populace (160–74).

The second difference is that, unlike individuals who must submit themselves to a rule of law in a state, the states of the world ought not to form a world state. Kant argues that such a world state would destroy the possibility of future freedom if it turned toward despotism because it would have no rivals to balance or question its authority. Yet, Höffe suggests, parting ways with Kant (notably rare in this text), neither should the states embrace a very loose federation of states, in which each state retains its absolute sovereignty, because the world state would then not have any coercive power to enforce justice among the member states. Höffe rejects the either/or of “either full sovereignty or none” (197), and argues that a federal world republic characterized by subsidiarity would promote peace more effectively than the Kantian loose federation (200–201).

Such a division of sovereignty, however, faces theoretical and practical difficulties. The Hobbesian theoretical objection is that sovereignty cannot be divisible because there must be a final decision in any particular case, which rests either in the member states or in the world state. Even if this theoretical objection can be overcome by a detailed exposition of the scope of sovereignty according to the principle of subsidiarity, a practical objection arises on the grounds that such a careful delineation of the limits of authority would likely break down when a conflict would occur. The balance of power would shift either to the world state, which would become more robust and far-reaching, or to the member states, forcing a slide into a loose confederation.

With clarity and succinctness of argument, Höffe's book succeeds in bringing out Kant's novel and valuable perspective on two main problems, the legitimacy of liberal principles of justice and the desirability and practicability of cosmopolitan peace. As I have indicated, however, Höffe's grounding of justice encounters a problem on the source of natural rights, while his program for peace faces both theoretical and practical difficulties. Furthermore, though Höffe demonstrates a wide-ranging appreciation and knowledge of the history of political philosophy, he too quickly sides in this book with Kant over other figures, like Aristotle. Nonetheless, this text insightfully contributes to the scholarship on Kant's political philosophy and to many debates in contemporary liberal theory. This work adds to the welcome trend of introducing good German scholarship to an Anglo-American audience, and, one hopes, this trend will continue with more translations from Höffe's diverse and rich corpus.

ADDENDUM

Whereas Höffe attends to the major English-language scholarship on Kant's ethics, most notably by Barbara Herman, Christine Korsgaard, and Onora O'Neill, he does not engage with the English-language scholarship on the political philosophy—see especially Patrick Riley, *Kant's Political Philosophy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1982), Susan Shell, *The Rights of Reason* (University of Toronto Press, 1980), Alexander Kaufman, *Welfare in the Kantian State* (Oxford University Press, 1999), Katrin Flikschuh, *Kant and Modern Political Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Kant: The Philosophy of Right* (Mercer University Press, 1994), and Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World* (Yale University Press, 2005).

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Cheryl B. Welch, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, xxvii + 428 pp., \$29.99 paperback.

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A companion he is. He offers readers his friendship, and increasing numbers have taken him up. Cheryl B. Welch calls the “revival of interest” in Tocqueville’s writings “one of the most surprising intellectual turns of the twentieth century” (1), and it must have been when it began, shortly after the Second World War in the United States, later elsewhere. In the first half of the century Tocqueville resembled the brilliant but eccentric elderly uncle at the family picnic—fascinating to talk to, but living in the past, specifically, in the previous century, when liberal democracy advanced with confidence, its continued progress assured. Nod politely at the kindly old gent, give him a few minutes of your time; after some decent interval, hand him off to your brother-in-law. The new tyrannies of the twentieth century mocked the liberalism of the nineteenth; the founder of one coined the ominous neologism, ‘totalitarian,’ to describe this enterprise. In ‘geopolitical’ terms (another neologism for the times), Tocqueville also seemed to have been mistaken. He had expected America and Russia to divide the world, but Germany had proved the real problem, twice (thrice if you were French). No surprise, really: wasn’t Tocqueville’s prediction founded on rather vague, unscientific thinking to begin with? Marxism, race science, or positivism, themselves products of German scientific rigor, although contradicting each other, at least offered more precision than these French-all-too-French ruminations, combining memorable *aperçus* with glittering generalizations.

Yet, then, there it was. By mid-century, the American republic and the Russian despotism *did* each hold the destinies of half the world in its hands. The unscientific French statesman and man of letters, a titled aristocrat no less, had surpassed the empirical, scientific projectors in the practice of their

own professed specialty: accurate prediction. Historians, political scientists, sociologists took notice, began to pay him the highest compliment they knew, namely, calling him one of them. And if the Cold War seemed unwinnable, at least it need not prove futile, so even political liberalism might have a chance on the road to some accommodation between it and state socialism—say, ‘social democracy.’

If he could return to life, the companionable, well-brought-up Tocqueville would likely have taken his newfound popularity very much in stride, welcoming even the most implausible claims to some distant relation, then drawing even his not-very-similar *semblables* closer to him in thought and sentiment. Politicians and philosophers both appreciate friends, each in their own way; if Tocqueville is both, a political philosopher, then doubly so for him.

Professor Welch has assembled a motley but stimulating group of Tocqueville friends and (intellectual) family relations as contributors to this volume—not only historians, political scientists, and sociologists but literary scholars and translators, and even a specimen of that rare bird, the independent scholar, which Tocqueville was, in a sense. She arranges the essays into, roughly, five groups of topics: Tocqueville the sociologist; Tocqueville the political philosopher; Tocqueville the literary and scholarly craftsman; Tocqueville the political scientist; and, finally, Tocqueville the literary politician, with his ups and downs in reputation in his native France and America, the future possible homeland, so to speak, of at least half the world. She assures readers that she is no Straussian, and I believe her, inasmuch as she puts the essays on Tocqueville the political philosopher second, not third in order. Because Tocqueville put his scholarly talents to the political work of persuading his contemporaries, the centrality of these articles in this volume points to Tocqueville the politician, the one who assured his friend Louis de Kergolay that he suffered from no “reckless enthusiasm for the intellectual life,” but “have always placed action above everything else” (quoted, 170).

Sociologist Seymour Drescher and sociologist/political theorist/historian Jon Elster lead off with accounts of Tocqueville as a social scientist—specifically, a political sociologist. Drescher considers Tocqueville as seen first in the titles of his best-known books, *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution*: a comparativist. He who knows only France cannot understand the French Revolution, Tocqueville said; therefore, one must journey to America, and also study not only France’s regime-of-the-moment but the regime that antedated all the others, in both instances

“viewing from without what one wishes to understand within” (21). Nor did Tocqueville confine himself to the study of two or three countries. “His interest extended across most of the globe: in Europe, from Russia to Ireland; in the Pacific, from Australia to New Zealand; in Asia, from China to the Ottoman empire; in North Africa, from Egypt to Algeria; in the Western hemisphere, from Canada to South America” (22). Throughout these places he located a common thread. The regimes of aristocracy (seen in its most extreme form in the villages of India) and despotism (from Napoleonic France to the “imbecile and barbarous government” of China) stultified societies (24). Indian decentralization made it vulnerable to British conquest while the caste system in its villages prevented the reward of natural merit. Only a measure of equality can elicit the best in a society as a whole.

Over his relatively short literary career of some twenty years Tocqueville changed his mind about the home of democracy. He began to see that the slave-based aristocracy of the American South might persist, and that the aristocracy of England acted in and among a strong and pious middle class. By the time he wrote *The Old Regime and the Revolution* in the 1850s, Great Britain, with its dynamic commercial and industrial economy, its political stability with substantial popular self-government, and its world-encompassing empire—all products of a successful transition from an ancient aristocracy to modern social equality—had become his model for sound politics in modernity. And *politics* was the key: Britain’s “rulers [had] avoided the generic aristocratic tendency to become a ‘caste’ because of the continuous political interaction inherent in its parliamentary and municipal systems” (38). The French aristocrats, by contrast, “*had* ossified into a caste” because they had taken the poisoned bait of the monarchy, trading political engagement for exemptions from national taxation and local responsibility (39). They became not an *aristo-cracy*—a ruling body—but a mere nobility, a social body. But independence from political life has nothing to do with liberty. As Tocqueville observes, “There is nothing less independent than a free citizen” (39); in that sense he was no ‘independent scholar’ at all. Only comparative study, getting the French ‘outside’ themselves might bring “the rebirth of liberty in France” (42).

The neo-Marxist scholar Jon Elster concerns himself not so much with the lessons Tocqueville draws from his comparative studies as with his account of historical causation. Elster particularly wants to determine the points at which revolution becomes first possible, then probable, then inevitable; revolution’s “preconditions,” “precipitants,” and “triggers,” respectively correspond roughly to Aristotle’s material, formal, and efficient causes,

with the final cause having disappeared. Unlike Drescher, Elster cares little for the ‘teleological’ dimension of Tocqueville’s enterprise.

Elster astutely describes the “social psychology” of the French Revolution, as Tocqueville understood it. The aristocracy succumbed to inter-class hostility from two directions. The tax exemptions aroused envy and resentment in the bourgeoisie, who seldom dealt with the aristocrats but ‘looked up’ at them from afar. At the same time, the aristocrats’ “withdrawal” from local administration without a simultaneous withdrawal from the countryside they had administered—their political irresponsibility coupled with daily contact with ‘their’ peasants—infuriated those peasants, made them want to physically destroy a class that had descended to parasitism (56).

Elster finds this account of the revolution impressive. He finds Tocqueville’s explanation of the aristocrats’ withdrawal from politics less persuasive; rather than a deliberate attempt by French monarchs to divide and thereby rule the social classes (a claim he judges “far-fetched and undocumented”), he takes the aristocratic exemptions as entirely a capitulation by the king to aristocratic demands—a power play that redounded unintentionally to the loss of aristocratic power and the final ruin of that class, an example of the cunning of history. Elster’s Marxist-historicist tendency also comes out in his discussion of the ‘Tocqueville paradox’: that improved ‘objective’ economic conditions may result in more intense discontent, and hence make revolution more likely. He objects that Tocqueville inconsistently appeals to two kinds of explanations of the paradox. The “synchronic” evidence of the paradox comes from Germany and from France itself; regions where aristocrats continued to perform their administrative responsibilities while peasants enjoyed low levels of personal freedom and suffered high taxes remained more stable than regions in which peasant freedoms were more considerable and taxes were low, but the aristocrats did not really rule (58). The “diachronic” claim holds that “revolutions often occur as one goes from the worse to the better rather than the other way around” (58). But of course it may be that Tocqueville is not a historicist, and therefore does not much care if an explanation is synchronic or diachronic, words that do not appear in his writings.

The next pair of essays, written by political philosophy scholars Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., Delba Winthrop, and Pierre Manent, point to Tocqueville not as a sociologist but as a philosophic political *scientist*—that is, as one who thinks about knowledge in its relation to political life. Mansfield

and Winthrop explicate Tocqueville's assertion that a *new* political science is needed for a world *altogether new*. Tocqueville does not follow this "striking statement" with a direct account of political science old or new, leaving the new science "implicit and scattered"—"for good reason" (81). They set out to recover that science, the reason for it, and the reason for Tocqueville's obliquity in presenting it.

Tocqueville mixes the political science of Aristotle with that of Publius, 'ancient' with 'modern.' Like Aristotle, he writes as a teacher of democracy, "judge and trainer"; "the political scientist must be occupied with the character of human souls" (83). But he regards the regimes Aristotle called democracies to have been aristocracies, reduces Aristotle's six regimes to two, and "values souls as a liberal would, in contrast to Aristotle" (83). Like Publius, "he regards America as the most modern regime, the arena in which the happiness and liberty of mankind are at stake in a new experiment" (82). But he inclines to see Publius' sharp distinction between democracy and republicanism as overdrawn; "in America, the power of the people overcomes the republican restraints of representative government owed to modern political science" (82). Modern political science attempted to solve the problem of religious warfare by abandoning political attempts to improve souls and instead centering the attention of political men on issues of "legitimacy"—the origins of society in a social contract, for example. Tocqueville replies that the moderns have succeeded in neglecting the soul without finding a solid foundation for political legitimacy, either. He therefore turns instead not to modern political theory—even to American theory, as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence—but to American political practice, which he discovers as decidedly soulful. "He prefers liberalism in practice to liberalism in theory because liberalism in practice is liberalism with soul" (84).

In theory, liberal egalitarianism denigrates human pride. It tends toward pantheism, which dissolves all individual distinctions into cosmic mush, or historicism, which dissolves the efforts of statesmen into sweeping "general causes" (85). "In the practice of democracy, however, democratic citizens show their pride" (85), especially their politicians, often heard to insist vehemently on the greatness not so much of themselves as on that of the people whose votes they want. "The image [of democracy] is there to be seen, but in [Tocqueville's] political science it is embedded in fact rather than abstracted in a theory. Democracy for him is *in* America, and America is not merely an example of democracy outside his political science" (85–86).

Even in their Christianity Americans exhibit pride. The human quest for immortality—the noble form of what puling mediocrities today call ‘self-assertion’—manifests human pride, “resemb[ling] what Plato calls *thumos*, the willingness to risk one’s life in order to protect it, the combination of self-disgust and self-elevation” (86). This very pride sets its own limits, conduces to moderation, precisely because it so thoroughly binds itself to religious teachings, “authoritative ideas” about God, the soul, and human duties (87). The pride of the Christian and the humility of the Christian both limit the sway of modern politics, especially as seen in its characteristic institutional device, the modern state; Christian pride and humility also limit the intellectual sway of materialism, which beckons souls to tyranny as surely as any politically empowered religiosity ever did. The Christianity of the Gospels is “the right kind of religion” (87). The wrong kind of religion is “the religion of Mohammed,” whose doctrine “included political maxims, which involve the church with the state, and scientific theories that interfere with freedom of the mind” (87). Tocqueville was quite likely to have known that Islam was Napoleon’s favorite religion.

Tocqueville worried less about a recrudescence of religious fanaticism than the existing threat of attempted “rational control” of human beings in various forms of benevolent despotism—democratic, administrative, mild—all of them kindly destroyers of man’s self-government because they lead men gently, unawares, without “any sense of being commanded” (89). The immense tutelary power of the state takes away the trouble of thinking and the pain of living, thus re-inventing God as a true anti-Christ—impersonal, unloving but never punishing, lulling us into dreamless narcolepsy. “Tocqueville’s religion endorses the separation of church and state,” the liberals’ institutional response to religious excesses, but “more, it grounds the proud freedom that makes self-government possible” (90). The Christian looks at the modern state and says: I may be a sinner, but I am better than that. Nor does this religion need to be Christian: “its function, which is not quite the Gospel message, is to protect freedom by allowing the right amount of pride” (91); other religions might learn to do that, too.

“While religion protects pride, it supports politics even more” by deflecting politics from too much insistence on modern liberalism’s central concern, physical self-preservation, and toward the spiritual and the spirited. This again plays up the enterprising and confident Christianity that evangelizes and affirms high hopes for the future as distinguished from the cloistered Christianity of patience and piety.

Democracy needs a political science sympathetic to such religion because the political science finds in the *Bios ti* of democracy, its way of life, much “to produce weak, soft, timid individuals who cannot see how they can manage,” and so look to the tutelary state for help and guidance (93). Here Tocqueville commends the main institutional benefit of the regime of democracy as seen in America, the local self-government produced by the art or science of association. “For Tocqueville, the desire to associate is not a mere consequence of one’s interest but also a part of one’s nature, though in one’s nature it comes second to one’s interest” (93)—a combination of Aristotle and Publius, indeed. In America human association, like Christianity, also ascends to the level of proper, even noble pride. The American “feels himself glorified in his country’s glory; his interest is not cold and indifferent but rises to patriotic passion” (93). Participation in the largest civic associations, political parties, not unlike church membership, teaches pride by moderating it, habituating party members to prudence (what do we need to do to win this election?) and cooperation (how can I help?).

The *politeia* or formal structure of the American regime supports the *politeuma*—the people and their representatives—in making the democratic way of life decent. The American federal form combines centralized government with decentralized administration, the latter ensuring active citizen participation. “In America, a plethora of elections keeps citizens active and prevents the rule of a centralized bureaucracy” (95); unlike Europe, America shows how freedom and order can go together. The New England township shows this spirit of freedom in action, enabling Tocqueville to “explain how authority in a democracy becomes legitimate,” thus answering the question the moderns ask. The citizen of a township “obeys society not because he is inferior to anyone but because he knows that society is useful to him, and that obedience is necessary to society” (96). Why is this not merely a reflection of the theories of Hobbes and Locke? Because the lesson the citizen learns from participating in local self-government comes “from social experience rather than individual imagination”—that is, from envisioning a previous ‘state of nature.’

Citizenship mixes rights and duties rather than distinguishing them, establishes the authority of ‘selectmen’ rather than a sovereign representative, and results in patriotic strength and independence among the citizens rather than fear and subjection. Here is freedom from the ground up, making weak individuals strong by advancing beyond individual interest to the exercise of pride and ambition when put to work among one’s neighbors. (96)

In this regime, democracy's small-souled 'mass man' becomes a capable, self-governing citizen. Tocqueville's political science discovers and encourages this human type. "Tocqueville can be said to have desired to restore politics, and therewith greatness, to the political science of liberalism" (96).

Self-government enables citizens to secure their rights by "obey[ing] without being submissive and command without being arrogant" (97). That is, self-government makes the theoretical rights of the Declaration of Independence real in practice as well as in speech, and exemplifies Aristotle's understanding of politics as ruling and being ruled in turn. The three innovations of Tocqueville's new political science for a world altogether new each shows how this can be possible. His concept of "the social state," seems to combine the modern desire to reduce society to pre-political elements with Aristotle's insistence on the importance of regimes, inasmuch as the two kinds of social state are characterized by the political terms, 'democratic' and 'aristocratic.'

America has a "point of departure"—the Puritans—rather than a deliberate founding. A founding is imposed, but a social state causes the society without ruling over it. That is why an aristocracy, which is the rule of a part imposing itself on the whole is less of a social state than is a democracy. (98)

(To this, Aristotle might reply: democratic public opinion does in fact reflect the imposition of a part, albeit the majority, over the whole, and as for the Puritans, *their* founding had already occurred, in England, and their presence in America meant that they had lost a regime struggle there. Tocqueville might not altogether disagree with that.)

The second innovation of Tocqueville's political science consists in seeing that individuals in democracies are *sembables*—equal not only in the sense of having rights but in the sense of being alike in seeing themselves as equals. Democracies frustrate Hegelians because 'the other' does not exist in them, insofar as they truly are democratic. Those who try to agitate such societies with stories of racial and class conflict will finally lose; not enough of the citizens will quite believe them because, although such conflicts will exist, they will not often predominate. If at some point they do predominate, the majority will win them decisively. Although this seems to mean that "aristocracy and democracy are successive eras in history, not constant possibilities for human beings to choose between or to mix, as Aristotle had argued" (100), Mansfield and Winthrop immediately mention that the few still exist in democracies—the intelligent and the rich, for example. They can make little headway by appealing directly to their own virtues as such. There is not enough 'fewness'

here for a mixed regime, but there does turn out to be an impressive list of aristocratic features in American democracy, enough to save democracy from its characteristic vices. Christian religion is a precious inheritance from aristocracy; local self-government, juries, free press, the idea of individual rights “are all said to have been brought from aristocratic England,” as were democratic associations, the legal profession, and the Constitution itself (the latter the work of the Federalist not the democratic party [100–101]). “Tocqueville does not add up these hidden aristocratic elements in American democracy, perhaps because the sum would seem considerable” (101).

The third innovation, the use of prediction, seizes the minds of democrats while elevating them beyond themselves. I venture to guess that no one who has taught Tocqueville in the past sixty years has failed to see, and rather enjoy, the effect of Tocqueville’s prediction of a geopolitical confrontation between the Americans and the Russians on those who read it for the first time. (One often can get this effect by reading the passage aloud in the classroom, because some students dependably neglect to read the day’s assignment beforehand, in the throes no doubt of the persistent busyness of democratic life.) Mansfield and Winthrop appreciate the rhetorical power of Tocqueville’s innovation: “Tocqueville wanted the reactionaries of his day to consider democracy irreversible” (102). By ascribing democracy’s advance to providence, Tocqueville at the same time avoids the sinister effects of materialist determinism, vindicating sufficient intellectual ‘room’ for the continuance of the spirit of political liberty his political science defends and exemplifies. “His notion of providence preserves human choice, which means that it preserves politics” (102). Democracy in America comes, ultimately, from Christianity. “It was necessary that Jesus Christ come to earth to make it understood that all members of the human species are naturally alike and equal,” Tocqueville writes (quoted 103). It took an individual, albeit a divine individual, to take a general truth that had been insufficiently appreciated and make it generally known, and therefore politically relevant. “The upshot for political scientists is to pay attention to particular facts, not only to general truths, and this lesson is aristocratic in character rather than democratic,” a practice of “immersing oneself in our democratic age and also...rising above it” (103)—in its own way, then, an *imitatio Christi* as well as a philosophic ascent from the cave of public opinion. One might of course wonder at Tocqueville’s understanding of Christianity as aristocratic rather than monarchic. He may mean that the Church is aristocratic, inasmuch as Jesus’ teaching of human equality under God anticipates the European monarchs’ teaching of human equality under themselves—

precisely an anti-aristocratic teaching. For this point the reader turns to the second political-philosophic essay in the volume, by Pierre Manent.

In his essay “Tocqueville, Political Philosopher,” Manent points not to Aristotle and Publius but to Aristotle and Montesquieu. His older contemporaries Benjamin Constant and François Guizot each emphasized one feature of Montesquieu—commerce and representative government, respectively—but Tocqueville did not find these adequate (either as descriptions or remedies) for understanding the core of the modern condition: equality of social conditions. In pointing to society, not government (or political-economic life) as modernity’s core, Tocqueville encouraged the invention of sociology. But his sociology does not resemble sociology as it developed. “[T]he overwhelming tendency of sociology itself can fairly be called anti-liberal” (110). If social forces are said to determine politics, and this opinion pervades political life itself, then the *politeuma* or ruling body of any regime amounts to mere ‘superstructure’—an effect of underlying social causes. “Enveloped in this way by social causes, political liberty loses much of its luster. That is why sociologists are often inclined to be contemptuous of liberalism”; “liberal politics tends to imply a devaluation of the political, which sociology tends to extend and radicalize until liberal politics is destroyed” (110).

By describing modern society as primarily democratic, however, Tocqueville avoids this serious error. “The originality of the definition is immediately apparent: the essential attribute of modern society belongs to the political order or at any rate stems from the language of politics” (111). Society already has politics ‘built into it,’ even as (one might recall) Aristotle’s family has parental, political, and despotic relations built into it. Manent remarks that the already political character of society illuminates Tocqueville’s otherwise dark comment that ancient democracies were really aristocratic. The human type generated by the genuinely democratic or egalitarian way of life “turns his back on grandeur and rejects the very idea of superiority” (114–15). But Athenian democracy “shared the ‘agonistic’ inclinations and ideal of ‘honor’ characteristic of the ‘few’ in the strict sense,” the aristocratic men (115). In seeing societies as (effectively) regimes or at least as demi-regimes, Tocqueville went beyond modern liberalism and “rediscover[ed] the most fundamental intuition of Plato and Aristotle, which he repeats freely (because he had barely read them) but faithfully—namely, that there exists a close correspondence between the order of the city and the order of the soul” (115).

Nor is the human soul the infinitely malleable or ‘plastic’ thing sociologists and their *semblables* the anthropologists take it to be.

Tocqueville therefore does not encumber himself with the prejudices of ‘value-free’ social science, instead “propos[ing] a very explicit ‘scale of values’ as a guide to human action” (116). That scale, characteristically, centers on the regime question. Insofar as they are democratic, human souls and societies orient themselves toward justice, justice understood as equal rights. Insofar as they are aristocratic, souls and societies orient themselves toward grandeur. “For Tocqueville, as for Aristotle, the perspective of ‘magnanimity’”—grandeur, greatness of soul—“does not coincide with that of ‘justice,’ and sometimes comes into contradiction with it” (117). Human souls and societies alike by their very natures find themselves in conflict, a conflict between reason and spiritedness, ‘democracy’ and ‘aristocracy.’

Modernity complicates this natural conflict by the invention of the modern state. Monarchy is a regime (in Aristotle, a pair of regimes) in which politics strictly speaking—the condition of ruling and being ruled—exists not among men but in the mind of the monarch, which then commands other men ‘in principle’ with no resistance. In practice monarchy invented the state as an instrument to *de*-politicize societies, to end the political interplay between aristocrats and democrats by replacing aristocrats with the administrative institutions wielded by the monarch and his bureaucrats. Manent puts it somewhat differently:

Democratic society was indeed the “original fact,” the cause, of the democratic life that Tocqueville describes, but that cause was in turn caused by a political institution to which a representation was attached. The political institution was the sovereign, leveling state, the state that produced the “plan of equality”; the representation was the idea of equality as human resemblance, with the passion that accompanied it. (119)

I propose only the slight modification that monarchy was the *least* ‘political’ political regime, to begin with.

Manent carefully distinguishes equality defined as the original *fact* of modern society from equality as the generative *principle* of that society. *Social* causality for Tocqueville is a fact and condition of modern life, whereas popular *sovereignty*, the political dimension of that life, consists of a principle. “This second causality is obviously richer and more significant in human terms since it serves to regulate most human actions from within and is inextricably associated with a ‘dogma’—in this instance, an opinion about the human world that possesses incontestable authority” (119). By acknowledging social equality insofar as it is a fact and interrogating it insofar as it is a princi-

ple, Tocqueville “reopens the question that our dogmatic passion declared to have been settled in advance. How can we deny the name ‘philosopher’ to the liberal sociologist who leads us out of the social cave?” (120).

The third set of essays show Tocqueville at work in his literary and scholarly craft. Historian James T. Schleifer uses Eduardo Nolla’s critical edition of the *Democracy* to show how Tocqueville made the book “take shape” (121). In this exercise Schleifer notices something often lost upon the new reader of Tocqueville, overwhelmed with the details. Tocqueville “thought deductively, even syllogistically”; the facts support real arguments, and never get thrown about (122). Such logical rigor underlies the success of Tocquevillian comparativism, and helps him to reject (as his notes show him doing) easy comparisons between modern and ancient conditions. At the same time, Tocqueville emerges clearly as a *non*-historicist in his rejection of historical relativism. The desire for the arts and sciences, the love of honor, the family, the rule of law, the love of liberty, religiosity: the entirely new world of democracy will not extinguish these perennial human characteristics and practices but will instead channel them “in new ways” (135).

Prolific translator Arthur Goldhammer describes Tocqueville’s literary style as supporting the substance of his thought inasmuch as in both he opposes both the Enlightenment *philosophes* and their Romanticist rivals. Neither the transparent prose of the Encyclopedists nor the lush and overgrown rhetoric of his uncle Chateaubriand would do, for his purposes.

He wants to influence his contemporaries, and, knowing that many of them will be impatient of any hint of pedantry, he does not wish to burden his prose with exegesis. Often he merely alludes. To the wise, a word is enough... A certain delicacy is required in dealing with such a text lest subtle references—hints contained in a lexical wisp of syntactic murmur—be obscured. (141)

This leads Goldhammer to an extended and exceedingly subtle critique of what he describes as the Straussian mode of translation, which he regards as leadenly literalist. “Slavish imitation, being mechanical, saps the work’s soul” (151). This reader, for one, rather prefers a fair degree of slavishness in translators, inasmuch as fidelity to a text, being accurate, saves the work’s soul—from the translator. The real solution of course is to learn French, read Tocqueville, then consult the translations.

French literature scholar Laurence Guellec discusses the *Recollections*, Tocqueville’s memoir of the revolution of 1848 and the short-

lived Second Republic, written to show why France had succumbed to yet another monarchy. She adroitly describes how Tocqueville's language, "the antirhetoric of an autobiographical text" (168), reinforces Tocqueville's critique of the failure of republican rhetoric, including his own, during the political crises of that time.

The rhetorician attempts to marshal men by marshalling words, Tocqueville said, but that is easier said than done. If democrats love generalities, how can a politician address them when specific policies are what the country needs? "Tocqueville rejected 'Parnassian' liberalism," "refus[ing] to fall back haughtily on pure philosophy," but neither would he "accommodate to the liberalism of compromise represented by Guizot, Remusat, and Cousin" (173). In Tocqueville's lifetime, literary, scientific, and political discourses had begun to separate from one another, making intelligible talk among practitioners of different 'disciplines' or kinds of thought more difficult even as the immense power of the modern project made such talk indispensable to the survival of free societies. "The history of 1848 became the history of a generalized impropriety of public speech—the very same speech that was supposed to have given form and meaning to the constitutional liberty of which Tocqueville saw himself as the harbinger" (182). Straining after the grand passions of 1789, the revolutionaries of 1848 sank into self-parody and cliché. "The constitutional monarchy"—the July Monarchy founded in 1830—"had proved incapable of educating citizens and teaching the French the practical art of political deliberation in accordance with the lessons laid down by *Democracy in America*" (184). This in turn made the attempt at a new republic farcical. In the wake of the failure of political language (really of prudence) literature went off into the passions of Romanticisms—Hugo, Michelet, Sand, "the novelistic apotheosis of *Les Misérables*, the book of the People" (184). No room for a Tocqueville in either that literature or that politics.

In the final essay on 'Tocqueville-at-work,' independent scholar Robert T. Gannett, Jr. considers the historical research behind *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. Although he calls his book not a history of the 1789 revolution but a "study" of it, Tocqueville did undertake extensive archival digging before putting pen to paper. Such research documented the long period of gestation that social democratization underwent. Tocqueville emerges as a reverse Burke: beneath the grand tradition of the old, aristocratic regime the new democracy arose with all the slow, unfolding majesty that the Englishman associated with the days of grandeur. The violent denouement

Burke rightly deplored Tocqueville considered accidental, a product of bad choices by the last monarch.

Because statesmanship requires seeing both in the long and the short distances, Tocqueville “went beyond the simple contours of finding and stating historical truth” (197) to identifying tendencies in the course of events that, if shown dramatically to citizen-readers, will alert them to present and future political dangers. “The pervasive hyperactivity of a well-intentioned royal government seeking energetically to preempt all forms of individual initiative by its citizens resonated with Tocqueville’s lifelong theoretical understanding of democracy’s principal threat: soft despotism” (198). Such a warning might serve as a spur to guide citizens not only to a defense of ‘negative freedom’—freedom against state encroachment upon their private affairs—but ‘active liberty’—the freedom to engage in politics. Far from misunderstanding the *longue duree* as a necessary march to servitude or to freedom, Tocqueville “pursued his archival work with the explicit understanding that free men possessed the ability to shape their destinies” (211).

In *The Old Regime*, he eschewed both aristocratic history, which privileged the individual actions of a few principal actors, and democratic history, which made great general causes responsible for particular events. Rather he sought to be a historian of a new order, appropriate for the new age of equality, who could comprehend and explain the causes that made possible the “force and independence [of] men united in a social body”...[A] historian must not just define and interpret the complicated variables affecting the actions of free men. He must also teach them how to be free. (211)

Tocqueville sought a new historiography of statesmanship for a world altogether new.

In the fourth group of essays, political scientists Dana Villa, Melvin Richter, Joshua Mitchell, and Cheryl B. Welch address Tocqueville’s political science as it addresses liberty and fraternity (the other elements of the French revolutionary trio), civil society, and religion. Villa emphasizes the political character of civil society for Tocqueville. Unlike previous French liberals, Tocqueville did not regard civil society as an enclave removed from politics but as the primary place where politics takes place, where citizens learn to govern themselves. Too often, the national state stifles political activity; many liberal thinkers of the Enlightenment unwittingly prepared the way for this by identifying civil society with economic activity or with ‘cultural’ activity (‘the republic of letters’), a ‘sphere’ to be protected from statist intrusions.

Tocqueville trails no one in his disapproval of bureaucratic government, but it is precisely for bureaucracy's injuries to political life that he detests it most. "If we want to grasp Tocqueville's idea of civil society, we must conceive it not as a seemingly self-contained realm of mores, habits, and feelings, but rather as a sphere of politically invaluable mediating organizations, a sphere sustained by the 'free *moeurs*' these organizations help to create and maintain" (224).

Tocqueville identifies three kinds of "associations" that mediate between the individual and the state: permanent, political, and civil. In Europe, permanent associations are the estates of the old regime: aristocratic, bourgeois, peasant. In America, permanent associations of this kind did not exist, at least among the European populations, so the term refers to such "legally established political entities" as townships, cities, and counties where men administer their own public affairs (224). Political associations are political parties and other, typically smaller organizations founded to advance some opinion or policy. Civil associations include commercial and manufacturing companies, churches, and the press—all of which have their own political opinions and interests, which they seldom hesitate to advance. This means that Tocqueville cares "first and foremost," for "the political uses and effects of associational life," the way they "decentralize administrative and political power" and "enable ordinary citizens to attain a degree of *positive* political freedom it would otherwise be hard to imagine," keeping despotism hard and soft "at bay" (225).

Villa's description of the "permanent" associations of America gives a sense of how Tocqueville found there a way to address Constant's argument on 'ancient and modern liberty.' In his famous 1819 lecture Constant argued that the attempt to introduce the *political* liberty of the ancient polis into the modern state could lead to nothing but the sort of disaster seen in the French Revolution. At best, moderns must settle for their own form of liberty, the liberty of free social life under a strictly limited modern state, bound by the rule of law. The New England township, "the concrete instantiation of the American principle of popular sovereignty," amounted to "a Puritan *polis*" (227)—that is, a piece of the 'ancient,' political, self-governing world thriving within the conditions of modernity, protecting modernity from its own statist tendencies by providing a school for citizenship and a stop against both majority tyranny and administrative despotism on any wide scale. To make a man really see the virtue of politics one needs to make him see how his private interests and the general interests of society can coincide, how "to obtain [the] support" of his own interests "he must often lend them his cooperation"

(Tocqueville, quoted 230). This is nothing but politics itself, ruling and being ruled in turn, and it can happen regularly for the average citizen only in small associations in which he enjoys real responsibilities. As townships and counties have seen such responsibilities effectively usurped by larger, more bureaucratic governments, political scientists who remain committed to self-governing political life have inclined to concentrate their attention on business/market associations and religious associations as the only remaining refuges from the centralized administration of *sovereign* states.

Melvin Richter also discusses political liberty as an introduction to Tocqueville's assessment of the threats to it. Political liberty gives the regime of democratic republicanism its "all-pervasive energy and force," which "can produce miracles beyond the power of even the most astute despot" (248). Tocqueville reverses the typical modern liberal claim; in his estimation political liberty generates economic liberty, not the other way around. Nothing can replace *la vie politique*, the "sublime taste" of which no man who has not sampled it can comprehend. (It might be noted that Tocqueville's use of "sublime," here, exactly follows the meaning it had for Burke: not beautiful, pleasing, easy, but noble, austere, difficult.) Having lost this taste by 1848, thanks to "the systematic corruption of the legislature by Louis Philippe," the French of his generation lost themselves in "materialism, political apathy, individualism" (249), which carried over into the listless despotism of the Second Empire.

Despotism means government both arbitrary and absolute. Tocqueville classifies modern despotism into five types: legislative despotism, majority tyranny, Caesarism, democratic/administrative/mild despotism, and imperial/military or Bonapartist despotism. To prevent legislative despotism, he advises, citizens should establish a bicameral legislature. To prevent majority tyranny, the tyranny of public opinion over the individual soul, guard a free press, avoid administrative centralization, and mark out such individual legal rights as due process and jury trials. To prevent Caesarism, the unlimited power of one person, now enhanced by the perfection of techniques of centralized administration, protect local self-government.

Democratic despotism is entirely new. Montesquieu had assumed that despotism would rule by intimidation, by manipulating the fear of force. But democratic despotism's "distinguishing feature would be the removal of any desire by its subjects for either individual autonomy or the wish to participate in deliberating or determining policies affecting the common

good of the polity”—the breeding of “industrious herds of sheep subservient to their bureaucratic shepherds” (256). Once established, such despotism can only collapse, eventually, a victim of its own imbecility. The imperial/military despotism that likely follows it excites souls more, inasmuch as a military tyrant seldom lacks “what we, in the wake of Max Weber, now call Bonaparte’s charisma” (262). This gives the tyrant a sort of legitimacy, in the sense that he does enjoy the enthusiastic consent of his people, at least initially. As Tocqueville said of Napoleon Bonaparte, “The hero concealed the despot” (quoted 263). He predicted that the Second Empire of his lifetime, like the First, “would be destroyed by an unnecessary war of its own making” (267). All of these permutations of despotism themselves reflect the underlying social condition of egalitarianism, and so fall under the overarching category of democratization.

Under such conditions, what happens to religion, that aristocratic thing? Joshua Mitchell writes that Tocqueville anticipated that “religious experience” in democracy would “become tame and self-referential,” but that it would also “make new forms of religious experience possible” (281). The democrat’s search for something stable amidst the energetic clamor of democratic life and his ‘Cartesian’ taste for clarity and simplicity will produce a turn toward what later writers named ‘Fundamentalism.’ The democrat will also seek “unmediated and direct” religious experiences, without the mediating forms seen in aristocratic regimes; Mitchell finds this in Tocqueville’s chapter on poetry in the *Democracy* (286). Finally, the replacement of the idea of a hierarchic nature, eventually throwing “the very idea of nature into question,” favors the Protestant doctrine of original sin, which in its more extreme forms “denied that an intact ‘nature’ survived Adam’s fall” (289–90). All of these tendencies together eventually will redound to the injury of Protestantism, however, “because man cannot long endure the isolation it engenders” (292). The soul will return to Roman Catholicism as a needed anchor in such heavy seas. (For an ampler discussion of these matters Mitchell’s readers should consult Peter A. Lawler’s 1993 study, *The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and Perpetuation of Human Liberty*.)

In the last of the four essays on Tocqueville’s political science, Cheryl B. Welch sets for herself the challenge of giving a Tocquevillian account of fraternity, a term Tocqueville “deliberately avoided” as an excrescence of the Jacobinism of the first French Revolution and of the communitarianism sentimental Christians and socialists purveyed in his own time. Tocqueville associated political life with regimes, and therefore with real bonds between

citizens, bonds stronger than those forged either by fanatical passion or vague fellow-feeling. The regime of democracy means the *rule* of equals; “because equality must have some referent, some dimension on which all are equal,” democracy typically looks to “our common membership in the human race,” or, as Tocqueville puts it, “the constitution of man, which is everywhere the same” (305). Christians have not invented this constitution; they have discovered it and proselytized in its favor, freeing each person “to act as an independent moral agent” (305).

But democracies do not embrace the whole of humanity. The nations that find themselves in conditions of democracy, themselves “historical legacies or constructs” and emphatically not natural groupings, thus find themselves both part of and differentiated from the human race. In another regime this distinction might not trouble souls so much. But Tocqueville “was afflicted with permanent double vision” on its account (309). He tended toward exaggeration of the dangers of racial differences, even and especially in democratic America, where natural human sociality gets “denatured by artificial taboos” that are nonetheless popular. He hoped to avoid the malign effects of racial prejudice in the French Empire, particularly in Algeria. But his efforts to find a way to prevent the problem—especially his recommendation of state-enforced racial intermingling—obviously contradicted his intention to defend political liberty. His own visit to Algeria forced him to “abandon the hope of enforced fraternity between French and *indigenes*. But this left him with only two choices: the abandonment of the imperial project or the “long-term domination” of the Algerians by the French (322). For instruction on the latter he looked to his usual model, Britain, and its rule of India. He hoped that firm rule wisely managed might make Arabs see mutual interests with the French, but this again contradicted his longstanding claim “that interest alone cannot generate lasting association” (325). “A theorist who sees the growth of unrepresentative state bureaucracies and the usurpations of military despots as among the greatest threats to a culture of freedom, Tocqueville nevertheless proposes to counter the criminal eruptions of democratic xenophobia, exclusionary racism, and retaliatory nationalism with long periods of unaccountable imperial tutelage,” a likely breeding ground for bureaucratization and demagoguery, two principal evils of democracy that alike threaten republicanism (327).

On this, as a supplement to Welch’s sharp-eyed account it might be worthwhile to consider Tocqueville’s geopolitical concerns. French imperialism did not exist in a vacuum; British imperialism might not only provide a source for tips in ruling an empire but also loom as a rival to France. So

might other European empires. It might not be an “inability” to “envision voluntary divestment” of imperial rule that holds Tocqueville back but real concerns about the results of doing so (324). Americans with their slaves were not the only ones with a wolf by the ears, and the wolves were not only (or, in the case of the Europeans) the principal wolves to be feared. All modern states of the nineteenth century (including Americans, as they marched from one coast to the other, over, around, and through the Amerindians) had to operate in a world of modern empires, and as it happened that turned out to be a dangerous world, if not yet in that century, for the Europeans.

The *Companion*'s final pair of essays, by French literature professor Françoise Melonio and historian Olivier Zunz, trace the reception of Tocqueville's books in Europe and in the United States, respectively. Melonio links Tocqueville to line of French moralists beginning with Pascal; Tocqueville deliberately adapts classical and Christian imagery and insights to the new regime of democracy in order “to clear a path for the future legislator—the future French legislator—whose mission is to bring the Revolution to an end and establish a well-regulated democracy” (339). The “entirety of [his] work” reflects “on the management of the democratic transition” (345). Once the Third Republic had established itself the French turned away from Tocqueville. Only the debacle of the 1940s brought them back, led by Raymond Aron. (One might, incidentally, wonder why de Gaulle, who saved French republicanism twice, avoided any serious reference to Tocqueville. Melonio, who does not ask this, nonetheless may provide a clue: Tocqueville thought that “The kings of France had sought only to divide their subjects in order to reign more absolutely,” thereby planting “the seed of the enduring French taste for servitude” [344]. De Gaulle wanted a republic that could defend itself, and therefore a republic with a strong executive, not a dominant parliament. Tocqueville's critique of monarchy, however accurate, would not have proved a useful text in the Gaullist founding.)

Tocqueville took up the French moralists' theme of *homo viator*, man the voyager, the being that lives in perpetual exodus toward or away from the Promised Land. Melonio rightly observes that Tocqueville writes most extensively about the contemporary voyage or crossing to the new world of democracy. But in saying that he “offered a secularized, historicized version” of this story, “because for him the theme of *homo viator* characterized not so much human experience in general as the historical situation of democratic man” (347), she overlooks the striking passage from chapter 17 of the *Democracy*'s second volume, “On Some Sources of Poetry in Democratic

Nations”: “man comes from nothing, traverses time, and is going to disappear forever into the bosom of God...” (*Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000], 462). She sees that for Tocqueville as for the earlier moralists—and not so much for the pre-Christian Aristotle, one might add—human happiness seems profoundly elusive, anxiety and restlessness chronic. Human beings oscillate between grandeur and misery for this “political Pascal” (348), and Tocqueville hopes to find “the *kind* of grandeur and happiness that is appropriate” to man in the very act of guiding his fellow men, and especially his fellow citizens, through the wilderness of regime change (348, emphasis added). Although she initially seems to deny that Tocqueville regards human nature as fixed, Melonio soon affirms that the very sublimity (and thus disquietude) of humanity constitutes “the fixed foundation of man’s nature” (Tocqueville, quoted 348–49). Tocqueville “looks beyond all social regimes to their ‘fixed foundation’ in human nature”; “democracy is the regime in which that nature reveals itself in its purest form” (349).

The legislator navigates high seas. He can steer the vessel but not construct it, nor control the ocean. Good steerage requires prudence, which Tocqueville “recovered” from Aristotle (349). Indeed, “for Tocqueville the quality common to all great writers is common sense,” “the art of engaging in conversation with the commonplaces of one’s time” (350). He offers “nothing to encourage romantic effusions of sensibility or imagination” but rather sought “to tame democratic man” (354). His “literary eloquence, his classical rhetoric, was intended to serve deliberative democracy, the only defense against despotism” (354). The best answer to Enlightenment materialism and rationalism consisted not in Romantic appeals to *thumos* but to the sanity, the balance, the moderation, the sanity of the biblical and classical wellsprings of the West—not because they were traditional but because they were true. In the first half of the twentieth century, these wellsprings dried up.

Olivier Zunz reports the course of Tocqueville’s reception in America in the final essay. Jacksonian Democrats dismissed Tocqueville’s critique of majority tyranny, while New England Whigs found his praise of township government notably insightful, although Whig economist and tariff enthusiast Henry Carey “faulted Tocqueville for attributing [Americans’ well-being] to the democratic principle rather than to Whig economics” (370). The *Democracy* found more serious readers during the Civil War, which (as Zunz puts it with nice understatement) “highlighted” Tocqueville’s warnings about potential tensions between equality and liberty (374). The young Henry

Adams “learned to think de Tocqueville my model” during the war (378). But Americans began to forget him around the same time the French did, and “the Progressives had little use for his work” (379).

Tocqueville speaks to Americans and Europeans today because the two great political alternatives, democratic republicanism and democratic despotism, ‘America’ and ‘Russia,’ remain before us. This *Companion* to the writings of our longtime companion serves him well, and with him, us.

Mary Nichols, *Reconstructing Woody: Art, Love, and Life in the Films of Woody Allen*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, 253 pp., \$21.95 paper.

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It may seem strange for a political philosophy professor to undertake an extensive interpretation of Woody Allen's films. Why, one might wonder, would a scholar versed in the writings of the greatest philosophers and dramatists opt to dedicate a book-length project to the works of a contemporary filmmaker—a mere celebrity, as might be said? In the opening pages of her book, Mary Nichols explains that *Reconstructing Woody: Art, Love, and Life in the Films of Woody Allen* began when she recognized in Allen's comedy a glimmer of insight reminiscent of the ancient comedian Aristophanes. Nichols noticed that Allen, in his *Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*, like Aristophanes, in his *Clouds*, saw fit to render ridiculous an empiricist professor who derives his views from an absurdly narrow basis of observable phenomena. After making this observation, Nichols decided to draw Allen's comic insight to the attention of her graduate students, with whom she discussed his films over a series of movie nights. Her book might thus be said to derive from admiration for a filmmaker who can provide insight into perennial problems in their modern manifestations, and the recognition that such insight can be particularly helpful for bringing these problems to light to modern students.

But does Allen actually provide such insight? Do Allen's films illuminate modernity in a manner that is worthy of such attention? Nichols argues against several of Allen's critics and says that they do. Generally speaking, her book is an account of Allen as a moral comic: as a filmmaker whose comedy successfully makes us laugh in a manner that also makes us think; and as a humorist whose works can provide society with a moral and intellectual education (xiv).

Nichols makes this claim against those who characterize Allen variously as a despairing nihilist, a groundless existentialist, and a vain, childish and immoral artist—in life and filmmaking alike. She dedicates a large part of her preface to dealing with the latter series of charges, which stem primarily from the scandal surrounding Allen’s life (Allen’s exposed affair with his adopted daughter, and alleged child molestation), and the reaction to his film *Deconstructing Harry*, which, on account of its ostensibly self-exculpatory character, generated a barrage of criticism against the filmmaker. Nichols’ account of Allen’s scandal in relation to *Deconstructing Harry* provides a unique variation on the approach of the book’s remaining chapters. Aside from the first and the final chapters (in which Nichols explores, respectively, the problem of interpretation, and the nature of comedy in general), the book is a meditation on the moral teaching that can be found within twelve of Allen’s films, and each film and its teaching are understood as a variation on the theme of art in relation to life. The preface, in contrast, takes up the controversy surrounding Allen himself, in relation to his art, along with the problem of judging the art by the actions of the man.

Nichols contends that in general it is the artist’s works, as opposed to the ephemera of the man and his scandal, that will persist, and for that reason it is on these that our attention should focus. In making this claim, Nichols takes on a difficult task; for it is the widespread allegation that Allen deliberately draws attention to his own life in a self-justifying way—or seems to anyway—which makes for much of the controversy surrounding *Deconstructing Harry*. To exonerate Allen from these charges, Nichols argues that at the core of *Deconstructing Harry* is a joke played on those who would mistakenly conflate biography and fiction, the man and his creation, life and art. According to Nichols, “Allen has given his most vociferous critics, who confuse his art with this life and judge both harshly, a version of the despicable person they imagine that he is. He holds out bait, and critics bite, identifying Allen with Harry and seeing their opinions confirmed” (x). But whereas the fictional Harry makes the mistake of writing a book that is only “thinly disguised life,” Allen himself, according to Nichols, shows this mistake to be a moral liability, and indicates this to his audience by having one of the people in the film, on whom Harry’s own fictional characters are based, threaten to kill him. Thus Nichols concludes that Allen is not guilty of the charge of trying to justify his own perhaps thinly veiled life in his film; rather, he uses the similarities between the film and his life to poke fun at those who would probe into his life in the first place. “Making private matters public, one of Harry’s sins,

crosses a moral line,” she concludes, “and Woody Allen is a very private man. He has not asked us to judge his private life. He has offered us over thirty movies that present a complex moral vision. At the same time, they reflect on the relationship between art and life, and that relationship is too complex to be simple autobiography” (xi).

In contrast to many of Allen’s critics, Nichols seems to point correctly to the subtle differences between Harry and Allen. Still, one might be inclined to inquire further into whether Allen intended his audience to take something more than a joke from Harry’s and Allen’s undeniable likenesses. Perhaps one might inquire whether their likenesses indicate that Harry remains something of a foil for Allen. If Allen is not exactly attempting to justify his own actions, the sympathy he invokes for an otherwise contemptible character suggests that he may at least be pointing to the hope for some sort of vindication. In particular, the final lines of *Deconstructing Harry* advance the hope that there is some beautiful and thus redeeming insight in Harry’s works. The hope appears through the lines of a graduate student who says she loves to deconstruct Harry’s works, because at first they seem dark and sad, but underneath they are happy. This comically trite remark may well point to Allen’s hope that there is something redeeming or ‘happy’ behind both Harry’s life and his own. Whether in this action Allen is calling for vindication or not, Nichols seems prudent to turn from Allen’s questionable morals to the moral questions of the films themselves. Indeed, several of Allen’s other films offer insight into the moral questions that Allen is addressing in *Deconstructing Harry*, without leaving one in the awkward position of sifting through the quagmire of Allen’s actual life.

One of the critical charges against Allen that arose in response to *Deconstructing Harry* was that the movie made the unscrupulous claim that “art overrides morality” (x). Nichols denies this charge on the ground that Allen illustrates the moral implications of the artist’s errors in the film itself. While Nichols illuminates Allen’s demonstrated awareness of some of the moral implications of the artist’s actions (in showing the dangers of producing a work that is only “thinly disguised life,” for example), one wonders whether Allen may be hedging on the view that art can override morality a bit more than Nichols allows. One can begin to explore this possibility more fully by turning to *Bullets over Broadway*, where the theme also appears. Nichols expresses a similar view regarding the moral teaching of *Bullets* to that which she had expressed in her account of *Deconstructing Harry*. In *Bullets*, a mafia man-turned-playwright murders the horrendous actress behind one of the

leading roles in order to save the work from ruin. Upon her death the play turns from a disaster to a wild success, but at the end of the play the murderer is himself killed by the mafia boss who funds the play, and whose mistress was the disastrous hopeful actress at the heart of its potential ruin. Nichols contends that ultimately Allen renders Cheech, the artist of the revived play, a failure, because he lacks the judgment to understand the limits of the value of art in relation to actual life. Particularly, Nichols illuminates how Allen renders Cheech indifferent to his own death, on account of his hope for new revisions to his play, which are never actually produced. As Nichols views it, the film is the story of the artist beginning to address the question, “Can the integrity of art be purchased with the integrity of human beings?” (191)—and Cheech fails to recognize that the answer is a resounding no.

Nichols’ account of Allen’s moral teaching is impressive: she illustrates that Allen has a far more coherent moral vision than one might expect, and that he presents this moral vision with a subtlety that is lost to many. Without her commentary I would have been more inclined to regard *Bullets* simply as Allen’s comical testament to the view that great art rightfully overrides the concerns of many human lives. With her commentary, I began to see that parsing out Allen’s moral understanding is a far more complex affair than my initial impression would admit. Yet returning to my initial impression, and considering that in the film Allen creates (if equivocally) something of a comic hero out of a murderous playwright, one might wonder whether Allen does in fact lend his work to something of the view that art can override morality, or that the standards for art are in some sense beyond conventional morality. While Nichols astutely undermines the view that Allen simply creates a dark hero whose immorality is excused on account of the greatness of his art, *Bullets* still seems to leave some room for a variation on this possibility.

In fact, in many of Allen’s films, and especially his more recent ones (again, *Deconstructing Harry* comes to mind), Allen appears also to be posing subtle challenges to accepted morality. In films such as *Bullets* and especially *Deconstructing Harry*, Allen renders appealing what are typically understood as immoral actions (in *Bullets*, sacrificing human life for good art; in *Deconstructing Harry* ignoring a morally reprehensible author on account of the greatness of his work), and thus challenges their status as such. At the very least, Allen appears to be pointing to the need for artistic merit to enter into the criteria for moral judgment. Perhaps even more, Allen seems to be playing, in a Nietzschean fashion, with morality altogether. That is, Allen seems to be playing precisely on the modern Nietzschean discomfort with morality as such. In

this vein, it seems that Nichols' efforts to draw out the morally grounded Allen are important; for through them we can appreciate that Allen is no nihilist. At the same time, however, it may be that in focusing on Allen as a moral comic, Nichols is not persuasive to the audience of people suspicious of morality itself, an audience that Allen also seems to be addressing directly. Nichols clarifies some of the more salutary aspects of Allen's work, but one might be inclined to probe further into the moral discomfort, or the discomfort with morals, that seems to be the effect of so many of Allen's films.

I can perhaps best illustrate my point by exploring Nichols' remarks on *Play It Again Sam*. This film, as Nichols reminds us, is at once a replay and a revision of *Casablanca*. As I understand it, the movie addresses whether the comic hero, Allan Felix, who is, to use Nichols' apt description, an "insecure, clumsy, whining, hypochondriac" (19), can in any manner imitate *Casablanca's* hero Rick (Humphrey Bogart), in a contemporary context with a contemporary woman. Allen's comical response to this problem is that he can: he suggests that *Casablanca* can still be imitated in the sense that it can elevate the moral actions of even the wimpiest of contemporary men, and that, despite the subsequent passing of circumstances that make *Casablanca's* Rick a courageous hero, the moral elevation of a weak man is a kind of heroism. The end of the movie is a direct parody of the closing of *Casablanca*. After having had an affair with his best friend Dick's wife, Linda, and after coming to the conclusion that he ought, out of loyalty to his friend, attempt to restore the latter's marriage, Allan Felix waits in eagerness at the airport to repeat Rick's famous urgings to Ilsa that appear at the close of *Casablanca*. Felix waits to tell Linda, that if she does not return to her husband she'll "regret it, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of [her] life." Whereas Ilsa had famously opted to allow Rick to do the thinking for them in making this decision, in Allen's rewrite, Dick's wife, and Felix's brief lover, Linda, pronounces that she herself has come to the conclusion that she ought to return to her husband without any help from Felix. Felix's repetition of Bogart's lines is comical, but they are saved from being ridiculous because they reflect a triumph of Felix's loyalty that is moderated by the circumstantial limits to his heroism.

Nichols takes Felix's actions as a reflection of Allen's teaching that the heroism of *Casablanca* has a place in contemporary lives, and praises Allen for delivering this teaching (29). In pointing to the extreme limitations on the possibility of heroism in present times, however, one wonders whether Allen is invoking something of a lament on the present state of affairs in which

the moral teaching of *Casablanca* is somewhat comical. By creating a comedy out of *Casablanca*, Allen almost seems to be telling us that we may have to lower our expectations—that the extent of the heroism of *Casablanca* simply cannot apply. Notwithstanding the well-known tune, in Allen's vision at least some of the fundamental things of *Casablanca* don't seem to apply as time goes by. While Nichols helps us to see the small victories that Allen wishes to inspire in his films, I wonder whether there is not need for a fuller assessment of Allen's apparent pessimism and its potential implications.

To ask this of Nichols would be to ask that she take up the position of acting as a moral critic, something she is reluctant to be in relation to Allen. Her avoidance of this stance is grounded in her aim to reveal Allen's merits and the subtlety and extent of his moral insights. In taking a sympathetic stance toward Allen, Nichols effectively illuminates a degree of moral integrity in his films that is lost to many of his critics. Yet in some cases it seems that Allen's suggestions may warrant a more critical stance—especially if they have the potential effect of lowering moral expectations. In her resistance to taking up the activity of a film critic, Nichols deprives us of some reflection on Allen's seeming comic pessimism, and the nature of the shadow it casts on the 'happy,' life-affirming gems that she reveals. Nevertheless, in the vein in which Nichols' book was conceived, reading her account of each film is like having a thoughtful interlocutor with whom to draw out the more perennial insights of the films, many of which are lost beneath overhasty criticism.

Eduardo A. Velásquez, ed., *Love and Friendship: Rethinking Politics and Affection in Modern Times*. New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003, 637 pp., \$110 hardback.

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The theory and practice of liberalism faced a wave of criticism in the 1980s and 1990s alleging that its disproportionate emphasis on individual freedom and fulfillment detracted from key aspects of a healthy social order, such as social and civic responsibility, public-spiritedness, social capital, and stable family structures (see, for example, Bellah 1986; Glendon 1991; MacIntyre 1981; Putnam 2000; and Sandel 1982). It was said that the liberal social and economic system fostered an “atomistic” or anti-communitarian form of life (Taylor 1979). Responses to the so-called “communitarian” challenge took a variety of forms, including a renewed emphasis on liberal virtue (Galston 1991; Macedo 1990; Berkowitz 1999) and community (Dworkin 2000). Yet, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Allen 2004; Irrera 2005; Schwarzenbach 1996; and Scorza 2004), little attention has been paid to love and friendship, which seem, on their face, important and central aspects of a healthy and stable community. The reigning assumption among liberal theorists—even those of a more “communitarian” bent—seems to be that bonds of friendship and love, however important for human life in general, have little bearing on our public life. Yet this assumption is rarely argued for explicitly, and Eduardo Velásquez’s edited collection of essays, *Love and Friendship: Rethinking Politics and Affection in Modern Times*, gives us good reason to examine more closely the role of love and friendship in the public sphere before dismissing it from consideration.

It is difficult to do justice to a book of this size and breadth in a few pages. It has a broad-ranging and somewhat eclectic range of contributions from no less than nineteen authors, spanning ethics, political theory,

sociology, moral theology, and literary theory. However, the editor's introduction provides a valuable clue to the book's general orientation. These reflections on love and friendship in the modern era are to be loosely held together by a few fundamental questions and assumptions. First, by and large the authors of this volume take for granted that affection must play an important role in the self-understanding of any citizen, including modern citizens: as Velásquez puts it, "[w]e cannot speak of politics in any meaningful sense in the absence of affection. We cannot consider ourselves a 'people' or 'citizens' without some kind of affectionate response to those we think of as citizens" (introduction, xx). Second, this book questions the assumption that friendship, love, or affection can be safely relegated to the private sphere. Borrowing explicitly from Plato's *Republic*, Velásquez maintains that any regime, including the liberal one, instills some range of affections in its citizens. So the question of the book becomes, "[w]hat kind of affection emerges as a consequence of our commitment to democratic principles and practices?" (xxi). This basic question quickly raises some doubts about the success of modern politics at incorporating and channeling the bonds of human affection. In particular, can a contractarian society that exalts individual autonomy support the practice of friendship and love among its citizens? As Velásquez notes towards the end of his introduction, "[i]t is hard to make a community out of the language of 'autonomy'" (xxv).

But if there are grounds for doubting the compatibility of a liberal community, conventionally understood, with love and friendship, the question naturally arises whether the modern polity can be somehow reinterpreted in a way that is more accommodating towards friendly and loving relationships. Indeed, the book's subtitle, *Rethinking Politics and Affection in Modern Times*, nicely captures its intent, for these essays are best understood not as an *attack* on modern liberal culture and politics, nor as a straightforward analysis of the relationship between modernity and friendship, but as an attempt to *rethink* the philosophical and practical basis of modern culture in light of the perennial human experience and aspiration of love and friendship. The common thread that ties these nineteen reflections together is a longing to reconcile modern social, political, and economic life with the joys and consolations of affection, love, and friendship. As such, these essayists sound a note of hopeful realism: they are realists insofar as they exhibit an awareness of the obstacles posed to love and friendship by the modern emancipatory project: in loosening the bonds of marriage, family, and various civil associations, and in stressing the practical primacy of individual choice in the social and economic

spheres, modern society seems to threaten the inherently interdependent and often other-regarding ties of love and friendship. On the other hand, the essays have a constructive dimension insofar as they propose resources both within and without the liberal tradition for enhancing the understanding and practice of love and friendship in a world in which they often seem “under siege” (549).

It seems fitting to dwell briefly on the grounds for the worry about the fate of love and friendship in the modern polity that runs through this book. First, the traditional philosophical justification for the modern state is a social contract among free and equal individuals, with no pre-political or “natural” ties of mutual authority or subordination. This contract is supposedly grounded in psychological and physical self-interest, fairly narrowly conceived. But friendship and love, whether platonic, sexual, or divine, seems to call for a willingness to sacrifice one’s own interests for the beloved. By expunging self-sacrifice from politics, the liberal state is liable to damage citizens’ capacity for self-giving and for the more noble forms of love. For example, commenting on Lockean liberalism, Scott Yenor remarks that “[c]ritics worry that Locke’s emphasis on the self leaves no room for that which transcends the self—for love, friendship, love of beauty, morality, community, compassion, or genuine public spirit” (140).

Second, by focusing attention on the needs and appetites of the body rather than the soul, the modern polity tends to discourage or even suppress what is arguably the highest and most self-transcending form of love: love for God or for the “good” that transcends all human calculation. This sort of critique is presented by Germaine Paulo Walsh in “God is Love, or Love is God? Denis de Rougemont and Allan Bloom on the Grounds and Goals of Love.”

Third, by inculcating uniform needs and desires in citizens through consumer culture and the mass media, liberalism fosters a form of cultural and political conformism that makes idiosyncratic and truly personalized friendships difficult to achieve. This uniformity and its implications are pushed to their logical extremes in *1984* and *Brave New World* (as discussed by Corey Abel). Fourth, as Mark Kremer argues in his critique of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, by treating men and women as not merely equal in dignity, but essentially the same, liberalism (or at least a certain strand of feminist liberalism) destroys differences between the sexes that are essential to the love of *eros* between man and woman, as well as the essential and unique contribution of mothers who literally bear the future of our society within them.

Does liberal democracy have the resources to meet such challenges without being transformed beyond recognition? To what extent can we “rethink” liberal democracy in order to better accommodate rich friendships and loves, without regressing to a pre-modern or anti-liberal form of community? Perhaps because it is an edited collection, Velásquez’s volume contains no sustained answer. However, the *beginnings* of an answer do emerge from time to time in various of the essays. For example, a good number of these essays undertake to reexamine the liberal tradition itself in search of resources for confronting the question of friendship. Surveying the political and social thought of thinkers such as Montaigne, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Smith, Burke, and Tocqueville, we find that, in many cases, modern thinkers do indeed evince a real sensitivity to problems of love and friendship, even if we are not entirely convinced by their answers. Adam Smith, for example (as discussed by Lauren Brubaker), points to the natural human sentiment of sympathy reinforced by social pressures that penalize anti-social behavior; Tocqueville (as elaborated by Alice Behnegar) places a great deal of store on the resources of civil society, especially religious faith, as a counterbalance to the social fragmentation of egalitarian societies; Locke (as explained by Scott Yenor) attempts to balance the partisan excesses of friendship with an independent and impartial spirit; and Rousseau (as interpreted by Pamela Jensen) seeks to educate the body politic in habits of freedom “by means of a revolution in taste, or love of the beautiful,” which must take place first and foremost in familial and marital relationships.

Other authors in this collection respond to the problem of friendship by mining the resources of pre-modern traditions. Velásquez’s introduction appeals to Plato’s *Republic*; Steven Berg looks to Plato’s *Symposium*; Ronna Burger examines Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*; and Walsh invokes the biblical and classical traditions. Pre-modern perspectives open a radically different panorama onto the meaning of friendship than what we moderns are accustomed to: friendships of virtue are viewed by Aristotle as the highest and most complete form of human friendship; *eros* or erotic love for the divine is believed by Plato to be the closest a human comes to realizing his true nature; and *agape* or pure self-giving love is deemed the pinnacle of virtue in the Christian tradition. Though we should not underestimate the relevance of pre-modern traditions, the disadvantage of this kind of response is that pre-modern thinkers did not have in mind the unique problems of our times, and it is not immediately obvious how their insights should be applied to modern industrialized societies.

A further response, which is one of the special contributions of this collection, is to mine modern works of literature for insights into the meaning of friendship in modern societies. Works discussed include Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Inger Sigrun Brodey), Schiller's *Don Karlos* (Fred Baumann) and Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (Velásquez). These sorts of literary discussions do not merely vividly exemplify philosophical principles, but supply independent sources of insight into human experience. To the extent that they are less philosophically "filtered" accounts of the human experience of love and friendship, they nicely complement the more abstract and analytic treatments that we find elsewhere in the collection.

If this book is taken for what it is—a collection of methodologically and topically diverse papers united loosely around the themes of love, friendship, and modernity—then it offers a valuable resource to those curious about this neglected topic. If the reader is prepared to forego expectations of a "streamlined," narrowly focused volume of essays, he will probably enjoy dipping in and out of the various essays, gleaning insights into this or that thinker, literary work, or philosophical problem. However, those predisposed towards a more focused and problem-driven discussion may find themselves somewhat frustrated, and will likely find the degree of diversity in styles, methods, and themes a little overwhelming. While it would be unfair to expect a work of this nature to provide a sustained and continuous treatment of the topic in hand, it does seem fair to demand that all of the essays come more or less firmly within the orbit of a few overarching questions. But beyond a general exploration of the role of affection in modern life, and the conviction that it is of fundamental importance to our self-understanding, the thread that binds these essays together is a loose one indeed. While the book undoubtedly presents a helpful and broad-ranging resource on the role of friendship and love in modern life, it is probably overly ambitious in scope, since the contributions are too eclectic both methodologically and thematically to constitute a coherent conversation. Some of them offer a close textual exegesis of a particular philosopher on love or friendship; others treat of some aspect of love in a particular novel or play; others critique very specific aspects of modern society's treatment of love (e.g. neo-Darwinian political science, or feminism); and yet others discuss the broad questions motivating this study in a more explicit fashion. More analytically inclined readers will likely be left with a sense of dissatisfaction, as the key question raised at the outset—the question of the

compatibility of modern liberal democracy with friendship and love—is seldom given sustained and explicit treatment by individual contributors.

Even if *Love and Friendship* is somewhat over-ambitious in scope, it offers some timely and probing reflections on a topic that seems to easily slip between the cracks of the so-called “liberal-communitarian” debate. With all the talk of “constitutive” community, “dialogic” identity, and “thick” citizenship, the themes of love and friendship have not yet been adequately integrated into discussions of the modern polity. This may be because liberals are uncomfortable with politicizing love and affection, and thus spoiling the simple joys of private life; while their critics recognize the limited capacity of modern politics to satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. And these reservations seem perfectly legitimate. However, Velásquez’s *Love and Friendship* reminds us that the relation between love and politics calls for a subtle and discriminating treatment that is not afraid to grapple with the public significance of bonds of love, all the while recognizing that the heart has its reasons which *public* reason does not know.

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