interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 4 issue 1

editors

seth g. benardete - howard b. white - hilail gildin - robert h. horwitz

consulting editors

john hallowell - wilhelm hennis - erich hula - arnaldo momigliano -

michael oakeshott - leo strauss (1899-1973) - kenneth w. thompson

executive editor

hilail gildin

managing editor

ann mcardle

interpretation is a journal devoted to the study of political philosophy.
it appears three times a year.
its editors welcome contributions from all those who take
a serious interest in political philosophy regardless of their orientation.

all manuscripts and editorial correspondence
should be addressed to the executive editor

interpretation

building g101 - queens college - flushing, n.y. 11367 - u.s.a.

subscription price

for institutions and libraries Guilders 36.— - for individuals Guilders 28.80
one guilder = ab. $ 0.42
subscription and correspondence in connection
therewith should be sent to the publisher

martinus nijhoff

9-11 lange voorhout - p.o.b. 269 - the hague - netherlands.
PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS
ON THE GODS IN THUCYDIDES' WORK

LEO STRAUSS

These observations "repeat," i.e., modify, some observations which I have made in the Thucydides-chapter of The City and Man. No necessary purpose would be served by stressing the differences between the first and the second statements.

For Thucydides the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians was, as he expected from the beginning, the most noteworthy motion—so to speak, the greatest motion of all times which affected all human beings. He gives a two-fold proof of his contention. The first and by far the most extensive (I.1-19) proves it by laying bare the weakness of the ancients and therewith the strength, the surpassing strength, of the men, especially the Greeks, of the present. Apart from a seemingly casual reference to the Delian Apollon (13.6), the first proof is silent regarding gods; this silence seems to be connected with the fact that the most famous speakers about antiquity are the poets, and the poets are in the habit of adorning their subjects by magnifying them (10.3): tracing happenings to the gods means precisely adorning the happenings by magnifying them. The second proof concentrates on the greatness of the sufferings brought on by the Peloponnesian War as contrasted especially with the sufferings due to the Persian War (23.1-3). Thucydides tacitly distinguishes the sufferings which human beings inflicted upon one another and those which were inflicted upon them by earthquakes, eclipses of the sun, drought, famine, and last but not least the plague. Following the guidance supplied by Thucydides' Perikles addressing the Athenians, we may call the second kind of happening or suffering "daimonic" (II.64.2), leaving it open whether the word always signifies, within the work, happenings of non-human or super-human origin (such as omens) or whether it is best understood as synonymous with "natural."

Let us then turn to Perikles' speeches or, more generally, let us consider a possible difference between Thucydides' narrative of the deeds on the one hand and the speeches of his characters concerning our subject on the other. In Book One he speaks in his narrative of the god in Delphi, of oracles, temples, and so on without making it clear whether he accepts or reveres them in the same manner as so to speak everyone else did. On the other hand, the first pair of speeches—those of the Korkyraians and the Korinthians in Athens (I.32-43)—contain no reference whatever to gods or to sacred things. (The same is true of the brief exchange between the Korinthian embassy and the Athenians in 53.2-9.) The situation is somewhat more complex and revealing in the four speeches delivered in Sparta by the Korinthians,
the Spartan king Archidamos, and the ephor Sthenolaidas (68-86). The Korinthians, the accusers par excellence of the Athenians, appeal more emphatically to the gods who watch over the performance of oaths than the other speakers. The only speaker here who is completely silent on the gods is Archidamos, the only speaker here whom Thucydides singles out here by an explicit, if somewhat qualified, praise. In the next assembly of the Peloponnesians which again takes place in Sparta, there occurs only a single speech; in that speech the Korinthians refer to the oracle of the god (123.1). There follows a narrative of the final exchanges which deal chiefly with mutual recriminations regarding pollutions contracted by the two sides concerning gods; Thucydides abstains from judging on the merits of the two cases; he merely notes that the Spartans held their polluting action to be responsible for the great earthquake that happened in Sparta (128.1). Thucydides’ account of the final fate of the Spartan and of the Athenian leaders in the Persian War—King Pausanias and Themistokles—contains literal quotations from the letters by the two men to the king of Persia, i.e., something approaching speeches by Thucydidean characters; those quotations contain no references to gods. On the other hand, the god in Delphi had a weighty word to say about the fitting burial of the Spartan king, traitor though he was (134.4).

We are now prepared for considering the next speeches, the Periklean speeches. There are altogether three such speeches (I.140-44, II.35-46 and 60-64). Perikles is, just like Archidamos, completely silent on the gods; only once in the Funeral Speech (38.1) does he refer to sacrifices. Archidamos remains for the time being unchanged. Before the first invasion of Attika he addresses a speech to the supreme commanders of the Peloponnesian troops without ever referring to the gods (II.11). Yet in a Periklean speech addressed to the Athenian Assembly which Thucydides reports without claiming to quote it, he makes that outstanding leader speak of “the goddess,” meaning thereby the most valuable statue of Athena, for he is setting forth there in detail the financial resources of the city (13.5). On the other hand, Thucydides has to say quite a few things about gods and sacred matters in his narrative of the plague which follows immediately on Perikles' Funeral Speech, to say nothing of his narrative about early Athens (15.2-6).

The first exchange of speeches after Perikles’ last speech concerns the conflict between the Spartans and the Plataians, who were allies of the Athenians. The exchange is based on a solemn oath still binding the two (or three) parties to the conflict. It is particularly worthy of note that the Spartan king Archidamos begins his final reply to the Plataians by calling on the gods and heroes who possess the Plataian land—to be witnesses to the justice of the Peloponnesian cause (79.2)—a justice which the reader might find rather dubious: the moral-political situation has undergone a profound change since the debate in Sparta.
We learn from Thucydides' narrative that after a victorious naval battle against the Peloponnesians the Athenians consecrated a captured enemy ship to Poseidon (84.4). In the ensuing speech of the Peloponnesian naval commanders to their troops, who were understandably disheartened by their preceding defeat caused by their insufficient naval training or experience, no reference is made to the gods (87). Yet the Athenian soldiers were also afraid: the Peloponnesian ships were more numerous than the Athenian ones. The Athenian commander Phormion restored their courage by a speech which is likewise silent regarding gods (88–89). In the second naval battle the Peloponnesians fought better than in the first but the final result was again a complete Athenian victory: experience and skill were again decisive. Toward the end of Book Two Thucydides tells a story, without vouching for its truth, about Alkmaion, a matricide, who, thanks to Apollon's oracle, found a safe refuge in a district which did not yet exist at the time of the murder (102.5–6).

The next speech is the one which the Mytilenian ambassadors address to the gathering of the Peloponnesians and neutrals at Olympia in order to solicit help for their intended defection from the Athenian allies; the Mytilenians are compelled to show that their intended action is not unjust or ignoble (III.9–14). Toward the end of their speech they admonish their would-be new allies to be awed by the respect in which those would-be allies are held by the hopes of the Greeks and by the respect of the Olympian Zeus in whose temple they appear, as it were as suppliants. As Thucydides shows by his narrative, the Mytilenians’ request and in particular the last-minute appeal to the Olympian Zeus remained without effect. He does not give a speech of reply. The reply is given by deed or to some extent by the two speeches exchanged in the Athenian Assembly after the Athenians' conquest of Mytilene. Prior to the actual conquest of Mytilene the Peloponnesian commander Teutiaplos of Elis addresses his troops a brief speech which is, according to Gomme (ad loc.), the only one prefaced by toade, instead of the usual toiade (29–30). (One might add that after having quoted the brief speech, Thucydides notes that Teutiaplos had said tosauta—an expression which he uses quite frequently.) Teutiaplos' counsel was rejected by his Spartan fellow-commander Alkidas, obviously a stupid man who thus contributed to the failure of the Peloponnesian enterprise. In a meeting of the Athenian Assembly which takes place after the conquest of Mytilene Kleon passionately opposes the reconsideration of the capital punishment of all grown-up male Mytilenians—of a punishment resolved upon a few days earlier: the Mytilenians are simply guilty of an inexcusable injustice and must be dealt with accordingly. Kleon does not refer to the gods: he has no reason to refer in any way to the gods (37–40). The case for gentleness or rather for discrimination is made by Diodotos, who had already stated it in the preceding meeting of the Assembly (42–48); his speech is perhaps the most enigmatic speech in the whole work. Diodotos is likewise completely silent on the gods. But it is possibly not inappropriate to note that
Interpretation

he speaks of the weakness of the passionately excited "human nature" as compared with "the force of laws or anything else awful" (45.7; cf. 84.2). Partly thanks to Diodotos' intervention the majority of the Mytilenians had a hair's-breadth escape.

Seen within the context of the whole, the fate of Mytilene and the speeches accompanying it are the foil of the fate of Plataiai at the hands of the Peloponnesians—an event illumined likewise by an exchange of speeches. The Plataians are eventually compelled to surrender their starved city to the Spartans, who accept the surrender with a reservation which, to me at least, is not a model of good faith. The Plataians know of course that the Spartans will give in to the demands of the Thebans, the Plataians' deadly enemies, but they make the manly effort to remind the Spartans of what the Spartans would have to do as good men. They naturally appeal to the gods, who in the Persian War consecrated the anti-Persian alliance in which the Plataians distinguished themselves. They remind the Spartans of the sacred duty incumbent upon the latter to respect the graves, always honored by the Plataians, of the Spartans' fathers who had fallen in the Persian War and had been buried in Plataian ground. They invoke the gods whom the Greeks worship on the same altars in order to persuade the Spartans not to give in to the Thebans' demand (53.5-9). The Thebans' hard and hateful reply is meant to show that the Plataians have always been unjust (61-67): hence the Thebans are completely silent about the gods (IV.67.1); as the Thebans imply, the Plataians' pious invocations do not deserve an answer.

The narration of the fate of Mytilene and of that of Plataiai prepares us sufficiently for Thucydides' account of the rising of the demos in Korkyra and of the fratricidal wars between the mighty and the demos in the cities in general. Cruel hatred took the place of friendship to the nearest of kin, led to complete disregard of the sanctity of asylum in the temples and to utter disregard of "the divine law": partnership in crime rather than respect for the divine law became the bond of good faith. Thucydides does not explain what the precise ground of the divine law is nor what its specific prohibitions (or commands) are, but he leaves no doubt that the partisans on both sides lost all piety (82.6-7).

When Thucydides, compelled or excused by the sequence of events, comes to speak of the first Athenian expedition against Sicily, he speaks first of a number of daimonic things, one of them a small volcano near Sicily; in the opinion of the local people the outbreaks are due directly to Hephaistos (87-88). Immediately thereafter he speaks at somewhat greater length than before of earthquakes, this time giving his own opinion about a related event; his own opinion contains no reference to gods (89). The Spartans on the other hand ask the god at Delphi regarding the foundation of a city; the god approves of the plan properly modified; although the modifications are accepted by the god, the foundation is not successful, not the least owing to the ineptitude of the Spartan magistrate (92.5-93). Shortly thereafter Thucydides avails himself of the opportunity
to mention the violent death of Hesiod in the temple of the Zeus of Nemea: he had received in Nemea an oracle to the effect that this would happen to him there but Thucydides does not vouch for the truth of the story (96.1). Thucydides would have misled us greatly about Athens and hence about the Peloponnesian War if he had not added soon thereafter his account of the Athenians' purification of Apollon's island of Delos, the purification having been ordered by "some oracle or other." The truth about the original form of the Delian festival is vouched for by no less a man than Homer himself (104).

The end of the first part of the war is decisively prepared by the Athenian victory, due primarily to Demosthenes at Pylos (or Sphakteria), and by Brasidas' victorious march to Thrace. Near the beginning of the section Demosthenes addresses the hoplites under his command. In the situation, which is rather grave, not to say desperate, he urges them to be of good hope and not to be too greatly concerned with the calculation of chances. He does not mention gods (IV.9-10). His tactics prove to be highly successful. The Spartans are now willing to conclude an armistice and even a peace treaty in order to get back the Spartiates cut off by the Athenians and send ambassadors to Athens. In their speech to the Athenian Assembly those ambassadors go so far as to leave it open whether the Spartans or the Athenians started the war, i.e., broke the treaty (IV.17-20); they naturally do not mention any god: Apollon had promised to come to the Peloponnesians' help called or uncalled (I.118.3, II.54.4). Thanks chiefly to Kleon the Athenians win a splendid victory. Nothing is said by anyone to the effect that the Spartans had asked for or received permission from the oracle to send ambassadors to Athens.

Before turning to Brasidas' expedition, Thucydides speaks of three actions which are particularly noteworthy with a view to our present purpose. The first is the pan-Sicilian gathering at Gela, which has at its high point the speech of Hermokrates that he quotes (IV.58-64). He warns his fellow-Sicilians of the danger threatening them at the hands of the Athenians: the Athenians intend to come to Sicily, not in order to help their Ionian kinsmen against the Dorians but in order to acquire the wealth of the whole of Sicily. He does not blame the Athenians for their desire, which belongs to human nature universally. He is completely silent about the gods, thus silently anticipating the argument of the Athenians on Melos. The second action is Brasidas' winning over the Akanthians, allies of Athens, to Sparta by a clever speech (IV.85-87). He presents the Spartans as the liberators of the Greeks from servitude to Athens and he disposes of any fear which the Akanthians might feel that the Spartans might misuse their victory, telling his audience that he has received from the Spartans' rulers the most solemn oaths to the desired effect: what stronger proof of Spartan good faith could be given? In addition, he counters a possible Akanthian argument that the Spartans have no right to liberate the Akanthians from the Athenians by force, by calling as witnesses the gods and heroes of the Akanthians' land: to
force the Akanthians to be free and to contribute their share towards the liberation of Greece as a whole by the use of force for this purpose is not unjust. The third action is the Athenians' occupation and fortification of the Delion, a temple of Apollon near the border of Boiotia and Attika. The Boiotian leader Pagondas delivers a speech to his troops in which he tells them that the god whose temple the Athenians have lawlessly occupied will be on the side of the Boiotians and that the sacrifices which the Boiotians have offered are favorable (IV.92). The Athenian commander Hippokrates in his address to his troops is completely silent on gods and sacred things (IV.95): we could not expect differently. The battle ends of course with a very severe Athenian defeat. The impious actions of the Athenians, which consisted in fortifying, and living in, the sanctuary, enable the Boiotians, as they think, to demand from the Athenians the evacuation of the temple before they can claim the surrender of their dead. In the ensuing debate the Athenians claim that their allegedly impious action would be forgiven as an involuntary action even by the god (98.6).

When Brasidas comes to Toronte, he arranges there a meeting of the citizens, to whom he says things similar to those he had said to the Akanthians (114.3-5) but his speech to the Toronaians is only reported, not quoted. Thucydides did not need a further proof of Brasidas' rhetorical ability. In addition, Brasidas' action in Akanthos had established his credit among Athens' vacillating allies sufficiently. Finally, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Spartan authorities did not entirely approve of Brasidas' making solemn promises in their name (108.7; cf. 132.3). In the report of the speech to the Toronaians there naturally occurs no reference to the gods. Let us remind ourselves here of two earlier parallels. In I.72-78 Thucydides first reports and then quotes the speech of the Athenians in Sparta: gods are not mentioned in the report but they are mentioned in the quoted speech; the result is that of the four speeches delivered on the occasion only Archidamos' speech is silent about the gods. In II.88-89 Thucydides first reports and then quotes Phormion's speech to the Athenian troops; but Phormion, in contradistinction to the Peloponnesian commanders, does not reinforce his speech by threats of punishment (II.87.9).

As a consequence of Brasidas' successes the Spartans and the Athenians conclude an armistice. The first article of the armistice concerns the sanctuary and the oracle of the Pythian Apollon (IV.118.1-3). The same order is observed in the solemnly sworn so-called peace of Nikias (V.17end-18.2).

Book V opens with Thucydides' account of the correction by the Athenians of a neglect of which they had become guilty when they purified Delos. There soon follows the battle of Amphipolis with Brasidas in command of the Peloponnesians and their allies and Kleon in command of the Athenians; the battle leads to a severe defeat of the Athenians; the leaders of both armies are killed. Before the battle Brasidas addresses
his speech, quoted by Thucydides, to his troops without referring to gods or sacred things (cf. also 10.5); on the other hand, he prepares a sacrifice to Athena (10.2). We note that no speech of Kleon is reported, let alone quoted. Kleon is too busy with "seeing," with observing the movement of Brasidas' army, to speak (7.3-4, 9.3, 10.2): a strange reversal of doings as between a Spartan and the then leading Athenian demagogue, a kind of comic equivalent to the fighting at Pylos. The citizens of Amphipolis honor Brasidas after his death with the honors of a hero. The death of the two commanders increased the influence of those leading men in Sparta and Athens who favor peace. To bring about this result in Sparta, the cooperation of the priestess in Delphi was important. This does not necessarily contradict Apollon's promise at the beginning of the war that he would come to the help of the Spartans called or uncalled, for the only oracle regarding the war which proved to be true concerned the war's lasting 27 years (V.26.3): the god had not promised that the Spartans would be victorious in "the first war." This is to say nothing of the fact that the armistice or peace was at that time a great help for Sparta.

Between Brasidas' last speech (9) and the dialogue on Melos at the end of V (84ff.) there occur no quoted speeches but only a few reported speeches or references to them. But in that twilight there occur mentions of gods and divine things, among which one may count earthquakes (45.4, 50.5), and of unfavorable sacrifices as causes why the Spartans broke off military operations (54.2, 55.3, 116.1). But the Athenians too of course obeyed the oracle of the Delphic god (32.1). Above all, Thucydides makes clear that the Spartans' flute playing prior to battle was not done "for the sake of the divine" (70).

It is easy for us to find that the references to "the divine law" in Thucydides' account of the civil wars (III.82.6; cf. II.53.4) and to the gods in the dialogue between the Melians and the Athenians are the most important or the most revealing statements occurring in his work as far as the gods are concerned. It is all the more necessary to realize that the theology of the Melian dialogue is in one sense of subordinate importance; the subject is brought up by the Athenians as it were in passing. In order to show the Athenians that they may have some hope against hope, the Melians remind them of the role played in war by chance: they trust, as far as chance is concerned, that "the divine" (to theion) will not disadvantage them, given the justice of the Melians—to say nothing of the fact that the Spartans are forced by sheer shame to come to the Melians' assistance. The Athenians reply that they, the Athenians, can count on the good will of "the divine," for they act within the limits of what human beings hold or believe regarding "the divine," for the Athenians (or all sensible human beings) believe as regards "the divine" what is generally thought about it and as regards the human they know clearly, namely, that the strong rules the weaker by nature and hence sempiternally with necessity. Thereupon the Melians drop the
subject and speak only of their manifest or human hopes, i.e., the hope which they derive from their relation with Sparta. We note that in the Melian dialogue "the gods" are not mentioned but only "the divine," which is more general and more vague than "the gods." Of "the divine law" as distinguished from "the divine," Thucydides speaks in his own name; but he is in the case of the divine law, as in that of the divine, equally silent about the precise meaning of the expressions. He clearly disapproves of breaches of the divine law, whereas he refrains from passing judgment on the Athenians' theology as stated by their ambassadors on Melos.

Books VI and VII, which contain Thucydides' account of the Sicilian expedition, are related to the Melian dialogue as his account of the plague is to his Pericles' Funeral Speech. In his archaeology of Sicily he indicates the untrustworthy character of what is said about the Kyklopes and others (2.1-2). The first great event pertaining to the Sicilian expedition is the exchange of speeches, quoted by Thucydides, between Nikias and Alkibiades in the Athenian Assembly; there are two such speeches by Nikias and one by Alkibiades. In what could seem to be, especially in retrospect, a reversal of roles Nikias warns the Athenians against endangering what they possess for the sake of immanifest and future things (9.3), just as the Athenians had warned the Melians; there is this difference that the Melians were not, or at least not in the same way as the Athenians, in love with the faraway (13; cf. 24.3). But Nikias is not equal to Alkibiades in dexterity; he is defeated in the debate, in a way that resembles Nikias' (or his comrades') defeat by Kleon in the debate regarding Pylos. Neither Nikias nor Alkibiades mentions gods but Alkibiades refers to the oath which obliges the Athenians to come to the assistance of their Sicilian allies (18.1; cf. 19.1). Nikias' last word is to the effect that the fate of the expedition will depend on chance, which cannot be mastered by men, rather than on human foresight (23.3). While the expedition is being prepared according to the proposal of the sensible and hitherto always lucky Nikias, unknown individuals mutilate the Hermai which stand in front of private houses as well as temples; this and other impious deeds are regarded as a bad omen for the expedition and even for the established democratic regime; a strong suspicion falls on Alkibiades and quite a few others. In spite of this Alkibiades is left together with Nikias in command of the expedition; the Athenians have the greatest hope for future things as compared with what they already possessed (31.6). This hope was not unconnected with piety; when everything was ready for the departure of the armament, the customary prayers and libations were offered (32.1-2). As little as in the debate in the Athenian Assembly are the gods mentioned in the debate in the Syracusan Assembly. It is hard to say whether this silence is one of the shadows cast by the unsolved mystery of the mutilation of the Hermai and similar impieties.

The considerable disappointment which the Athenians with the excep-
tion of Nikias (46.2) experienced after their arrival in Sicily proves to be minor compared with the recall to Athens of Alkibiades who is now to be proceeded against on account of his alleged impiety. The action of the Athenian *demos* against Alkibiades enables or forces Thucydides to tell the true story of the alleged tyrannicide committed by Harmodios and Aristogeiton. We note in particular two things: the tyranny of Peisistratos and his family was on the whole mild and law-abiding and in particular pious; Hippias, the man who was in fact tyrant after the death of his father, Peisistratos, survived and after his expulsion a few years later from Athens by the Spartans and some Athenians found refuge with the Persian king and fought on the Persian side at Marathon (54.5-6, 59.4), thus foreshadowing in a manner the fate of Themistokles.

In the first battle, Nikias defeats the Syracusans after having encouraged his troops by reminding them of their military superiority to the enemy: the enemy army is inferior to Nikias' army in regard to knowledge (68.2, 69.1). There is no need for him to refer to gods and hence he does not refer to them. This is perfectly compatible with the fact that in both armies the soothsayers bring the usual sacrifices prior to the battle (69.2). The battle was accompanied by a thunderstorm and heavy rain—phenomena which increased the fear of those who had no previous battle experience while the more experienced men simply regarded them as a consequence of the season of the year (70.1): experience diminishes the frightening effect of the daimonic things. Any discouragement which the Syracusans may have suffered on account of their defeat is removed by a speech of Hermokrates in their Assembly which Thucydides reports and which is not encumbered by an explicit reference to gods (72). Hermokrates is also the speaker for Syracuse in a gathering at Kamarina in which both belligerents sue for the favor of those Sicilians who have not yet taken sides; the speaker for Athens carries the characteristic name Euphemos. Both speeches are quoted and are silent on the gods. In a gathering of the anti-Athenian cities at Sparta Alkibiades succeeds in convincing the Spartans of the soundness of a broadly conceived anti-Athenian policy and strategy and at the same time of the perfect correctness of his high treason. Alkibiades' speech is also quoted and is silent on the gods; its being quoted and its being silent on the gods have the same reason. While the Spartan and Korinthian relief force is already on its way to Syracuse, the situation of the Athenians on Sicily looks quite favorable: Nikias is quite hopeful. Yet the only mishap which befell the Spartans was that they had to interrupt a military operation which they had started against Argos, because of an earthquake (95.1). As it seems to me, Book VI, which is rich in quoted speeches, also abounds in reported speeches.

Book VII can be said to bring the *peripeteia*: the leadership in the fight for Syracuse shifts from the Athenian gentleman Nikias with his half-Spartan turn of mind to the much more daring commanders Gyliippos of Sparta and Hermokrates of Syracuse (cf., e.g., 3.3 and 8.3). The
Athenians' situation in Sicily becomes grave; Nikias is compelled to send a letter to Athens with an urgent request for additional troops and supply. Apart from the fact that the letter was accompanied by oral messages, it has the status of a quoted speech (8.1-2, 10-15) to a greater degree than the excerpts from the letters of Pausanias and Themistokles to the king of Persia (I.129.3, 137.4). Nikias does not hesitate to tell the Athenians what he thinks of their "difficult natures" (VII.14.2 and 4). The reversal of fate which has taken place in Sicily resembles that at Pylos: while Athens has ceased to be the preponderant naval power, the anti-Athenian combination's naval power has increased (11.2-4, 12.3). Gods and the sacred things are not mentioned—at least not explicitly. For the greatest increase in the Spartans' power was caused by their holding now among other things that the Athenians had broken the treaty, whereas in the first war it had rather been the Spartans who had begun the war; the Spartans therefore believed that their misfortunes in the first war, like that at Pylos, were deserved or reasonable (cf. 18.2); they believed that good or bad fortune in war depends on the justice or injustice of the belligerents, i.e., on the rule of gods concerned with justice. This thought is ascribed by Thucydides to the Spartans, but it is no accident that it follows almost immediately his quotation of Nikias' letter; it is also a Nikian thought.

The operations urgently recommended by Alkibiades begin to hurt the Athenians considerably, although for the time being the harm which Athens suffered was as nothing compared with what happened to the small city of Mykalessos at the hands of Thracian mercenaries who were in the pay of Athens and whom the Athenians had to send home for fiscal reasons. Thereafter through an improvement in their naval tactics the Syracusans defeat the Athenians unmistakably in a naval battle; this was the turning point (41). Yet for the moment the Athenians' situation seems to be greatly improved by the arrival of the second Athenian expeditionary force that is commanded by Demosthenes. Demosthenes' daring attempt either to win a victorious decision practically at once or else to start at once with the preparation for the return home of the Athenian armament is spoiled in the first place by enemy resistance. Secondly, there is disagreement among the Athenian commanders and within the army: there seems to be no longer any hope. Demosthenes voted for immediate return to Athens. In the deliberations Nikias could not be as frank as Demosthenes since he was engaged in secret negotiations with the influential, wealthy Syracusans, who desired as much as he a speedy end of the enormously expensive war; he still has some hope. He voted therefore against Demosthenes' proposal. The reason by which he supported his vote was what he thought of the difficult nature of the Athenians: the very soldiers who clamor now for the immediate return to Athens will say after their return, when they have come again under the influence of the demagogues, that the Athenian generals have been bribed by the enemy: he for one would not prefer to perish unjustly at
the hands of the Athenians rather than perishing at the hands of the enemy "privately," i.e., not unjustly. He does not consider the fact that his unjust death would contribute to the salvation of the Athenian armament. The exchange between Demosthenes and Nikias (47-49.3) is the most striking example in Thucydides' work of an exchange of reported speeches. Nikias' speech, though, does not simply express his thought since, as Thucydides makes clear, his hope prevents him from being completely frank. He clings to his opinion because he is swayed by hope based on his Syracusan connections rather than by fear of Athenian revenge, and his opinion wins out. The postponement of the Athenians' departure is due entirely to him. But at the time everything was ready for the departure of the whole armament by sea, an eclipse of the moon took place. Thereupon most of the Athenians and not the least Nikias himself, who was somewhat too much addicted to divination and the like, demanded further postponement of the departure: Nikias decided that according to the interpretation given by the soothsayers one ought not even to deliberate about the date of leaving before three times nine days had passed (50.4).

In the meantime the Syracusans gained a splendid naval victory, thus almost closing to the Athenians the exit from the harbor of Syracuse. The Athenians' discouragement increased correspondingly and still more their regret about the whole expedition. Before they make a last desperate effort to break the Syracusan blockade, Nikias calls all soldiers under his command together and addresses to them a speech in which he shows them there is still hope, given the power of chance especially in war. Nikias' speech is paralleled by a speech of the enemy commanders to their troops: they have much better grounds for hope whereas the Athenians are reduced to putting their reliance altogether on fate (61-68). In these speeches, both of which are quoted, gods and sacred things are not mentioned, but the extreme danger in which the Athenians find themselves induces Nikias to address every single commander of a trireme and remind him, among other things, of the ancestral gods (69.1-2). The battle which follows and which consisted in the futile attempt of the Athenians to achieve a breakout through the blockading enemy navy was of unrivaled violence. The Athenians who could not embark were compelled to be spectators of the life-and-death struggle. Their participation was limited to their passionate response to the part of the fight which they could see from the place where each happened to stand: when they saw their own men vanquish the enemy, they caught courage and called on the gods; in the opposite case, they lost their courage and apparently also their willingness to call on the gods (71.3). Hope ceasing, piety ceases (cf. also 75.7). The Athenians' disaster prevents them from taking the customary loving care of their many dead, even from asking the victors for the surrender of the Athenian corpses (72.2): the contrast with the circumstances in which Perikles delivered his Funeral Speech is overpowering. Retreat into the interior of Sicily is rendered difficult and
eventually impossible by a ruse of Hermokrates to which he was forced to have recourse because the Syracusans refused to continue fighting during the night: they just happened to celebrate a festival in honor of Herakles (73.2-74). Thucydides has described the miserable end of the Athenian army and its commanders—an event which surpasses description—as adequately as possible.

Shortly before the very end Nikias addressed a speech of encouragement to his troops which is quoted by Thucydides in full and which is the last speech quoted in full that occurs in the work. Nikias, still filled with hope, exhorts his soldiers to be hopeful. He declares truthfully that he is rather worse off than his comrades in arms although he has fulfilled the customary duties toward the gods and has always been just and modest towards human beings. The Athenians may have provoked the envy of the god by their expedition but they have been sufficiently punished for this; now they deserve the god’s pity rather than his envy (77.1-4). Nikias’ theology obviously differs from—nay, is opposed to—the theology stated by the Athenian ambassadors on Melos. According to Thucydides himself Nikias would have deserved a better fate than the one which fell to his lot, for he had applied himself more than any other of Thucydides’ contemporaries to the exercise of that virtue which is praised and held up by the law (86.5)—as distinguished from another, possibly higher, kind of virtue—but his theology is refuted by his fate. It is almost unnecessary to say that the Athenians’ hopeless retreat into the interior of Sicily was accompanied by thunderstorms and rain which, while being seasonal, were interpreted by the Athenians as pointing to misery still to come (79.3).

Thucydides’ theology—if it is permitted to use this expression—is located in the mean (in the Aristotelian sense) between that of Nikias and that of the Athenian ambassadors on Melos.

Book VIII, the last Book, is anticlimactic. What this expression means depends obviously on the character of the climax, i.e., in the first place on the character of Books VI-VII and then of the whole work. It has been plausibly suggested that the peculiarity of Book VIII is due to its incompleteness, perhaps to Thucydides having died before he was able to complete his work. But this is not more than a plausible hypothesis. The peculiarity of Book VIII must be understood in the light of the peculiarity or peculiarities of the bulk of the work. The most striking peculiarity of the bulk of the work is the speeches of the characters which are quoted in full and the way in which they are interwoven with the account of the deeds as well as with the speeches which are merely reported. There are no speeches quoted in full to be found in Book VIII. There is however a large section of Book V which has the same character: V.10-84. The absence of quoted speeches from this section heightens the power, the impact, of the dialogue on Melos (V.85-112) and of the account of the Sicilian expedition (VI-VII). Is that power, that impact, not still more heightened by the absence of fully quoted speeches from Book VIII?
Let this question also not be more than a plausible hypothesis. It has at least the merit of protecting us against the danger of mistaking a plausible hypothesis ratified by an overwhelming majority for a demonstrated verity.

Since the Athenians and their enemies preserve their turns of mind—their zealous quickness and their cautious slowness, respectively—despite what happened in Sicily, the Athenians were able to build up a new powerful force and to protect the largest part of their empire. Their initial anger when they learned of their disaster in Sicily was directed also against the diviners and soothsayers who had confirmed them in their hope that they would conquer Sicily. But the long-range reaction was rather in favor of thrift and moderation and of some form of rule by older men. One may doubt, however, whether any effort on the part of the Athenians would have been of any avail to them if there had not been frictions or dissensions among her enemies. Owing to Alkibiades’ instigation an important part of Attika was under permanent occupation by an enemy army commanded by the Spartan king Agis, and Agis was or became a mortal enemy of Alkibiades. Owing to his command of a Spartan army Agis’ power in Sparta had increased and he had thus increased or aroused dissensions with the other Spartan authorities. Alkibiades therefore had to depend on the support of these other Spartan authorities (5.3-4, 12.2, 45.1). But it was another division within the enemy combination which saved Athens and—incredible as it may sound—by the same stroke Alkibiades, who was condemned to death by Athens. The Athenian defeat in Sicily had made the king of Persia (and therewith his satrap Tissaphernes) and the Spartans the actual or potential heirs to that part of the Athenian empire which was located in Asia Minor and the islands nearby. Tissaphernes wished to use those rich financial resources, which were hitherto at Athens’ disposal, for the king’s services. This state of things naturally led to a Spartan-Persian alliance that was strongly urged by Alkibiades. While the war continued with more or less its old fury, the demos of Samos rose with the help of the Athenians against their oligarchic fellow-citizens, killing or expelling them and confiscating their property (21). Furthermore, the war still dragging on, the Peloponnesians felt that their treaty with Tissaphernes gave them less than they were entitled to expect; accordingly, a new treaty of alliance between the two powers was concluded. A change in the Spartan command brought the latent conflict between Sparta and Persia into the open. The Spartans who were now negotiating with Tissaphernes found it unbearable that the two treaties between Sparta and Persia restored to the king of Persia the right to all countries which he and his ancestors ever possessed, i.e., above all the Greek lands which Greeks had liberated from Persian domination. Tissaphernes became angry and was unwilling to continue paying the large sums of money which he had spent hitherto for the Peloponnesian navy. Precisely at this moment Alkibiades saw himself compelled to take refuge with Tissaphernes in order to find protection against his numerous and powerful enemies in
Sparta. He took resolutely the side of Tissaphernes against the Spartans. He became the teacher of Tissaphernes in all things—especially regarding moderation: Tissaphernes ought to reduce the pay of the Peloponnesian sailors, whose high pay induces them to commit every kind of mischief and to ruin their bodies (45.1-2). Alkibiades, who was notorious for his *hybris* and incontinence, as teacher of moderation and continence: if this is not the greatest or most moving *peripeteia* recorded in Thucydides’ work, it is surely the most astounding one. What an ancient critic observed with regard to Thucydides’ account of the Kylon affair (I.126.2ff.)—here the lion laughed—can be applied with at least equal right to Alkibiades’ timely conversion.

Politically the most important instruction which Alkibiades gave to Tissaphernes was to prevent the victory of either the Peloponnesians or the Athenians: a divided Greece could easily be controlled by Persia. If Persia had to make a choice between the two Greek powers she ought to prefer Athens, which constituted less of a danger to Persia than the Peloponnesians. In this way Alkibiades prepared at the same time his reconciliation with the Athenians. For he held that the Athenians might turn to him if Tissaphernes appeared to be his friend. But this solution required the change of the Athenian regime from a democracy into an oligarchy: the Persian king could not be expected to put any reliance on a democracy. Very influential Athenians were won over to the plan to recall Alkibiades and to abolish the democracy. The popular opposition to the plan was silenced by the hope for the pay which the Persian king would give. Connected with Alkibiades’ conspiracy but to some extent independent of it, there developed an anti-democratic conspiracy among the highest strata of the Athenian army on Samos, with the consequence that that army as a whole favored the abolition of democracy and the recall of Alkibiades. The Athenians on Samos sent an embassy to Athens with Peisandros as its leader. There was considerable opposition in Athens to the recall of Alkibiades, not the least on the ground of the fact that he had been condemned to death because of impiety. Yet the opponents were unable to suggest an alternative which might save Athens. Thereupon Peisandros told them clearly “there is none” except to make the government more oligarchic (53.3). This utterance of Peisandros—roughly six lines—is the only direct speech quoted in Book VIII. This does not necessarily mean that it is the most important utterance of a Thucydidean character that occurs in the last Book. But it clearly underlines, especially if taken in conjunction with the absence of any quoted speech by Alkibiades, the most striking characteristic of that Book: its anticlimactic character, as previously explained. One might also note the relative abundance of fully quoted treaties of alliance (18, 37, 58) as contrasted with the complete absence of fully quoted speeches proper.

The oligarchically minded Athenians other than Alkibiades, if not altogether inimical to him, established an oligarchy in Athens and wherever else they could in the Athenian empire. But the allies or
subjects of Athens were less eager for oligarchy than for being independent of Athens. The regime now established in Athens was the government of 5,000 who were most able to help the city by their property and by themselves. This meant in fact that only members of the oligarchic clique were entitled to participate in the government and exercised a violent rule. At Peisandros' proposal the actual government was vested in 400 men out of the 5,000. The establishment of this regime in Athens was a remarkable achievement, the work of some of the most able and excellent Athenians. The oligarchic rulers naturally fortified their rule by prayers and sacrifices to the gods (70.1). They changed many of the provisions made under the democracy but they did not recall the men who had been exiled in order not to be forced to recall Alkibiades in particular. They tried to start negotiations with Agis; peace with Sparta rather than with Tissaphernes was their aim. But they achieved nothing. In addition, the Athenian army on Samos put down the oligarchy there. The democratic leaders obliged the soldiers and especially the oligarchically minded among them by the greatest oaths to accept the democracy and continue the war against the Peloponnesians (75.2). They were in favor of Alkibiades' recall and its implication: alliance with the King of Persia. This proposal was adopted by the Assembly of the soldiers on Samos, with the result that Alkibiades joined the Athenians on that island. He addressed a speech to that Assembly which Thucydides reports and which overstated the case for Alkibiades and his policy as strongly as possible (81.2-3). Thereupon he was elected general to serve together with the previous ones. He was now in a position to frighten the Athenians with his alleged or true influence on Tissaphernes and Tissaphernes with his power over the Athenian army. It was in this grave situation that Alkibiades seemed for the first time to have benefited his fatherland no less than any other man by preventing an ill-conceived attempt of the Athenians on Samos to leave that island and to sail straight into the Peiraeus. In fact there was at that time no one apart from him as capable to restrain the multitude. He abolished the rule of the 400 while preserving or rather restoring the rule of the 5,000. Just at this time, while the sharpest civic conflict raged in Athens, the Athenians suffered a severe naval defeat in the closest proximity to the city; the situation was graver even than immediately after the disaster on Sicily. But they showed again their old courage and resilience. The rule of the 5,000, i.e., the rule of the hoplites, was firmly established. Then the Athenians had for the first time during Thucydides' life a good regime: a right kind of mixture of oligarchy and democracy. Simultaneous with this salutary revolution Alkibiades was formally recalled (96-97) and therewith the hope for Athens' salvation restored. The hope came to nought, as other hopes spoken of by Thucydides had come to nought, but not through Alkibiades' fault. How it came to nought is told by Xenophon in the Hellenika. There seems to be a connection, not
made explicit by Thucydides, between the first good Athenian regime that existed during Thucydides' lifetime and Alkibiades' unquestioned predominance.
The quest of this paper is the quest for the human soul, as I believe Rembrandt understood the human soul to be. As I am not an art historian, I shall have to show that one may find the human soul as a painter saw it by relating art history to the history of political philosophy. Just as in the history of political philosophy there are regions, times, and influences, yet each political philosopher must be one in his own right, so it may be in the history of art. There is, however, an important difference. Philosophy has known but one revolution in its tools: a methodological "logical" one. Of course, there is the invention of the printing press; but that has probably enabled men to pass as philosophers who, as Rousseau said, "in the days of the League would be known only as fanatics." Art has known several, perhaps many revolutions: canvas, chiaroscuro, the use of shadow to make a rounded figure, and so on. Seldom is there reversion, at least a formal one. Perhaps Cézanne has something in common with antiquity, but not technically. Perhaps Cézanne is closer to the classics than Rembrandt, which does not make him a better painter.

We consider it legitimate to speak of "modern political philosophy." So to speak is not to deny that political philosophers like Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza were philosophers in their own right, who made original contributions to political philosophy. Yet they all differed so strongly, so markedly from Plato and Aristotle and other classical thinkers, and from medieval political thinkers, that it is today a commonplace to refer to modern and pre-modern political philosophy.

There need not be the same break in the history of pictorial arts. However, the deft use of shadows to create a rounded figure is called by one art historian "the most decisive revolution which art history knows." Strange or not, the fact that it took place in the seventeenth century, the century of Descartes, sometimes considered the founder of modern philosophy, and a man whose portrait, as we shall see, Rembrandt drew, is worthy of notice.

I hope that the above will suffice as an introduction to my approach. It is not always easy for serious men to understand why the seventeenth century was a time of high hopes. Today the view that the universe is alien and incomprehensible often causes despair. Granted that there are still those who equate and take great hope from the prospect of the conquest, and therefore the comprehension, of the incomprehensible

universe, there is a more thoughtful view: go to the moon; find what you can; you will never find God. There was a time, however, when men took delight in the alien character of the universe. To Francis Bacon, it meant the end of Aristotle’s fifth essence, the *coelum fantasticum*. From Machiavelli to Descartes, it was a time of soaring hope, the hope that the *coelum fantasticum* might be replaced by a universe of man’s making.

There is the same soaring hope in Rembrandt. Just as Aristotle seemed to Bacon and Descartes to forge chains, binding man so that he could not be free, so the classic art patterns seemed to impose restrictions, restrictions which were gradually removed by Titian, by Caravaggio, by Rembrandt, to make room for color and light. For hope one paid a price. Bacon knew that, and the wise men he created are full of compassion. Rembrandt implicitly raises the question as to why, in response to the development of universality, in the face of the great metaphysical systems like that of Descartes, it was necessary to turn to the soul and the self. John Donne wrote:

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of Fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and th’earth, and no man’s wit
Can well direct him where to look for it.²

Both Donne and Rembrandt seem to suggest that the truth about the soul as soul (or self) is not essentially related to the truth about the whole. In a Rembrandt painting, it would be difficult for us to see the difference, if he saw one, between the soul and the self. Stand in gallery after gallery, and watch light and shadow play upon the youthful face, the aged face, the ageless face of the painter himself. Jakob Rosenberg postulates an exhibit of all the self-portraits. “We know altogether,” says he, “about sixty painted self-portraits by the master, in addition to more than twenty etchings, and about ten drawings.”³ This gives us a total of ninety, perhaps a few more. There will probably have been some losses. Of course there were precedents. Durer made self-portraits, one in the likeness of Christ. Then there were furtive portraits in group paintings. Rembrandt may have done that too (see the *Samson and Delilah* in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Since it is doubtful, I assume that self-portraits in group portraits are not included in Rosenberg’s computation. Among great men there is nothing like Rembrandt’s concentration on the self except, perhaps, in the abundance of confessional literature in Rousseau, and that comes much later. There are no real precedents for Rembrandt’s concern with the soul and the self. What would the visitor to Rosenberg’s hypothetical exhibit see? Growth, of course, growth in wisdom and compassion, and often, though Rembrandt led a life of much deprivation,

in happiness. Perhaps Rembrandt could not have known that when he painted his first self-portrait. And we perhaps cannot know whether he continued with the style because it was economical, because he found it successful, or because there was a genuine philosophical interest, whether perhaps, in either creating or seeking the self, he might find the soul. Something of the last may be suggested by Kenneth Clark’s statement: “We know from Rembrandt’s early etchings that one of his chief exercises was the observation of his face in a mirror, expressing every violent emotion that he was likely to need in his narrative pictures.”

This does not seem to suggest that Rembrandt’s self was autonomous or unique, so much as that it was the easiest object in which to find the human. Of course, individuality in painting developed long before the existence of the soul became philosophically problematic. I have not seen the early self-portraits, except for one drawing in the Louvre, which is quite engaging. The portrait of 1634 (Berlin-Dhalen) shows an elegant and engaging young man. The portrait of 1640 (London, National Gallery) is similar but statelier. In 1650 (Washington, National Gallery), Rembrandt became a thinker, as seen in The Scholar in his Study. In the many later self-portraits Care grows. Insight also grows. The faces are full of wonder, and wonder, to Aristotle, is the beginning of wisdom. What the portraits show, in spite of the suffering, is the ascent of the soul and the strange light, to which we shall return.

I mentioned that Rousseau had a similar absorption with the self. From the time Rembrandt painted his first self-portrait, around 1630, to the time Rousseau completed his last work, Rêveries d’un promeneur solitaire (1776) about a century and a half intervened. These two men, different as they were, had two things in common, a concern for the self and a deep compassion. It seems probable, however, that Rembrandt, unlike Rousseau, was entirely free of amour-propre. His reasons for presenting a long series of self-portraits are probably not the same as Rousseau’s reasons for writing a large body of confessional literature. Rousseau gives a reason at the beginning of the Confessions. He wants to show “a man in all the truth of nature.” Such a claim does not necessarily deny selectivity, and it is well known that there is some selectivity in the Confessions. The reference to Rousseau is not intended to suggest that Rembrandt could possibly have had in mind himself as a natural man in Rousseau’s sense. If Rembrandt painted two self-portraits a year, even these may be selective, as there may be gaps which his brush did not capture. Selective or not, however, his large and continuous output of self-portraiture does suggest that, at some time, his concern with the

---

5 F. Lugt, Inventaire des dessins école Hollandaise (Paris), 1149.
self became permanently fixed as a concern, legitimate and responsible, to exhibit to the world. In other words, the expression of self had to be one means of showing what is proper to mental and spiritual growth. Already one can anticipate Jakob Burckhardt's criticism of Rembrandt for employing vulgar themes. Burckhardt writes: "One can wonder whether this constant examination of his own features with the help of a mirror was good for him. Maybe the strange blinking of the eyes which gives some of his portraits such a dreadful expression came from this habit." Yet the self-portraits have none of the confessional pleadings of Rousseau or, for that matter, of St. Augustine. Rembrandt has precedent enough in portrait painting, in Durer, in Franz Hals. That is not the point. The point is the search for the self, and, through the self, the human, a search which has nothing to do with the guilt which bothers the Christian confessional and the natural confessional alike.

The search for the human in Rembrandt must take us occasionally to Descartes. Descartes lived the greater part of his mature life in Holland, and wrote in 1631, "You must excuse my zeal if I invite you to choose Amsterdam for your retirement and prefer it not only to all the Capuchin and Carthusian monasteries, to which many worthy people retire, but also to the finest residences in France and Italy." Rembrandt, as I have noted, made a portrait of "Cartesius." Its present whereabouts are unknown. What is compelling is that Descartes must have sat for Rembrandt, and the leading philosopher of his time and the leading painter of his time may have had something to say to one another.

Descartes wrote, "Mais, tout de même que les peintres ne pouvant également bien représenter dans un tableau plat toutes les diverses faces d'un corps solide, en choisant des principaux qu'ils mettent seul vers le jour et ombrageant les autres." This statement is somewhat paradoxical. It says that painters cannot present in a painting all the different "faces" or "surfaces" of a solid body, and it seems to refer to seventeenth-century art, perhaps to Rembrandt in particular. The statement appears in a

---

7 "Rembrandt," in Kulturgeschichtliche Vorträge (Leipzig, n.d.). Translations from Burckhardt's essay have been made by my wife.
8 Ibid., p. 118.
9 Letter to A. Balzac, Amsterdam, May 5, 1631, Œuvres complètes, pp. 941-42.
10 J. Bolten, ed., Dutch Drawings from the Collection of Dr. G. Hofstade de Groot (Utrecht, 1967). A footnote refers to the handwritten "catalogue of the Valerius Rover collection, library of the Municipal University, Amsterdam." There is a drawing in the Louvre, not in the Lugt inventory, which is a portrait, apparently of a philosophe, with a globe at his feet. This may be Descartes.
11 There is another relationship, Descartes and Rembrandt had a mutual friend in Constantijn Huygens. The letters Descartes wrote to Huygens were warm and friendly. Huygens was also the first to recognize Rembrandt's genius and to recommend him to royal patrons. Huygens, the father of the physicist, was the one person who certainly knew both Descartes and Rembrandt well.
paragraph in which Descartes refers to "un trait que quelques considérations m'empêchent de publier." This is generally taken to be a reference to *Le Monde*, and the principal "consideration" is believed to be the fate of Galileo. Hence perhaps what a painter could not do Descartes would do if he could. However, a friend suggests the possibility that chiaroscuro is a form of concealment or *ombrage*, that the painter's concealment was related to Descartes' concealment. Chiaroscuro is a form of concealment, and Rembrandt, like Descartes, was a master of concealment.

We should see the relation between Descartes and Rembrandt in quite another way. Rousseau was not the first philosopher to be concerned with the self. Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* may be considered an autobiography, though not a confession. We have already seen his comparison of his own way with that of seventeenth-century painting. Much earlier in the *Discours* he says he will "be glad to show, in this discourse, what are the ways that I have followed, and here to represent my life as a painting [tableau]."13 If his life is a painting, it is obviously a self-portrait, or a series of self-portraits.14 Insofar as the *Discours* is an autobiography, it deals with the development of Cartesian thought, and it is therefore a series of self-portraits. As with Rembrandt, the *Discours* represents an ascent,15 yet an intellectual ascent. The question of subjectivity, a subjectivity perhaps common to Rembrandt and Descartes, may be raised. Is Cartesian morality purely subjective? Is it idiosyncratic? Yet in the *Discours II*, Descartes tells who are the people who should not imitate him in the rash ("ni avoir assez de patience pour conduire par ordre toutes leurs pensées") and the modest.16 By implication, we can tell who should imitate him. In part 6, Descartes adds that "perhaps the public has some interest in knowing these things."17 His morality, then, has a following. Publication begets imitation. At the beginning of part 3, Descartes presents the famous analogy of the two houses,18 the one in which he must now live, and the one that is being constructed. Here is a *morale par provision*, and, again by implication, a definitive morality. If the provisional morality is just for himself, the introduction of subjectivity into philosophy bears a close relation to Rembrandt's self-portraits. As mentioned above, that is probably not the case. However, there is something else that is new, and that is the emphasis on solitude for philosophic reasons. Descartes refers to himself

---

14 Gregor Sebba writes: "The self as *res cogitans* can clearly and distinctly know its own substantial nature..." "Time and the Modern Self: Descartes, Rousseau, Beckett."
16 *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 126, 179.
as a man "qui marche seul et dans les ténèbres." His praise of Holland is the praise of a country that permits solitude, where he can live as in a desert. That solitude has something to do with the task of modern philosophy. This contrasts strangely with the acts of the citizen-philosopher—with the remarks Socrates is made to utter in the Phaedrus. It is not our concern here to develop this point, but merely to show that Descartes has an affinity with Rembrandt in subjectivity. We are still a long way from the promeneur solitaire.

A self-portrait is not necessarily a soul portrait. Leo Strauss writes: "Not a few people who have come to despair of the possibility of a decent securalist society, without having been induced by their despair to question secularism as such, escape into the self and into art." Note that, in this sentence, art and self have a peculiar affinity. One can understand that affinity if one realizes that the role of individuality in art is necessarily strong. The joining of art and self contrasts with the more traditional joining of imitation and soul. Strauss continues: "The 'self' is obviously a descendant of the soul; that is, it is not the soul... The soul is a part of an order which does not originate in the soul; of the self it is not certain whether it is a part of an order which does not originate in the self." Yet modern philosophy continued to treat the soul as soul, asserting that the person was not purely autonomous. Descartes wrote a work on the "passions de l'âme," and even Locke wrote of the soul. Some philosophers still do. Whatever the soul is in Rembrandt, and there is no easy answer to that, it is somehow related to his own predecessors, like Titian and Caravaggio, and to what was happening to the relation of man to the cosmos, from Machiavelli to Descartes. There is still a soul in Rembrandt, but it is not the Platonic soul. It is well known that modern philosophy in general, and Descartes in particular, replaced the supremacy of virtue over the passions with the supremacy of the passions. Rembrandt certainly had a hierarchy of the passions, wherever he got it. He either replaced virtue by passions or identified virtue and passions. Before we can understand the hierarchichal structure of the soul, we must first treat of other things in Rembrandt, of motion and rest, of the instrumentality of the sense of touch, of the biblical picture, of the transformation of the celestial or supernal light into the terrestrial or diurnal.

I am aware of the rashness of suggesting that Rembrandt raised philosophical questions. I hope I can show that the suggestion is less

19 Ibid., p. 136.
20 Ibid., p. 146.
21 Plato Phaedrus 230D-E.
rash than it appears to be. I think that one might study certain painters, including Rembrandt, just as scholars have studied the philosophy of Goethe, or Coleridge, or Shakespeare. It still remains to establish this view in the perspective of the whole. In one respect we are not plowing virgin soil but treading beaten paths. There is a distinction between what is called in art-historical jargon the "painterly" (das malerische) and what is called the "linear." According to one art historian, this distinction was understood in antiquity.\(^{26}\) In the sixteenth century some artists chose what had previously been rejected. They chose motion over rest, indeed, appearance over reality.

Jakob Burckhardt writes of Rembrandt, "He subordinated the subject, no matter what it was, under the two elementary powers: light and air. Rembrandt does not care about the true form of things. Their appearance is everything."\(^{28}\) One may question this interpretation of appearance and reality. On the one hand, all art may be an illusion. On the other, why should rest be more real than motion?

That people have believed that there was a higher reality, in God, or in being, is clear. Artists have tried to paint God. It is doubtful whether anyone can paint God, any more than one can paint "being," in the Platonic sense. The visible world is the world of becoming. What seems likely to be new is not so much the relation between appearance and reality, in what Wölfflin called "the most decisive revolution which art history knows."\(^{27}\) There are new techniques in the rendition of light and shade, and in these things Titian and Caravaggio were Rembrandt's teachers.

If baroque artists thought that they had found the "truth," they have something in common with modern philosophy. Though there may well be objectivity in taste, to compare Titian and Rembrandt, Plato and Aristotle, is beyond the province of us professors. To say that is not to deny that any reasonable man will prefer Shakespeare to his contemporaries. He would be a rash man indeed who compared Shakespeare and Homer. Since Wölfflin must have it, however, that "the historian" judges otherwise (apparently without investigation) than the baroque artist,\(^{28}\) we must stay for a moment with the relative merits of appearance and reality. For appearance to be superior to reality, reality must be incomprehensible. That is certainly, though oversimplified, what Bacon believed. In discussing the portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels (Berlin-Dahlen), Wölfflin writes, "We see that the emphasis no longer lies on being but on becoming and change."\(^{29}\)

If Wölfflin means this distinction in the Platonic sense, I have said


\(^{26}\) "Rembrandt," p. 112.


above that it is doubtful whether Platonic "being" could be imitated in a painting. However, this is certainly not an universally accepted principle. I am not sure that Aristotle, in the Poetics, did not mean to suggest that a great tragedy, with a catharsis of pity and fear, would be an imitation of being. Wolfflin should have asked first, "What was Rembrandt's view of reality?"

If what we are really talking about is motion and rest, the Greeks sought motion. So did Michelangelo. Rembrandt was certainly a master of change, if that is becoming. Recession gives an impression of movement, but it is not recession alone. There is movement in the Descent from the Cross (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). There is the impression of movement in the Night Watch. There is the man rising from his chair in the Syndics (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). It is possible that Rembrandt is giving expression to one of the leading tenets of modern thought, the alien and incomprehensible character of the universe. It is possible, but not likely. Since I think it unlikely that he got such a notion from Bacon, could he have gotten it from Titian?

Rest is sometimes related to moderation and motion to daring. Valuable as moderation is traditionally held to be, there is a level at which it is a negative quality. "However ambiguous that daring, that mania which transcends the limits of moderation on the political plane alone, it comes into its own, or is in accordance with nature on the plane of thought," says Leo Strauss.30 Daring in thought, however, need not mean daring in expression. Often it does not, as Strauss, in his studies of writing and reading between the lines, has shown us. Daring, or frenzy, "mania" in Platonic thought, is supplemented by extreme care in construction of a dialogue. Rembrandt was not careless, but he was extremely bold in execution. He did not innovate "slowly, like time," as Bacon urged. His treatment of motion was bold innovation.31

Whether motion is closer to reality than rest, whether the tactile is closer to reality than the visible, a higher reality is still possible. The roles of faith and skepticism in the High Renaissance are moot, and there is a great deal to be said about them. I suppose that there is no question, however, about the piety of Giotto. Madonna and the Child Enthroned, for example, appears to be a genuinely devout picture. I take it as an expression of a belief in a spiritual reality. The central position of mother and child contributes to the expression of piety, but there is much more to give the impression of profound religious conviction that many pictures, even of biblical subjects, do not.

Apollonius of Tyana asked a group of Egyptians why Egyptian pictorial representations of the gods were so grotesque, representing irrational animals rather than gods. When asked what Greek statues were like,

---

30 The City and Man (Chicago, 1964), p. 299. But see Bacon's essay on boldness: "Boldness is ill in counsell, good in execution."

31 Cf. Rosenberg, Rembrandt, pp. 139, 146.
Apollonius replied in terms of reverence, the reaction which, he said, should be encouraged by the statue of a god. When then asked whether Phidias and Praxiteles and the others went up and saw the gods, so that they knew what the gods looked like, Apollonius replies that that was done by creative imagination. In other words, Apollonius, in defending Greek sculptural representations of the gods, abandoned the traditional view that art was imitation for a doctrine of critical imagination.\textsuperscript{32} We are not here concerned with the origin of this view or its relation to Aristotle's discussion of imagination in the \textit{De Anima}.\textsuperscript{33} A view that imagination is nobler than imitation because it presents what the artist does not see, a view similar to that which Philostratus attributes to Apollonius, seems essential to religious representation.

For Rembrandt, the question of the higher reality remains doubtful, though more can be said about the subject. Is not the compassion so evident in the face and hands of the father in the \textit{Return of the Prodigal Son} a clearly Christian piety? Certainly Rembrandt knew his Bible well. He painted religious pictures in Calvinist Holland, though Calvin opposed religious painting. The use of imagination to give a visible shape to God or, apparently, to Christ was unlawful. What was lawful was what was presented to the eye. In other words, imitation was lawful.\textsuperscript{34}

Rembrandt did not follow in Calvin's steps, at least in this respect. I am not interested in pointing out profanities and jokes in the treatment of biblical subjects, as Balet and one of the art historians he cites seem to be.\textsuperscript{35} I am seeking the human soul. The subject matter may tell us something of what the artist sees the soul to be, but the subject matter alone is hardly sufficient. In the \textit{quattrocento}'s representation of virtue and holiness, there is a serenity which strengthens the impression of the subject matter. In Rembrandt, as in Descartes, passions tend to replace virtues, but not all passions are equally pervasive. Burckhardt writes of Rubens: "Rubens is as rich in figures of evil as in figures of virtue. We see, generally in violent action, Discord, Envy, Hate, Deception, Rage, Ignorance, Slander and so on, while Rebellion appears as a many-headed hydra. Yet all these figures blend most harmoniously with the ladies and gentlemen of the court and the aristocracy.... they are, for the most part, introduced with unerring propriety."\textsuperscript{36} Panofsky says something similar about Titian: "Titian's world extended all the way from the idyllic to the tragic, from tenderness to brutality, from the seductive to the repulsive, from the sublime to the almost—though never quite—vulgar."\textsuperscript{37} Seldom is a contrast between great masters

\textsuperscript{32} Flavius Philostratus \textit{Life of Apollonius of Tyana} 6.19.
\textsuperscript{33} Bk. 3.3
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Institutes} 1. II.12.
so striking. "Along with Homer, the greatest story teller," Burckhardt says of Rubens.\(^{38}\) Rembrandt was not a storyteller. He had visions. His greatest vision was the vision of the good life. He denied himself—one is inclined to say, deliberately—Titian's range. Figures of evil were not his wont. They do exist. There is David in *David and Uriah* (Hermitage, Leningrad). The cruelty is unmistakable. Yet even *David and Saul* (The Hague) are lonely rather than evil, and arouse compassion. There are those who see prurience in Susannah, but you have to look very hard to find it. That is perhaps not all. He tried his hand at the unsympathetic passions, but they did not stay long with him.

There are two or four passions which dominate Rembrandt's painting, as far as I can see. I say two or four because it depends upon whether you identify love and compassion or curiosity and wonder. In Rembrandt, love and compassion frequently go together, as in *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, in the old men, of whom he was so fond, in the blind Homer (Mauritshaus, The Hague), in the pictures of Anna and Tobit from the Apocrypha. The compassion which is expressed by the father in the *Prodigal Son*, compassion for the prodigal, is shared by Rembrandt and surely by nearly everyone who looks at the painting. Compassion implies a certain inequality. Love, of course, does not.

The other passion is wonder, or, perhaps, curiosity.\(^{39}\) Rembrandt was like the father of Solomen's House, in Bacon's *New Atlantis*, who had "eyes as if he pitied man." There is compassion in the self-portraits, but it is mingled with happiness and thoughtfulness. Moreover, in the self-portraits, it is Rembrandt who shows compassion. He is not the object of compassion; if he were, he would be guilty of self-pity, which would be absurd. The problem of equality and inequality presents difficulties, so that perhaps we should unite love and compassion and speak of care. As noted above, the *Prodigal Son* shows the care of the father. The three men on the right are somewhat shaded. Whatever passions they do express, they do not seem to share the compassion of the father. The older brother, if it be he, has a red cloak and a beard like his father, but apparently not the noble care. The beards contrast with the shaven head of the prodigal. The upright posture contrasts with the humility of kneeling. The prodigal's face is not turned to the spectator. In this he resembles one of the figures, clearly the more distraught, in the *Parting of David and Jonathan* (also in the Hermitage, Leningrad). Love goes out to the penitent and the father. It goes out

---


\(^{39}\) Wonder is not a passion in Aristotle, at least not the wonder of the *Metaphysics*. It is partly painful, because it accompanies ignorance. Nevertheless, it leads to philosophy, obviously not by a quick conversion but rather through study and contemplation. It is, therefore, a habit. Wonder becomes, with Descartes, the first passion discussed in the *Traité des passions de l'âme* (Paris, 1952), pp. 723ff.
in one picture to the returning, in the other, to the parting. If your son ran away to the East Village, would you greet him with such sympathetic passion? The father could, and Rembrandt knew that this was no ordinary father.

Let us return to the Jewish Bride (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). We may here recall that many, perhaps most, of the titles are not Rembrandt’s. This fact is significant in the case of some pictures. Burckhardt says that “perhaps even the master’s last picture, called the Jewish Bride, until one has a better name for it,” could be called a genre picture. The love in the picture is tender. The touch of the groom’s hand is light and devoid of sensuality. The passions are intense but subdued. The spectator experiences wonder. The mystery is enhanced by the fact that happiness is mingled with shyness. Therefore one may feel compassion as well as love. Or consider the head of Christ (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Not inexplicably, Jesus is suffused with care. What of the visitor to the museum? Does he feel compassion for Jesus, or does he share Jesus’ compassion for humanity? Perhaps both, the former being the key to the latter.

There are numerous portraits of old and elderly people. There are two in the Hermitage. One is labeled Portrait of an Elderly Man and shows sorrow. The other is called Old Man in Red and shows overpowering care. The hands are heavily veined. The brow is wrinkled. Older and sadder than the Elderly Man, he wears a skull cap. He cares, and one cares for him. In London (National Gallery) there is an old man in an armchair. He is also careworn and tired. His head rests upon his hand. The hand calls witness to care, as it does in the Prodigal Son and the Jewish Bride. The man in the armchair seems to be more well-to-do than the figure in the portrait marked “probably” Rembrandt’s brother in The Hague (Mauritshaus). There is a similar careworn face, but the drabness of the cloak contrasts strangely with the bright red of the man in the armchair or the old man in red. Also in London, there is an Eighty-Three-Year-Old Woman. She is withered, and the picture is compassionate.

There are other instances: the pictures of Anna and Tobit, like Anna and the Blind Tobit in the National Gallery (London). There is Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Again, Jeremiah’s face is resting on one of his hands. In the Woman Taken in Adultery (National Gallery, London), the atmosphere is one of pity. The light is on the penitent woman and on what appears to be the vacated throne of the high priest. The judgment of Jesus takes place below the throne. One finds compassion where one would expect to find it, in the Good Samaritan (Louvre, Paris). The Apostle Paul (National Gallery, Washington) sits, again

---

40 “Rembrandt,” p. 122.
with his head supported by his hand, his pen idle in his right hand, his brow full of perplexity. He is singularly unlike the philosopher on the other side of the gallery.

Let me add one precaution. Care is a passion common enough in art, in tragedy, in many forms of expression. Rembrandt did not invent it. The way we feel towards these old men is not different from the way we feel towards Durer's portrait of his mother. The point I want to stress is twofold. First, there are, in the totality of Rembrandt paintings, a great many showing care, indicating that care was perhaps his primary concern. The second point is that the things Burckhardt notes that Rubens handled with such propriety—discord, envy, hate, and so on—are excluded. Is it true that Rembrandt did not know enough anatomy for certain subjects? That he had the wrong kind of models? But if a great artist eschews the expression of evil, is it not likely that he was saying, "This is not my way"? Something I think Burckhardt misses is the possibility that Rembrandt did certain things deliberately, and for philosophical reasons. If Rembrandt knew Rubens' Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus or the Rape of Hippodameia, he did not choose to imitate them. If rape is in the Italian classical tradition, a Dutchman has as much right to belong to the Italian classical tradition as a Fleming. But that was not his way. The prodigal son was a rash young man, but he was not a rapist. The woman taken in adultery broke one of the commandments. But that no one cast the stone shows that the sin was widespread enough.41

The kind of people for whom Rembrandt has compassion are people troubled by nature—old age, blindness—or by circumstance, like poverty. If Rembrandt painted for all time, as he must have known he did, he must have expected his profound human sympathy to touch the hearts of men for centuries. He may have known that Descartes wrote "qu'on se pourrait exempter d'une infinité de maladies tant du corps que de l'esprit, et même aussi peut-être de l'affaiblissement de la vieillesse, si on avait assez de connaissance de leurs causes et de tous les remèdes dont la nature nous a pourvus."42

Did Rembrandt see an end to the suffering he depicted, as Descartes did? Something took place between the High Renaissance and Rembrandt, something of a philosophical nature, but we must see more clearly what that was.

We must next address the question of whether we are dealing with wonder or curiosity. Rembrandt drew and painted the mysterious, the penumbral. He also drew and painted the commonplace. The Jewish Bride is an object of wonder, the Slaughtered Ox of curiosity. One should further make a distinction between two kinds of wonder, the wonder that is the end of art and the wonder that is the beginning of

41 John 8:3-12.
42 "Discours de la méthode," pt. 6, p. 169.
philosophy; the wonder of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and the wonder of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; the wonder that Horatio sees at the end of *Hamlet* when he refers to "woe or wonder" and the wonder that permeates the *Tempest*, the incipient or philosophical wonder. It is the philosophical wonder with which Rembrandt was concerned.

If we walk across the room from the Apostle Paul, we see the portrait labeled *The Philosopher*. He may not be a philosopher at all, but he seems to be wondering. The lips are slightly parted; the gaze is intent. He wears a blue chain, but the colors are far from garish or prodigal. His identity is apparently obscure. If this portrait was painted in 1650, Spinoza was eighteen, and Descartes was dying in Stockholm. One may wonder, however, at obvious perplexities without that wonder leading to philosophy.48

Burckhardt writes, "Sometimes he [Rembrandt] uses costumes of a past period to great advantage. The etchings throw more light on the matter of dress: either extremely rich and colorful, or rags. There are Turks, strange old men, Jews, cripples, beggars, draughtsmen absorbed in their work, finally thinkers and perhaps philosophers."44 It will suffice for the time being to accept Burckhardt's great authority for "perhaps philosophers." To Rembrandt's philosophical concern we must return.

There is also the *Anatomy Lesson of Professor Tulp*. It is said that the painter did not care for the picture. Among the students, some do not care for the lesson either. Yet at least three look at the professor and the corpse with intense curiosity. Would any contemporary professor ask for more? There is the *Syndics* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). Eyes are aglow with interest and concern. There is *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* (Metropolitan, New York). We have seen touch used to show compassion or care. Here we see contemplation through the fingers. Julius S. Held writes of Aristotle's hands, "One rests on Homer's head, while the other touches the chain... The philosopher looks neither at Homer nor at the chain. Yet we cannot help seeing that this melancholic countenance and far-away glance are in some way linked to both these objects."45 Held seems to be right that the countenance is melancholic. Aristotle wrote that all truly outstanding men, including philosophers, were melancholic. This remark was widely current in the Renaissance. It is cited by Cicero.46 Rembrandt could have known it and applied it to Aristotle himself. The notion of Aristotle as melancholy was widespread. One possible suggestion is that Aristotle was melancholy in contemplating the *Poetics* because he knew that he could not complete it.

43 Aristotle *Metaphysics* 982B.
44 "Rembrandt," p. 123.
46 Aristotle *Problemata* 30.1; Cicero *Tusc.* 1.33, 80: "Aristoteles quidem ait, omnes ingeniosos melancholices esse."
that he could not discuss comedy, as Plato had done in the *Symposium.* It is possible but highly speculative.

Homer is much like the Homer in the companion piece in the Mauritshaus. He is apparently blind, but, in the portrait in The Hague, the hands show Homer's wonder; the bust, of course, has no hands, but wonder is in the right hand of Aristotle, as well as in the eyes.

The mingling of care and contemplation is visible in *A Franciscan Monk* in the National Gallery (London). In one of several pictures of the Holy Family, this one in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, there is apparently no manger. The furnishings are Dutch. Joseph is dozing. The baby is sleeping. Mary is reading a book, which I suppose to be the Old Testament, lighted by the strange light which, as so often, seems to have no source. One cannot see the Virgin's face, but the light shines on her book. Wonder is again suggested. Because the setting is almost cavernous, the picture bears some relation to the pictures treating philosophers or savants which show light in a cavernous setting. We shall turn to those later. Wonder is hardly seen, but the setting implies wonder.

It is clear that any great work of art induces wonder, the wonder that is self-sufficient, the wonder in the *Poetics,* the wonder in Horatio's "woe or wonder." It is perhaps rarer for incipient wonder, the wonder of the *Metaphysics,* to be one of the leading sympathetic passions in an artist's imaginative presentation. Yet it so dominates the Rembrandt corpus as to eliminate any comparison with the cruelty of *David and Uriah,* the terror of *Belshazzar's Feast* (London, National Gallery), the loneliness of Saul (*Saul and David,* Mauritshuis), or anything else that might suggest a likeness to Rubens as Rubens appears in the passage I quoted from Burckhardt.

We must turn to sight and touch. It is obvious that every painter makes use of sight and touch in order to paint a painting. We are not here attributing a *Zeitgeist* to the seventeenth century, as is sometimes done in the alleged diversion from the "tactile." We are talking about touch, or the tactile, as Rembrandt understood it, as an instrument of understanding. In *Belshazzar's Feast,* the mysterious hand from the book of Daniel is reproduced and so are the Hebrew characters. The writing on the wall is a way of enhancing and understanding Belshazzar's terror. In *Lucrezia* (National Gallery, Washington) the right hand, holding the dagger, appears to be resolute, though the eyes are sad. Old men show tiredness, resting their faces on their hands, as in *Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem* or the *Old Man in an Armchair,* mentioned above. The light and tender touch of the groom in the *Jewish Bride* gives the viewer a sense of tenderness, and the shyness which shows not only in the face but also in the touch of the bride arouses compassion. The father lays his hands upon the *Prodigal Son.* Compassion is in the touch as in the sight.

If hands are instruments of compassion, hands are also instruments
of wonder or curiosity. If touch is conspicuous in the Anatomy Lesson, hands are equally conspicuous in Homer, where the blind poet extends his hands, as though he saw with them. And Aristotle lays his right hand on the bust of Homer, one sage contemplating another sage with his hands more clearly than with his eyes.

To make this a little clearer, let me refer to the classical belief that sight was the noblest of the senses and to the essay of Hans Jonas on "The Nobility of Sight," where the author gives some of the reasons for the move in classical antiquity from sight to philosophy. Yet Jonas also notes the nobility of touch: "An organ for real shape-feeling exists probably only in the human hand, and there is more than coincidence in the fact that in his hand, man possesses a tactile organ which can take over some of the distinctive achievements of his eye. There is a mental side to the highest performance of the tactile sense, or rather to the use that is made of its information, that transcends all mere sentience, and it is the mental use which brings touch within the dimension of the achievements of sight. . . . Blind men can 'see' by means of their hands, not because they are devoid of their eyes, but because they are beings endowed with the general faculty of 'vision' and only happen to be deprived of the primary organ of sight."48

Such a statement helps us to understand Rembrandt's portrait of Homer. To Aristotle, however, touch was the most pervasive of the senses and the most necessary. But to Aristotle neither the pervasive nor the necessary count for very much.49 Pervasiveness is clear. Even the blind mole has touch. Necessity is also clear. We touch food; we touch a member of the opposite sex. We need food and, while individuals may not need sexual intercourse, the human race does. But the unnecessary things, like thought, are, to the classics, higher.

I do not know that the first to repudiate this teaching was Machiavelli, but I do know that Machiavelli did repudiate it. "Men in general [universalis]," says Machiavelli, "judge more by the eyes than by the hands, because each judges by seeing, few by feeling. All see what you appear to be; few feel what you are."50 As Leo Strauss says, "in order not to be deceived, one must be close to the deceptive things and immune to false imaginations."51 There is also a flight from reason. Obviously visions are included among the deceptive things, and cannot be touched. So too is the Platonic eidos.

I cannot say how far Rembrandt followed Machiavelli or whether he had even heard of this passage. He was not particularly political in the narrower sense of the term, though he cared for the independence of

48 Ibid., pp. 141-42.
49 De anima 422B-28ff.
50 The Prince, ch. 18 (near the end).
51 Thoughts on Machiavelli (Glencoe, Ill., 1958), p. 203.
Holland. He was passionately concerned with how men should live. Certainly touch does not have for him the universal validity it has for Machiavelli as a source of understanding. I have mentioned the use of hands. Let me quote Burckhardt on Rembrandt's understanding of the human eye: "Rembrandt knew the effect of eyes as few others did. He knew how to make them shine under the shadow of a hat or a cap with strange fire." Whether Rembrandt followed Machiavelli regarding sight and touch, in some ways he was still a modern man. Certainly one of his greatest pictures is the Jewish Bride. Through touch it elevates the admittedly tender and admittedly restrained but still sexual eros far beyond what the classics would have done.

Before we can seek another universality, we must understand the diurnality of the supernal light. It is a strange light, as everyone knows, and its source is usually mysterious. There are a few paintings, drawings, and etchings where the light comes through the window, but here the mystery is retained because of the cavernous structure of the room or some other factor. "Rembrandt," says Burckhardt, "will probably remain the greatest painter of light of all time, because that is really all he wanted to be." Burckhardt adds, "We can see the light, but we only understand through the artist how beautiful and transfused with spirit it is."

Of course, Rembrandt had forerunners. One of them was Titian, but the light effects of Titian are quite different from those of Rembrandt. Radiances of divine light may appear in diagonal form, for instance in the three ceiling pieces at the Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. Panofsky points out that "from an iconographical point of view the series may be called a trilogy of homicide: homicide condemned by God (Cain), homicide prevented by God (Abraham), and homicide approved by God (David and Goliath)." Titian certainly influenced Rembrandt, but the light is not usually, in Rembrandt, presented in such diagonals.

This is not a study of influences, but a word must be said about Caravaggio. There is nothing new in this; it is widely accepted in the literature. It is not so much the light, however, as the substitution of the human for the transcendent. La Vocazione di San Matteo (The Calling of St. Matthew) is called by Guttoso "one of the dipintichiavi [key paintings] of the entire history of art." Here, Guttoso adds, "the choice of the extracts of life—a choice not casual—carries itself

52 He did paint at least two significant political paintings, The Conspiracy of Julius Civilis (in Stockholm), a tribute to liberty, derived from Tacitus, and The Concord of the State (in Rotterdam).
54 Ibid., p. 113.
55 Problems in Titian, pp. 33-34.
out through the constructive and significant office of the light.” I doubt that this is the usual use of light in Rembrandt.

The object of the strange light is varied. In the Woman Taken in Adultery, the light shines on the woman clad in white and on an empty throne (perhaps the high priest’s), for which I can find no biblical authorization. The light is not on Jesus. In the Prodigal Son, the light shines on the tattered clothing of the returned prodigal and on the hands and face of the compassionate father. In Jeremiah Lamenting the light streams beneath and behind the prophet. In St. Peter’s Denial (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), the light is on St. Peter’s robe and on the bodice of the maid of the high priest. In one picture of the Holy Family (Louvre), the light is on the Christ child but also on one part of the floor. In another picture of the Holy Family (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), the light is on the sleeping Christ child but also on Joseph’s turban, on large sections of the wall behind Joseph, and on the book Mary is reading. The light blends with the shadow, and the light may help us to understand each particular picture and what the artist chose to emphasize.

Not all shading is umbral; much of it is penumbral, enhancing the mysterious character of an object. Or, as Burckhardt says, “the most profound darkness is not quite black.” What is important here is that secular objects are sometimes penumbral and mysterious and sometimes lighted, suggesting enlightenment. Often the same objects are lighted in one picture, shaded in another. Often, in portraits, the face and hands best show the light. Not, however, in Homer (The Hague) or in Old Man in an Armchair (London), where the light seems to come from the robe. The play of light and shadow is lifelike enough. Rembrandt may have had no other design than to make use of the light to illuminate the simply human. Rembrandt never heard of the Enlightenment, and when he died (1669) the siècle des lumières had not yet arrived. Yet Descartes and even Bacon may be considered as belonging to the Enlightenment, if one does not insist on the French identification of light with a century. Bacon talked continuously about light: the dry light, the experiments with light in contradistinction to experiments with fruit, the merchants of light, and the lamps of the New Atlantis. Bacon, as d’Alembert said, “born in the depths of the most profound night, believed that philosophy was not yet.” Rembrandt need not have read Bacon. He need not have read Descartes, though he made a portrait of that philosopher. Scientific reasoning is known in Descartes’ Meditations as the “light of nature.” The metaphorical use of light is much older. But “let your light so shine before men” does not refer to human progress. Obviously the philosopher uses light figuratively, but the painter may

---

57 Mark 4:66.
58 “Rembrandt,” p. 113.
59 “Discours préliminaire de l’Encyclopédie.”
use it both figuratively and literally. There is a problem. Did what was happening in painting from Titian to Rembrandt have a relation with what was happening in philosophy from Machiavelli to Descartes?

It seems to me likely that the difference between the High Renaissance and Rembrandt can be traced to his agreement or at least coincidence with Bacon and Descartes, but it is extremely difficult to say exactly in what way that is so. It is true that Rembrandt was not a philosopher. He was not compelled to be consistent. Yet Panofsky can speak of a peintre philosophe or a peintre savant, naming several like Leonardo and Durer.60 He should, it seems to me, have named Rembrandt. Let us see first what Rembrandt did not accept. Much of the High Renaissance was skeptical. It can be seen in Raphael's paintings, in Leonardo's writings. But the classical-pagan element in the Christian tradition, the cosmos, Raphael certainly does not seem to have rejected at all. Orderliness is conspicuously present in the High Renaissance. Orderliness is united with skepticism. It is probably different with Rembrandt. His work does not demand the kind of belief in a well-ordered universe that Raphael's does.

Yet there is something in thought that Rembrandt did contribute. Long before Rembrandt, Hugh Latimer had said, it was chiefly through yeomen's sons that the Gospel was kept alive. The appeal to the lowly and the humble found its way into art. That is perhaps the link with Caravaggio. It is said that Caravaggio was influenced by St. Philip Neri. With Caravaggio as with Rembrandt it is the human side of the Bible and of hagiology rather than the transcendent which is predominant. Perhaps the resemblance ends here, except for the use of light, for in Caravaggio there is a strong element of violence, even brutality. There is little of this in Rembrandt. The compassion which the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, the woman taken in adultery command is Christian compassion, and, even if Rembrandt was a modern man, a man whom the stream of Baconian-Cartesian thought had somehow impressed, he was also a man thoroughly conversant with the Bible and a man who took the Bible seriously. Can one accept the Christian way of life and reject the Christian order? Certainly there is a kind of wisdom in Rembrandt, a wisdom which accepts Christian compassion, coupled with the possibility that the need for that compassion may some day be obviated.

What was said at the beginning of the discussion of the light is that Rembrandt made the supernal light diurnal. Burckhardt makes a great deal of fun of Rembrandt for choosing models as experiments in light and for having a hard time getting models, as they wanted to be something besides an instrument for illumination.61 Perhaps this is so. But it helps to indicate that light, both literally and metaphorically, is of supreme importance to Rembrandt. The light appears to be heavenly or divine

60 Problems in Titian, p. 88.
61 "Rembrandt," passim.
light. It has the mysterious quality of heavenly light. Its source is not usually shown, and its objects are not only varied but apparently indiscernible. It can shine from the body of a slaughtered ox. It seems to have divine origins, but it can be brought into the everyday. Essentially, its universality is a universality of this world.

When I first embarked upon the journey that took me outside my own field of political philosophy to the relations between the history of political philosophy and of art, I believed that I could establish Rembrandt's affinity with Descartes. I realize that that was an oversimplification. Richard Kennington writes, "In some part of the soul arises spontaneously the desire to esteem oneself highly." Yet why should one esteem oneself highly? Kennington quotes Cartesian passages about the "mastery and ownership of nature" and the "enjoyment of the fruits of earth in this life without pain." The highest passion or virtue in Descartes, générosité, is a form of self-love, but it is directed towards what Bacon calls the "relief of man's estate."

Despite the great differences, did Rembrandt here have something in common with Descartes? Let us look again at the play of light and shadow. The spirituality of light the Dutch painter found in Titian. So, I suppose, did Vermeer. The relation of light to realism he found in Caravaggio. And this would be true if Rembrant had never had Descartes sit for him. However, the works of Rembrandt show strong affinity with light, in the metaphorical as well as the literal sense. The mingling of light and shadow in the Jeremiah noted above is different from the sharp contrasts in the cavernous pictures. The Holy Family in Amsterdam is a cavernous picture. The light comes through the window, reminding us of the pictures of philosophers. Why did Rembrandt paint those dark backgrounds, light coming through the windows, and figures apparently enchanted by the light chiefly as representatives of philosophy? Dark backgrounds are not uncommon. It is the mingling of blackness, sunlight, and cavernous appearance which is special. It is this which belongs to philosophers, particularly old philosophers. Age may be an object of compassion. But one does not pity the old philosopher contemplating the truth. As I mentioned, pictures sometimes go by different titles. The cavernous picture of the savant or philosophe in the Louvre is labeled Le Philosophe. Rosenberg calls it Scholar in His Study. He gives the same title to a similar painting in London. There are numerous other illustrations of the search for truth and its relation to light. One is an etching, sometimes called Faust. This picture is not cavernous, but it has a dark background, a scholar rising to look at a

63 Ibid., p. 87.
64 Lugt, Inventaire, 1128.
65 Rembrandt, pp. 266-67.
disc, and light streaming through the window. That in these pictures the source of light is less mysterious than in others, seems to indicate a lumière naturelle.

In putting forth the radical view which I am about to express, I must gather such evidence as I can, including one picture that I have not seen. The characteristics of the London and Paris paintings are massive darkness relieved by the light shining from the window on the savant or philosopher, cavernous appearance, and the presence of articles identifiable in the dark with some difficulty, like the spiral staircase. There is a picture in Stockholm called A Scholar in a Lofty Room. According to a print, this picture is not cavernous, but it shares the other characteristics of the Paris and London paintings. There are some variations in other pictures. There is also an etching which I have seen in the Rembrandtshuis in Amsterdam, which purports to show St. Jerome in a Dark Chamber. Here too there are sunlight, spiral staircase, darkness. Generally speaking, this contrast of quasi-total darkness with a foreground or a corner of sunlight is reserved for pictures of philosophers or scholars. It is proper to suppose that there is a relation between contemplation and this peculiar confrontation of darkness and light.

In the famous myth of the cave in Plato’s Republic, the philosopher goes from the cave to the light and then is forced back into the cave to rule. He does not and he cannot take the light with him. The cave is the world, or, at least, the political world. It cannot be enlightened, for most men will see only shadows, and the darkness will never be dispelled. In the Enlightenment, however, as Allan Bloom says, the light is brought back into the cave of the world. This distinction is one of the most important distinctions between pre-modern and modern political thought. Whether Rembrandt knew of this distinction, I do not know. Yet out of his work, I believe, could be created a new myth. The darkness of man’s world remains, but one may suppose that, as progress continues, the sunlight would illuminate not only the philosopher but also the fruits of his work, and that the sorrow and care, so clearly seen by Rembrandt, would some day be dispelled, like the darkness of the cavernous chamber.

There is a certain relation with Descartes, though it would be hard to establish an affinity. To Descartes, the leading passion, and also the highest virtue, is générosité. As Kennington points out, générosité is a kind of self-esteem. Descartes himself points out the similarity of generosity to the Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity, adding that it (générosité) is “comme la clef de toutes les autres vertus et une remède

---

66 A. Bredius, The Paintings of Rembrandt (New York, 1942), no. 430.
67 Hind, op. cit., 201. See also 202.
68 See also Bredius, Rembrandt, nos. 423-24.
70 “Descartes,” p. 117.
The generous man is capable of great things. Is Rembrandt, or Rembrandt’s savant in the cavernous study, Descartes’ man of générosité? To answer that, one would have to know whether the myth which Rembrandt created to replace Plato’s myth of the cave presents a kind of self-esteem. We can hardly know. All we can say is that Rembrandt accepted something from the tradition of Bacon and Descartes which is associated with what we now call Enlightenment—that with him as with them, the goal of contemplation became practical.
NIETZSCHE AS COSMOLOGIST:
THE IDEA OF THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE AS A
COSMOLOGICAL DOCTRINE AND SOME ASPECTS OF ITS
RELATION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE WILL TO POWER

JERRY H. COMBEE

In the last speech of part 2 of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Zarathustra tells his friends that there is still something more he could tell them. Evidently Zarathustra's final teaching has not been revealed; perhaps it is that teaching is incomplete by itself. In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche reports that when he "found Zarathustra III" he was "finished," and he also says that "the fundamental conception of this work (Zarathustra)" is "the idea of the eternal recurrence." The first speech of part 3 of Thus Spoke Zarathustra contains what appears to be a dramatic re-creation on a much grander scale of the occasion of Nietzsche's finding of the idea of the eternal recurrence as described in Ecce Homo; in the second speech of part 3, Zarathustra first reveals his teaching on the eternal recurrence, though not to his friends. Relying on this passage in Zarathustra and certain others in other works, the essence of the idea of the eternal recurrence may be distilled into the following proposition: all things that can occur have occurred and will recur in the same succession an infinite number of times.


2 Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1966), p. 295 ("Thus Spoke Zarathustra, A Book for All and None," 1); hereafter cited as Ecce Homo. It has been argued that this doctrine was really not new with Nietzsche; see, e.g., Karl Lowith, Meaning in History (Chicago, 1949), "Nietzsche's Revival of the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence." Such arguments are well considered and refuted in Joan Stambaugh, Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return (Baltimore, 1972), passim.

3 Nietzsche found the idea while on a walk when he stopped before a powerful pyramidal rock.

4 He reveals it to a group of sailors, whom he calls bold searchers and researchers; some sailors were earlier depicted as shooters of rabbits. What he reveals is a vision and riddle in which he tells a dwarf, who is the spirit of gravity, about the eternal recurrence. See Zarathustra, pp. 241-42, 267-70 (pt. 2, aph. 18; pt. 3, aph. 2).


6 As Arthur C. Danto has emphasized, the doctrine is not that very similar things recur, but rather that the exact same things recur. See his Nietzsche as Philosopher (New York, 1965), p. 204.
Nietzsche as Cosmologist

I

Nietzsche had an intention, which he never fulfilled, to write a book entitled *The Eternal Recurrence*. In a note of this title, made in connection with his plan to write a book entitled *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche presents the following outline:

*The Eternal Recurrence. A Prophecy*

1. Presentation of the doctrine and its *theoretical* presuppositions and consequences.
2. Proof of the doctrine.
3. Probable consequences of its being *believed* (it makes everything *break open*).
   a) Means of enduring of it;
   b) Means of disposing of it.
4. Its place in history as a *mid-point*.
   Period of greatest danger.
   Foundation of an oligarchy *above* peoples and their interests: education to a universally human politics.
   Counterpart of Jesuitism.⁷

This not unenigmatic outline does make one thing clear: The idea of the eternal recurrence is not just a moral doctrine, but a cosmological one as well.⁸

As a moral doctrine, the eternal recurrence is bound up with Nietzsche's project, or hope, for the Superman. By calling the idea of eternal recurrence "moral," I mean first of all that Nietzsche presents the eternal recurrence as something to be willed:⁹ will for all things that can happen to have happened and to happen again an infinite number of times. Phrased imperatively, the doctrine amounts to a test of the degree of one's affirmation of what is. One who wills eternal recurrence has not sought to escape immanent being via otherworldly visions. By calling the idea of eternal recurrence "moral," I mean, second of all, that Nietzsche presents the eternal recurrence as something to be believed. As a belief, it bestows cosmic significance upon the particular of the present. In order to act in a manner consistent with belief in eternal recurrence, it would be imperative to so "act (or so be) that you would

---

⁷ Will to Power, pp. 544-55.

⁸ This distinction, although not in these exact terms, is common in secondary treatments of the doctrine. See, e.g., Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher, p. 203, also contrasting pp. 203-9 with pp. 209-13; Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (Princeton, N.J., 1950), contrasting pp. 279-87 to pp. 287-88; and Lowith, Meaning in History, p. 222.

⁹ The adjective "moral" is hence justified if only because Nietzsche himself says that "willing as such" should be included "within the sphere of morals." See Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1966), p. 27 (pt. 1, aph. 19); hereafter cited as Beyond Good and Evil.
be willing to act exactly the same way (or be exactly the same thing) an infinite number of times over.”

This differs from willing eternal recurrence, for it involves acting with recognition of eternal recurrence as a fact beyond one’s will. As belief, the idea of eternal recurrence gives the lie to any notion of the world having a purpose, meaning, or final state of any kind; consequently, the responsibility for whatever meaning the universe is to have must be borne by man, whose every act has occurred and will occur again an infinite number of times. As belief, then, the moral aspect of the idea verges on the notion of the eternal recurrence as a cosmological doctrine.

By calling the idea of the eternal recurrence a cosmological doctrine, I mean, first of all, that the idea is a theoretical idea; it is one which has theoretical presuppositions and consequences, an idea for which one can at least try to give proofs—an idea, therefore, which in some sense can be spoken of as an allegedly true description of objective reality. This much is clear from the outline. But by “cosmology” something more has traditionally been meant: an account of all things as one, an

10 Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher, p. 212. Kaufmann (Nietzsche, pp. 283-84) objects to this understanding of the doctrine, but Danto appears to reflect accurately the passage he quotes from a Nietzschean fragment. Kaufmann seems correct, however, in urging the misleading character of a comparison of Nietzsche’s doctrine to Kant’s categorical imperative, whatever the superficial formal resemblance may be.

11 Lowith (Meaning in History, p. 222) argues that wherever Nietzsche “tries to develop his doctrine rationally, it breaks asunder in two irreconcilable pieces: in a presentation of eternal recurrence as an objective fact, to be demonstrated by physics and mathematics, and in a quite different presentation of it as a subjective hypothesis, to be demonstrated by its ethical consequences.” If there is a contradiction and if the above analysis of the ideal of eternal recurrence as a moral doctrine is correct, then there is also a contradiction within the doctrine as moral, i.e., between the willing of eternal recurrence and the belief in it. It is not clear, however, that there necessarily is a contradiction. Willing eternal recurrence need not entail the necessity for it happening, nor need it entail the opposite; “willing” could mean simply “wishing.”

12 Danto argues (Nietzsche as Philosopher, pp. 204-5) that if the doctrine “is to receive evidential support, it must be through some evidential support of premises which then entail the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence.” It is true that Nietzsche’s proof for the doctrine is deductive. However, only some of the premises are established inductively. Others are established a priori, i.e., through avoiding the law of noncontradiction; see, e.g., point (3) of the summary on p. 45 below.

13 The adjective “theoretical” as used here is synonymous with “scientific” in the analyses of the doctrine in Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher, p. 203, and Kaufmann, Nietzsche, pp. 287-88. “Theoretical” is perhaps preferable if it enables one not to miss that Nietzsche was not simply appealing to the established science of physics in his day. It would be much more accurate to view his effort in this regard as an immanent critique of the existing science of physics; involved in his doctrine, for example, was a rejection of the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the mechanistic conception.
account of the intrinsic order which makes the world a whole. As the cosmological aspect of the doctrine is explored, it will become clear that this description, too, fits the idea of the eternal recurrence.14

II

In the first speech of part 3 of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, an hour again15 speaks to Zarathustra, asserting that Zarathustra is now going his way to “greatness.” Aphorism 212 of Beyond Good and Evil deals with the concept of greatness. The greatness of philosophers has consisted in their creation of new horizons for man; in this task, they have taken their bearings by the concept of greatness on the horizon of their times, defining the new in opposition to the old. Nietzsche gives a brief statement of the new idea of greatness as a philosopher of the future would define it; it is a statement which takes its bearings in part by opposing the herd morality of modern egalitarianism, and it is almost a recapitulation of the speech of the hour on greatness:16

He shall be greatest who can be loneliest, the most concealed, the most deviant, the human beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, he that is overrich in will. Precisely this shall be called greatness: being capable of being as manifold as whole, as ample as full.17

This emphasis on manifoldness, wholeness, amleness, and fullness is in opposition to the specialization or compartmentalization which Nietzsche believed characterizes modern times.18 One can see an obvious manifestation of this trend in the modern theoretical sciences; a sign of it has been the decline of cosmological speculation. This decline is directly related to the rise of the most spectacularly successful part of the new science which came into being in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—modern physics. The relation might be seen as having three aspects: according to one view of modern physics:19

1. The founders of modern physics insisted that the certainty attained in mathematics be sought in physics. It was to be sought by making physics mathematical. The goal of certainty and the consequent

14 In part, this becomes clear by seeing the relation between the idea of the eternal recurrence and the idea of the will to power as an alternative ontological conception of the mechanistic-materialist. Danto (Nietzsche as Philosopher, ch. 8) explicates the will to power doctrine as ontology; it is strange that he neglects to relate the idea of the eternal recurrence to it.
15 An hour also speaks to Zarathustra in the last speech of pt. 2.
16 To see the aphorism as a recapitulation of the speech of the hour on greatness, it is necessary to read more of the aphorism than is quoted here.
17 Beyond Good and Evil, p. 139 (aph. 212).
18 Ibid., p. 137 (aph. 212).
making of physics seemed to require, at least, the abandonment of previous teleological conceptions of the world. It was felt that such conceptions in large part accounted for the failure of traditional philosophy to attain certain knowledge and to combine knowledge patterned after mathematics with a teleological conception. In place of a teleological conception, a mechanistic conception was substituted—a view of the universe as material atoms in aimless motion transferred by collision with one another and describable in terms of inexorable laws capable of mathematical statement. Now this mechanistic conception is indeed a cosmological conception, but it tended to become unquestioned, as the demand for certainty and hence a mathematical approach achieved the status of a methodological axiom.

2. Mathematics, it was thought, owed its certainty to being a human construct: i.e., we can know what we make. But this meant that mathematical physics was fundamentally a human construct and owed its certainty precisely to that fact. Consequently, knowledge, in the traditional sense, of a correspondence between the subject (or mind) and the object (or reality) could no longer be the goal of physics; this conclusion also followed from the fact that the mechanistic conception eliminated all mind from the world and hence made any notion of a correspondence or even interaction between mind and reality incomprehensible. The goal substituted for knowledge of nature was mastery of nature. The achievement of this goal, in turn, demanded experiments in which the theoretical constructs could be tested; in experimental situations the senses could be used to determine whether one could indeed control nature to achieve the results that had been hypothesized by taking one's bearings from the theoretical constructs. Since the whole cannot be "sensed" in this way, cosmology, even in some redefinition as mastery of the whole, ceases to be a meaningful goal of the scientific endeavor, or at least becomes a not entirely respectable one methodologically.

3. A true cosmology must be capable of comprehending human beings, which after all are part of the whole in some sense. Could the mechanistic conception be extended to man? In light of certain attempts made in that direction, it seems safe to say that the answer is no, unless it be bought at the price of a monstrous distortion of the phenomena. But this meant that science could not explain its own doings—not even its passion for mastery, much less any sort of "knowledge."

If this depiction of modern science as anti-cosmological is accurate, then it should not seem strange to try to view Nietzsche as in some way

---

20 See Strauss, Natural Right and History, pp. 171-72.

21 In ancient times, of course, very similar conceptions had been developed by the Democritean-Epicurean schools. What made the modern conception unique and productive of vastly different consequences was the combination of a mechanistic conception with mathematics as the pattern for knowledge. See Strauss, Natural Right and History, pp. 169-72.
the bad cosmological conscience of modern science,\textsuperscript{22} nor should it surprise us to hear the hour of the first speech of part 3 of \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra} say to Zarathustra:

One must learn to \textit{look away} from oneself in order to see \textit{much}: this hardness is necessary to every climber of mountains.

But the lover of knowledge who is obtrusive with his eyes—how could he see more of all things than their foregrounds? But you, O Zarathustra, wanted to see the ground and background of all things; hence, you must climb over yourself—upward, up until even your stars are \textit{under you}\.\textsuperscript{23}

Zarathustra soon reveals that such hard maxims as the above are his own, i.e., Nietzsche's. It \textit{is} perhaps surprising to hear a psychologist\textsuperscript{24} say such things; but Nietzsche was a peculiar kind of psychologist and would have himself been guilty of his charge against modernity of specialization\textsuperscript{25} if he had not been more than a psychologist.

Nietzsche as psychologist explains all psychic phenomena in terms of the will to power; he reduces all psychic phenomena to the self, the self to the body, and the body to the will to power. It is that last reduction which enables him to avoid the crudities to which materialism usually succumbs when trying to account for the human things; i.e., his "materialism" is peculiarly "spiritual." In the final analysis, however, Nietzsche is not a materialist at all. He regarded materialistic atomism as "one of the best refuted theories there are," maintaining that "Boscovich has taught us to abjure the belief in the last part of the earth that 'stood fast'—the belief in 'substances,' in 'matter,' in the earth-residuum and particle-atom."\textsuperscript{26}

Following Boscovich, Nietzsche wants to try to see all reality as consisting not of material atoms but of centers of force.\textsuperscript{27} He goes beyond Boscovich in that he tries to understand all force (all energy, all motion) as will-force, as will to power,\textsuperscript{28} which is an alternative mode of causal explanation to the mechanistic mode of what has been called "billiard-ball" causality.\textsuperscript{29} Under such an interpretation, the world would consist of nothing but will to power,\textsuperscript{30} which is not to say, however, that it consists of nothing but spirit.\textsuperscript{31} If Nietzsche could carry out this program, then he would be able to succeed where the mechanistic conception had failed. The human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate (if these words

\textsuperscript{22} See \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, par. 1, sentence 2.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Zarathustra}, p. 265 (pt. 3, aph. 1).

\textsuperscript{24} See \textit{Ecce Homo}, pp. 266-69 ("Why I Write Such Good Books," 5, 6).

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, p. 137 (aph. 212).

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 19-20 (aph. 12).

\textsuperscript{27} See aphs. 12 and 36 of \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 47-48 (aph. 36).

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 29, 48 (aphs. 21, 36).

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 48 (aph. 36); \textit{Will to Power}, p. 550.

\textsuperscript{31} See aph. 12 of \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}.
still have any meaning), could be explained in the same terms. What is most important is that now science could explain its own doings, its drive for mastery of nature, in the same terms as those in which nature would be explained—namely, will to power—for Nietzsche had already attempted to show that the doctrine of the will to power can explain or comprehend all science or philosophy.\footnote{See ibid.}

Nietzsche accepted provisionally that the mechanistic conception is capable of explaining or interpreting sense experience; he thought, however, that the will-to-power conception might prove equally successful in this regard were it tried.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 19-20, 30, 47-48 (aphs. 12, 30, 36).} But ultimately he could not take this ability to explain or interpret sense experience as the final test, for materialistic atomism is more consistent with sense experience, which does indeed tell us that there is "substance" or "matter". solidity or impenetrability, whereas Nietzsche's conception denies just this.\footnote{See ibid., aphs. 12, 14.} Consequently, it was necessary for Nietzsche to make a dialectical attack on the mechanistic conception by showing that it is self-contradictory.

According to one view, the mechanistic conception was adopted by modern physics because it was thought to be non-teleological. Nietzsche argued that the mechanistic conception does have the consequence of leading to a final state—the goal of an equilibrium that involves duration, immutability, the once-and-for-all. He seems to have had in mind the second law of thermodynamics, which asserts that the universe is moving inexorably towards a state of "heat death" in which all differences of temperature will be leveled and cosmic energy, though indestructible and quantitatively the same, will be uniformly dissipated throughout space.\footnote{Reliance for this statement of the law is placed upon Milic Capek. \textit{Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics} (Princeton, N.J., 1961). p. 128. Capek argues (p. 129) that since this law is only a statistical law, given an infinity of chances a \textit{decrease} of entropy is not impossible. But does not the once-for-all character of the law contradict Capek's argument?} Nietzsche accepts as decisive against the mechanistic conception the fact that such a final state has never been reached: "That a state of equilibrium is never reached proves that it is not possible."\footnote{Will to Power, pp. 547-49.} Nietzsche's argument on this point is not altogether clear, but perhaps it can be expressed and elaborated as follows: he maintained (as did mechanistic physics) that time is infinite, that "the concept 'temporal infinity of the world in the past'" is not self-contradictory, and that its opposite cannot be maintained without contradiction.\footnote{Ibid., p. 548.} This means that there have already been an infinite number of chances for a final state to be reached. If a final state is possible, it has a probability greater than zero. Given an
infinite number of chances, any event whose probability is greater than zero, no matter how slightly greater, must occur and indeed must occur an infinite number of times.\textsuperscript{38} Since a final state has not occurred, it is not possible—i.e., its probability is not greater than zero.

If a final state is not possible, then there are only two possibilities left: either the world has the requisite energy, motion, and force for infinite novelty or it does not, in which case one is left with a concept of infinite repetitiveness or circularity—i.e., eternal recurrence.\textsuperscript{39} Nietzsche claims that "the law of the conservation of energy demands eternal recurrence."\textsuperscript{40} He maintains that the very concept of force is incompatible with the idea of infinite force: "the world, as force, may not be thought of as unlimited, for it cannot be so thought of."\textsuperscript{41} It follows that infinite novelty is not possible; by process of elimination, eternal recurrence is proved. And the mechanistic conception, in that it entails the notion of final state, is proved false. The superiority of the will-to-power conception, at least when it asserts that reality consists of force and only of force, is established because it is consistent with the idea of the eternal recurrence.

All this may be summarized as follows:\textsuperscript{42}

1. The world is a certain definite quantity of force and contains a certain definite number of centers of force. (It is necessary to see the world as consisting of force or centers of force, which Nietzsche understands as will to power, instead of matter or material atoms; the former is consistent with eternal recurrence; the latter is not because it, as part of the mechanistic conception, has the consequence of a final state which is not possible. It is necessary to see the world as consisting of a certain definite quantity of force or containing a certain definite number of centers of force because the idea of infinite force is a contradiction.)

2. There are a calculable number of possible combinations, configurations, or arrangements of the force in the universe. (Again, this follows from the concept of infinite force being a contradiction.)

3. Time is infinite. (This is maintained on the grounds that it and its corollary, the temporal infinity of the world in the past, are not contradictions, and that the opposite cannot be maintained without contradiction.)

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Will to Power}, pp. 546-47.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 547.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.. Perhaps Nietzsche's argument is that when we speak of force, power, or energy we do so meaningfully only when we can specify force \textit{for what}, power or energy \textit{to do what}, meaning a definite and therefore finite thing: thus the idea of infinite force, it might be argued, is contradictory.
\textsuperscript{42} See \textit{Will to Power}, pp. 548-49.
4. Every possible combination must at some time or another be realized, and be realized an infinite number of times. (Given an infinite number of chances, any event whose probability is greater than zero, however slightly greater, must occur at some point, and indeed must occur an infinite number of times.)

5. Between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to occur. (Between every combination and its recurrence is an infinite number of time instants or changes, and therefore every combination whose probability is greater than zero must occur in the interval.)

6. Each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series. (This is true because if the exact combination of forces in the universe is known for any one moment, in principle the next and all future and all past combinations can be predicted.43)

7. Therefore there is a circular movement of absolutely identical series that has repeated itself an infinite number of times and will repeat itself an infinite number of times.

IV

According to Nietzsche, "The two most extreme modes of thought—the mechanistic and the Platonic—are reconciled in the eternal recurrence: both are ideals."44 The idea of the eternal recurrence is mechanistic in the sense that it, and the requisite will-to-power conception, more adequately meet the ideal standard of no teleology which the founders of modern science laid down and for the sake of which, in one view, the mechanistic conception was adopted. Also, the idea of the eternal recurrence does not deny the place of certainty in science. Out of the hat of blind chance, as it were, Nietzsche has pulled the utmost necessity—everything that happens happens of necessity, and happens of necessity an infinite number of times. Thus Zarathustra affirms in the fourth speech of Part III of Thus Spoke Zarathustra: "'By chance'—that is the most ancient nobility of the world, and this I restored to all things: I delivered them from their bondage under Purpose."45 A place for certainty—indeed, for mathematical certainty—could be retained in science by way of probability and its laws. The idea of the eternal recurrence is Platonic in the sense that it presupposes or entails the most radical denial of the senses, which testify to the reality of "substance" and "matter."46 It is also Platonic in the sense that it is an account of the intrinsic order which makes the world

43 See ibid., p. 547.
44 Ibid., p. 546.
45 Zarathustra, p. 278 (pt. 3, aph. 4).
46 See Beyond Good and Evil, p. 22 (aph. 14).
Nietzsche finds such an intrinsic order by assuming the rule of what one would have thought to be the very principle of disorder—chance. If the world is as it is by chance, then it must be as Nietzsche says it is by necessity. Nietzsche achieves, it might seem, what was for Plato unattainable but nevertheless an ideal, a comprehension of the whole, by assuming as the principle of the whole that which would appear to be the most hostile to a rational account of the whole.
ARNOLD TOYNBEE: NATIONALISM AS A "FALSE GOD"

MARVIN PERRY

Nationalism was a principal force shaping European history from the French Revolution to World War II, and it has spread to the non-Western world with predictably disastrous results. In A Study of History and other works Arnold Toynbee devotes considerable attention to the phenomenon of nationalism. In this discussion we shall focus on Toynbee's conception of modern Western nationalism as a "false god" and his estimation of its future course.

I

Toynbee defines nationalism as "a spirit which makes people feel and act and think about a part of any given society as though it were the whole of that society."1 By designating people as "insiders" and "outsiders," states Toynbee, nationalism represents a regression to tribalism; by compelling man to worship his local community, it is the "political counterpart of polytheistic idolatry—the monstrous 'association' of false gods with God."2 As God is One, so too is there a unity of humanity: this vision held by the prophets of all higher religions is at the center of Toynbee's thought. By corrupting this vision of universalism and by causing men to hanker after false gods, says Toynbee, nationalism has perverted man's spiritual development; by provoking fratricidal warfare among people that share a common civilization, it has hampered man's social progress. After studying all of man's civilizations beginning with ancient Sumeria, Toynbee concludes that nationalism has been responsible for "the death of no less than fourteen civilizations for certain, and perhaps of no less than sixteen, out of the twenty-one civilizations that had come into existence."3

Humanity's finest achievement, says Toynbee, has been the inspiration of the prophets of higher religions. Adherence to prophetic ideals enables man to overcome his natural self-centeredness and to uplift himself morally. Historically, the most formidable obstacle to the realization of these ideals has been the lower religion of nationalism: its narrow conception of humanity has set man against man in unholy warfare, and its deification of the parochial community has turned men away from the spiritual presence behind the universe. If twentieth-century

1 Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History (New York, 1962-64), I, p. 9. All references are to the paperback edition.
2 Ibid., IV, pp. 407-8.
3 Ibid., IX, p. 442.
man does not extricate himself from a tribal, neo-pagan, morally repellent nationalism, concludes Toynbee, it is doubtful that he will survive.

Modern nationalism sprouted on soil fertilized by the wreckage of Latin Christendom during the era of Renaissance and Reformation. The Renaissance revival of classical culture, one of whose elements was a fierce devotion to the city-state, "raised Western nationalism to a new pitch of intensity."4 Modern man has remained infatuated with the Greeks and Romans, says Toynbee, because the ancients taught him how to infuse citizens with patriotic fervor, organize armies, and build a powerful state. For Toynbee the Greek devotion to his city-state was a form of idolatry; the Greek citizen drew the morally sinful and intellectually arrogant conclusion that his polis, a man-made institution, deserved worship. Since God alone is worthy of worship, this act of hybris had to end in disaster. Idolization of the local community, a false god, raised the psychological temperature of city-state warfare and culminated in the ruinous Peloponnesian War that precipitated the breakdown of Hellenic civilization.

This pagan deification of the parochial community was imitated by the citizens of Florence, Milan, Genoa, and the other Italian cities, who allowed loyalty to their local city to predominate over allegiance to Respublica Christiana. Machiavelli gave intellectual expression and moral approval to this new outlook. From Machiavelli, says Toynbee, was derived the principle that

if the worship of a parochial community constituted the whole duty of its subjects, then any community which was the object of such worship must be a moral absolute—a moral universe in itself which could be subject to no transcendent moral law in its physical collisions with other representatives of its own species.5

In absorbing and surpassing Hellenic parochialism, the modern West has behaved according to the Machiavellian precept that the state is a non-moral institution. The revival of Hellenism, says Toynbee, ministered to Western man's "insatiable lust for power which was the inevitable ruling passion in hearts that had relapsed from Christianity into a pagan worship of a Collective Humanity," and Western man pushed "this resuscitated political ideology of Hellenism to extremes that had never been approached by Hellenes themselves in their self-immolation on the altar of an idolized Leviathan."6 In elevating the state over Christian morality, the West expressed a defiance of its Christian heritage while conveniently ignoring the principal lesson of Hellenism, namely, "that this inordinate divisive mindedness was the chief cause of Hellenic civilization's downfall."7 And the same fate

6 A Study of History, IX, p. 3.
7 Change and Habit, p. 109.
will befall the modern world, insists Toynbee, if it fails to "exorcise this
demon resolutely."8

A revived Hellenism was one fuel that has fed the furnace of
nationalism. Modern Western nationalism, asserts Toynbee, has also been
overheated by Christian fanaticism. The terrible ferocity of the wars of
religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries alienated humane
people from Christianity. The devotion withdrawn from Christianity was
transferred to technology and secular ideologies—nationalism, individual-
ism, communism. Of the three post-Christian ideologies,

Nationalism is the most obsessive. At any rate, Nationalism usually prevails over
the others when these come into conflict with it. The devotion that has been
transferred from Christianity to Nationalism has detached itself from what is
good in Christianity but has clung to what is evil in it. It has repudiated the
ideals of love, self-sacrifice, and concern for mankind as a whole that are
Christianity's virtues; it has retained the fanaticism that is the common vice of the
religions of the Judaic family, and this sour wine, poured into Nationalism's
constricting bottle, has fermented there with explosive effects.9

Toynbee regards modern nationalism as a lower religion that worships
collective human power instead of a higher spiritual reality. That man
has been willing to sacrifice himself for this modern cult is an indication
that nationalism "was in truth a religious revival in the spiritual vacuum
left in human hearts by the evaporation of a higher religion."10 As a
neo-pagan religion that mistakenly worships Leviathan instead of the
One God, modern nationalism has undermined Western man's moral and
spiritual development; it has led him away from Christianity, which
Toynbee regards as the soul of Western civilization.

Because modern nationalism has been power-driven by a fanaticism
inherited from Christianity, it "is tribalism with a difference. The
primitive religion has been deformed into an enormity."11 Convinced
that they were in possession of the true faith, religious fanatics during
the wars of religion sought to impose spiritual unity by force; regarding
the nation as the highest good, nationalist fanatics have sought to impose
national unity by persecuting minorities and regimenting the population.
The fusion of a revived Hellenic parochialism with Christian fanaticism
aggravated fratricidal warfare and gave Western parochial sovereign
states the capacity "to ruin their common civilization by ruining one
another."12 Nationalism had transformed the human community into
a god, warfare into a holy crusade, atrocities into pagan sacrifices,
traitors into heretics, citizens into true believers.

Toynbee believes that religion is a perennial need of man, a component

9 Change and Habit, p. 110.
11 Ibid., V, p. 161.
12 Ibid., IX, p. 443.
of human nature. Through religion man tries to comprehend and reconcile himself to the awesome reality of life and death. A human being, whether he admits to it or not, insists Toynbee, cannot live without some form of religion. When he rejects a higher religion that stresses selflessness, love, and universalism, he will only embrace a lower religion that heightens his innate egocentricity. Thus Toynbee interprets modern nationalism as a lower religion, for it selfishly worships the collective human power of an expanded tribe at the expense of the rest of humanity. Whereas a higher religion emancipates man from his innate self-centeredness, nationalism intensifies the brutal, irrational, and selfish side of human nature. Nationalism and higher religions are competing faiths. Christianity has sought to free man from the self-destructive idolization of human power; by deifying the state, a human creation, nationalism has enmeshed man in sin. Christianity aspires to a brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, while nationalism represents the “lamentable victory of parochialism over ecumenical.”13 Although the spiritual message of higher religions is infinitely superior to the sin and idolatry evoked by nationalism, the power nationalism exercises over man has not been broken by the higher religions. In 1971 Toynbee concluded:

in my belief, the worship of the collective human power of a fraction of the human race at the expense of the rest of the human race—nationalism, in other words—is the real religion today of a majority of people. Nationalism has been superseded only nominally by the ‘higher’ religions, each of which aims at converting the whole of mankind to its own prescription for putting the individual into touch with ultimate reality. Whether we profess to be followers of one of the historic higher religions or not, almost all of us are nationalist under the skin.14

Nationalism has surpassed in power and influence both individualism and communism, the other post-Christian ideologies. And in common with these other ideologies it has been a poor substitute for Christianity, for it is “incapable of helping human beings to preserve their personalities,”15 which is a basic need of all men. Both competitive individualism and ant-like collectivism deprive the individual of his dignity by regarding him as an object. So too does tribal-minded nationalism.

Democracy is still another force that has increased the intensity of modern nationalism. At first glance, observes Toynbee, it appears that democracy and nationalism stand in opposition. In essence democracy represents universalism, not parochialism, the rights of man, not the special destiny of a people. Democracy is characterized by a spirit of fraternity which knows no bounds.... The natural field of action for Democracy is a field that embraces all Mankind; and it is on this range that its spiritual potency is beneficent. But when this potent spiritual driving-force is

13 Ibid.
diverted into the mechanism of a parochial state, it not only ceases to be beneficent but becomes malignantly subversive. . . . Democracy imprisoned in parochial states degenerates into Nationalism.16

By turning democracy into an agent of nationalism the parochial state system poisoned the political life of the modern world.

It is in the area of warfare that democracy has caused the most havoc. With the breakup of the religious unity of Western Christendom in the sixteenth century, war became infused with a sectarian religious fanaticism that magnified "the evil of War into an unprecedented enormity."17

By the eighteenth century there had been achieved a divorce between war and religion the immediate effect of which was to reduce the intensity of warfare to the lowest level ever attained in Western history. Warfare in the eighteenth century was relatively civilized—"temperate and moderate,"18 said Gibbon. Wars were waged from limited aims, casualty rates were low, and the civilian population remained uninvolved. The ferocity and mass emotions that had characterized the wars of religion ended, as warfare was transformed into the "sport of kings," a game played for limited stakes and devoid of passion. Armies were not recruited by conscription and did not live off the countryside; peace terms were not crushing and countries were not wiped off the map. Princes were forced to wage moderate warfare, for there existed no great passion that could rally the nation to a total effort. In the eighteenth century many people regarded war in much the same manner as they did slavery—an ancient curse that was rapidly dissipating. It was the spiritual power of democracy that restored to war the ferocity displayed during the Wars of Religion. Democracy transformed the "sport of kings" into la guerre totale. The limited warfare of the eighteenth century turned out to be only a brief interlude between two bouts of fanaticism, the earlier wars of religion and the later wars of nationality. Once the people had become a "nation in arms" fighting for national survival, warfare could no longer remain temperate and indecisive. During the French Revolution war became an ideological struggle, and the flames of hatred fanned by mass emotions could not be extinguished by the rational and universal spirit of the philosophes.

Compounding the danger of democratic warfare was the emergence of militarism, which made war into a cult, something desirable in itself and worthy of human worship. In the years from von Moltke to Hitler, states Toynbee, young men embraced the military virtues because they had been starved of other kinds of spiritual bread. . . . These latter-day Western worshippers of the "military virtues" are the epigoni of generations which were nurtured in the "Christian virtues"; and they began to be starved of the traditional Christian

---

16 _A Study of History_, IV, pp. 162-63.
17 Ibid., p. 143.
18 Quoted in _Experiences_, p. 203.
morality, upon which their forebears had been brought up, when, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the unbelief of a cultivated minority in the Western World began to infect the less sophisticated masses.\textsuperscript{19}

Rejecting the creed of Isaiah and Jesus for a barbaric cult of the sword—could there be a more depressing example of spiritual backsliding?

Toynbee has called attention to a crucial development in the evolution of modern nationalism: in the process of feeding off democracy, nationalism destroys democracy's essential ideals. In the first half of the nineteenth century many liberal intellectuals identified nationalism with liberty. Liberal nationalists believed that a unified state free of foreign subjugation was in harmony with the principle of natural rights and insisted that love of country led to a love of humanity. "With all my ardent love of my nation," stated Frantisek Palacky, the Czech patriot, "I always esteem more highly the good of mankind and of learning than the good of the nation."\textsuperscript{20} Addressing the Slavs, Giuseppe Mazzini declared: "We who have ourselves arisen in the name of our national right, believe in your right, and offer to help you to win it. But the purpose of our mission is the permanent and peaceful organization of Europe."\textsuperscript{21} Liberal nationalism stressed individual freedom, humanitarianism, and cosmopolitanism; it sought to extend constitutionalism and the open society throughout Europe. But as nationalism gained in intensity, it soon clashed with liberal ideals, and few liberals hesitated to sacrifice liberal principles for nationalist goals.

During and after the revolutions of 1848 liberals demonstrated an increasing fascination for nationalism and the power-state and a decreasing commitment to liberalism. The link between liberalism and nationalism was completely severed in the last decades of the nineteenth century by integral nationalists who not only glorified state power but also insisted that liberalism was an obstacle to the achievement of nationalist ends. In the early part of the century liberals had stressed the close connection between nationalism and individual freedom, considering the nationalist goal of liberation and unity to be in accord with the rights of man. In the last part of the century, integral nationalists attacked liberalism as the principal menace to national greatness, removing, in the process, all restraints imposed by liberal principles that sanctified human dignity and exalted reason. As nationalism became increasingly dissociated from liberalism, it began to embrace mythical modes of thought. No longer committed to liberal goals of freedom and reason, nationalists became entranced with the cult of ancestors, the cult of native soil, the cult of heroes, the cult of the leader, the cult of force, the cult of the state. By the end of the nineteenth century a narrowminded,

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{A Study of History}, IV, pp. 644-45.
\textsuperscript{20} Quoted in Hans Kohn, \textit{Pan-Slavism} (South Bend, Ind., 1953), pp. 66-67.
\textsuperscript{21} Quoted in \textit{ibid.}, p. 44.
openly bellicose, and absurdly racialist chauvinism stalked the European continent, attracting both the elite and the masses. Some thinkers recognized the danger: an astute German philosopher wrote in 1902 that supersensitive nationalism has become a very serious danger for all peoples of Europe; because of it they are in danger of losing the feeling for human values. Nationalism, pushed to an extreme, just like sectarianism, destroys moral and even logical consciousness. Just and unjust, good and bad, true and false, lose their meaning; what men condemn as disgraceful and inhuman when done by others, they recommend in the same breath to their own peoples as something to be done to a foreign country.22

World War I and Nazism were the terrible fulfillment of these dangerous trends in European nationalism. Liberalism had nurtured nationalism and had contributed to its success, but the momentum of nationalism could not be contained by liberal principles.

Another force that has contributed to nationalism's "demonic dynamism"23 is industrialism. Like democracy, industrialism is ecumenical in spirit, for it "will not work freely or effectively or beneficently except in so far as the world is organized into one single field of economic activity."24 But when industrialism made its appearance, the Western world was already broken up into a multitude of petty politico-economic units that erected barriers to economic integration. "Caught in the trammels of the Parochial State,"25 industrialism, like democracy, has been unable to fulfill its essential nature. Instead of building a world order, industrialism, like democracy, has fortified the parochial state which seeks to promote its own economic interests at the expense of the rest of humanity.

Toynbee views the Industrial Revolution that began in the West during the eighteenth century as the "unmistakable counterpart of the economic revolution that had overtaken the Hellenic World in the sixth century B.C."26 At that time the Greek city-states were becoming economically interdependent while remaining politically divided. This incongruity created intolerable tensions that triggered endemic interstate warfare. With the Peloponnesian War the Hellenic world entered its time of troubles; it never survived them, despite the reprieve granted it by the Roman Empire. The Western world has also become economically interdependent, but, remaining politically fractured, it has waged ferocious fratricidal warfare.

The parochial-minded national state, created in a different social context, was not prepared to cope with the ecumenical forces of democracy

---

23 Change and Habit, p. 109.
24 A Study of Hab, IV, p. 169.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., IX, p. 444.
and industrialism. The attempt to confine these new and dynamic forces within the framework of the national state, concludes Toynbee, resulted in the totalitarian state. Only a modification of parochial sovereignty could have dealt creatively with industrialism and democracy; perverted by their imprisonment within the national state, these two ecumenical forces contributed to the power of totalitarian nationalism.

The dangerous tendencies in modern Western nationalism culminated in National Socialism, a repudiation of "the moral and religious essence of Western Christian culture." In rejecting Christianity for their human god, Hitler, and his goddess, the German state, the German people had adopted a perverse neopagan religion. Toynbee believes that Nazism was not a peculiarly German phenomenon but a German expression of the crisis in Western civilization—the rejection of Christianity and the pursuit of false gods. In the late seventeenth century, enthusiasm for religion began to wane in a Western world disillusioned and disheartened by generations of religious conflicts. The decline of Christianity created a discomfiting spiritual vacuum which was filled by post-Christian ideologies, of which nationalism was the most powerful and Nazism the most malignant expression. The essential reason why Nazism won over the youth with astonishing ease was not force or propaganda but latent idealism searching for a cause. The spiritual vacuum that emerged with the decline of religion could not be filled by liberalism, for its stress upon self-interest, utilitarianism, and commercialism "seemed to be extinguishing the vision without which Society cannot endure." To many young people National Socialism was a new faith. Toynbee wrote in 1933:

The truth seems to be that the enlightened skepticism of the eighteenth-century elite... had produced an immense and intolerable spiritual void—with the consequence that any new spiritual force, however primitive and crude, could count upon a welcome in the house thus swept and garnished. Viewed with a sympathetic eye, the neopagan movements might be regarded as a pathetic effort on the part of twentieth-century Western Youth, to begin again, from the bottom, the ascent of the spiritual ladder, by setting its foot clumsily on the lowest rung. The tragedy of the Western World, in this age, was its division against itself through a conflict between an ancestral Church which had lost its hold over the masses, and a generation which had gone a-whoring after false gods under the delusion that it was recapturing its lost spiritual birthright.

The experience of National Socialism contains lessons for the West in particular and mankind in general. The Nazi era demonstrated anew the precariousness of civilization, the fragility of reason, and the immutability of original sin. The glorification of Teutonic ancestors and the racial delusions about the "blond beast" indicated that a Germany disillusioned

27 Change and Habit, p. 18.
28 A Study of History, VIIb, p. 520.
29 Survey of International Affairs, 1933, pp. 133-34.
with Western civilization was retreating into the darkness of the primeval forest from which the German tribes had come. The conversion of the barbarians to civilization had not rooted out barbarism from the West; in the form of National Socialism, "barbarism was taking its revenge by finding its way into the souls of its Western conquerors."30 That a Western people could fall so low indicates that the West had not risen so high—that it is continually menaced by a morally perverse barbarism that it harbors in its own breast. For Toynbee, Nazism represented "one phase of the struggle between the spirit of Western Christendom and the spirit of European barbarism which Christianity had sometimes charmed and had thereby partially tamed, but had never wholly exorcised."31 When the West abandoned its devotion to God, who is love, it became capable of every moral enormity. This, for Toynbee, is the true lesson of Hitlerism. The Nazi experience reinforced his belief that civilizations are still experiments in which man seeks to rise above the level of the primitive, and that these experiments often end in failure.

The moral catastrophe of Nazism, insists Toynbee, demonstrates anew the limitations of reason and the inadequacy of a nonreligious conception of liberty. The secular values of the Enlightenment, unbattressed by Christian spirituality, are insufficient to restrain man's basest impulses. When the West discarded Christian dogma in reaction to the savagery of the wars of religion, it also dispensed with Christian love, a loss unforgivable and unendurable. After the Nazi experience it has become "impossible to retain Modern Western Man's latter-day dogmatic belief in the inevitable progress of a secularized Western Civilization and in the self-perfectibility of a graceless Human Nature."32

While Nazism emerged within Europe among a people that had been Christians for more than a thousand years, it was as much a human problem as it was a purely German or Western one, for there lurks a vein of Original Sin in human nature everywhere to which Hitlerism makes a strong appeal. The moral is that civilization is nowhere and never secure. It is a thin cake of custom overlying a molten mass of wickedness that is always boiling up for an opportunity to burst out. Civilization cannot ever be taken for granted. Its price is eternal vigilance and ceaseless spiritual effort.33

II

The institution of the national state and the ideology of nationalism have spread from their birthplace in Western Europe throughout the globe, blazing "a trail of persecution, eviction, and massacre."34 National-

30 A Study of History, IX, p. 450.
ism, which historically "has been by far the commonest cause of mortality among civilizations," has become the religion of most of humanity in the contemporary world. While the problems that threaten human survival can only be solved by a global effort, the number of parochial sovereign states has increased, and the temperature of nationalism remains high. In a world that desperately requires global thinking, says Toynbee, we continue to worship a fraction of mankind at the expense of the human race. The lower religion of nationalism continues to be "the prime conditioner which enables the 'establishment' to turn men into soldiers and train them to kill their fellow human beings without personal animosity but also without compunction." War is an institutionalized form of violence that did not exist prior to the appearance of states; wars are waged by people who have achieved a large degree of political organization. Regarding war as "a parasite on the institution of local sovereignty," Toynbee insists that only by destroying the host can we eliminate the parasite. The need for a world-state has never been more pressing than today, for the persistence of nationalism in an age of global pollution, world-wide overpopulation, and atomic weapons is, for Toynbee, nothing less than "a death-wish."

Toynbee believes that a political system's merit depends on its ability "to rid human social life of the violence that is the price of anarchy." Judged by this standard, world-states have been considerably more successful than city-states or national states; they have succeeded in providing a large measure of domestic order and unity while engaging in relatively few wars with states beyond their borders. For example, in the two centuries after 27 B.C. "the Roman Empire endured not more than half-a-dozen years of internal warfare.... War seemed to have been banished from the center of civilization to its periphery and to have been transformed into police-operations against barbarians beyond the pale; and even on the single frontier where, along the Euphrates the Roman Empire marched with another organized state, the total number of war-years during these two centuries was hardly more than fifteen." While political divisiveness is as old as the first hunting bands, world-mindedness is a relatively recent phenomenon; it made its appearance only after civilization had already been established. World-states were formed when one state delivered a knockout blow to its competitors. But the age-old habit of divisiveness inherited from the early days of prehistory persisted long after the establishment of the world-state. Often, defeated peoples rejected the peace and stability imposed by the world-

35 A Study of History, IX, p. 442.
36 Surviving the Future, p. 116.
37 Experiences, p. 84.
38 Change and Habit, p. 112.
state and rose in nationalist revolt. In our own day, the subordination of the universal elements of communism to the demands of Russian nationalism is another indication of the greater appeal of parochial-mindedness than of world-mindedness. Yet world-states have not been without their appeal, as evidenced by the loyalty Rome received from the different peoples that composed the empire.

While tribalism is a deeply ingrained and formidable habit, it is still a product of culture and not an ineradicable trait of human nature. Toynbee feels that man can be taught to regard a world-state as a superior form of political organization and that he can learn to subordinate parochial sentiments to a world-wide loyalty. Since 1500 certain developments have served to push mankind into the direction of a single society. Ironically, the West, which has been notoriously plagued with political parochialism, has been the agent in this movement towards ecumenicalism. The spread of Western technology, institutions, and ideas throughout the globe is bringing the world together in a common culture. Spearheading the global diffusion of Western civilization is a world-wide intelligentsia comparable to the hellenizers, who served as the medium for the cultural unification of the ancient Mediterranean world. Perhaps the modern intelligentsia, many of whom already think and behave as world citizens, will serve as "the social and cultural cement for the holding together of a world-state."41

Another promising sign for future world unity is the growing economic and political consolidation of western Europe since World War II. This radically new departure is "a good augury, considering how deeply ingrained is nationalism in the tradition of Western European peoples. . . . If the Western European peoples can unite with each other voluntarily, as they are now demonstrating they can, a voluntary unity of mankind, on a global scale, is not a utopian objective."42

The future world-state will not be greatly centralized, predicts Toynbee, for the peoples of the world will only reluctantly support world government. Moreover, in an era of atomic weapons, recalcitrant national states cannot be coerced into accepting world authority. While states will not put themselves out of business, they might be persuaded to surrender certain prerogatives for the sake of self-preservation. Realizing that the alternative may be self-destruction, mankind will choose a form of world government, but unlike the world-states of the past, which were unitary states imposed by force, the coming world-state will be a voluntary federal union. But to be effective it must have the power to prevent local units, driven by parochial loyalties, from engaging in war. Toynbee believes that the proper end of statesmanship is the "harmony between 'national' and 'universal,'" but if this harmony is to endure and succeed, "the authority

41 Change and Habit, p. 155.
of the 'universal,' and the loyalty paid to it, must be paramount.'

Consistent with his interpretation of history, Toynbee insists that the coming world polity requires a religious base, for only by expressing devotion to God can man overcome the limitations of parochialism and live in brotherly unity. Western technology is an inadequate scaffolding upon which to construct world unity; so too are the post-Christian ideologies, which offer man a limited conception of humanity and an inadequate understanding of the purpose of life. Only by turning once again to the true prophets of universalism—Isaiah, Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi—can man fashion an enduring world order. Without this spiritual infusion mankind might not succeed in making the leap from tribalism to ecumenicalism, from idol worship to spirituality.

For a true and lasting peace, a religious revolution is, I am sure, a sine qua non. By religion, as I hope I have made clear, I mean the overcoming of self-centeredness, in both individuals and communities, by getting into a communion with the spiritual presence behind the universe and by bringing our wills into harmony with it. I think this is the key to peace, but we are very far from picking up this key and using it, and until we do, the survival of the human race will continue to be in doubt.

If the future world-state manages to eliminate the war and class conflict that have traditionally wrecked civilizations and succeeds in coping with pollution and overpopulation, the next problem confronting mankind would be the role of leisure in a mechanized world. Toynbee fears that leisure lavished on a proletarian majority will lead to cultural deterioration. What irony it would be if the reward for the elimination of war and class conflict turns out to be the mass of mankind wallowing in Plato's "Commonwealth of Swine." To prevent mechanization from crushing the spirit, the society of the future must create an educational system that stimulates aesthetic and intellectual growth. But Toynbee also recognizes that only a relatively few people possess the intrinsic gifts required for art and thought. Consequently, if man is to use leisure "in the service of some high calling to which all men would find themselves able to devote their lives, then Mankind must turn again for salvation to Religion," which provides "an infinite spiritual scope for Everyman."

III

Toynbee's study of history leads him to conclude that "our greatest need is for spiritual improvement in ourselves and in our relations with our fellow human beings." For man to achieve this spiritual end he must "break out of the prison of his inborn self-centeredness and enter

---

43 A Study of History, XII, p. 619.
45 A Study of History, IX, p. 618.
46 Surviving the Future, p. 47.
into communion...with some reality that is greater, more important, more valuable, and more lasting than the individual himself." The way to accomplish this is to turn once again to humanity's greatest teachers, the prophets of higher religions, who saw God as One and mankind as Unity. By recognizing that God alone is the supreme value in the universe, man liberates himself. He owes no ultimate loyalty to a state or ideology, for they are only man-made idols and God has sternly warned against the worship of false gods. Man's ultimate concern is moral growth not power, fame, or riches, which are also man-made idols. By focusing on God, Toynbee maintains, man becomes a free moral agent, for no human person, no human institution, no human tradition can claim his soul. He also overcomes self-centeredness and is thus enabled to treat his fellows with respect and even love. It is through a spiritual communion with God that man becomes conscious of his own humanity. Because the higher religions address themselves to all mankind, not just to a part of it, they enable man to "overcome the political barriers between parochial states and even the cultural barriers between parochial civilizations." Without expressing allegiance to God, men will not be able to dispense with their tribal loyalties and dwell together in peace.

A strong element of humanism pervades Toynbee's religious orientation. He does not celebrate the irrational, but insists that reason, unilluminated by a prophetic concern for humanity, will distort human values with computer-like indifference. He does not negate this world for some unknown after-life or cling dogmatically to the doctrines of a sectarian church, nor does he retreat into fruitless despair. He believes that the ideals of the City of God do benefit the City of Man. By setting our foot on the spiritual path, he states, we can make ourselves better and improve our relations with each other. And for Toynbee the City of Man is a true cosmopolis; it embraces all mankind, not just Christians or Westerners.

Toynbee's humanism is clearly discerned in his attitude towards technology, which he regards as still another false god, another example of man idolizing his own power, another grievous substitute for God, another "shocking vent for Original Sin and a serious threat to Man's welfare and perhaps even to his existence." In the fifth century B.C., Toynbee reminds us, Socrates, finding the theories of the natural philosophers inadequate for dealing with human problems, turned away from a study of nature to the study of man and society. Toynbee calls for a similar reorientation. He yearns for a modern Socrates who would convince man to channel his energies into developing his moral and spiritual potential, who would instruct man how to utilize technology so that it does not warp human souls. The techniques and tools created

47 Ibid., p. 46.
by man's intellect can be enormously effective in bettering the human condition, but "we have not the spiritual power or understanding or goodness to use these tools right... We need another Socrates." Both technology and nationalism, in contrast to higher religions, care nothing for the individual human personality—man's dignity and his need for personal consolation and spiritual uplifting. For Toynbee, man becomes fully human when he sees the spiritual significance of life and the moral potential of his own personality. Technology must promote this end, he says, if we are to avoid either Huxley's Brave New World or the destruction of the planet. And, it should be added, Toynbee warned of the dangers of technology long before it became fashionable to do so.

Only through spirituality and universalism can mankind preserve itself and the individual fulfill himself—this is the essence of Toynbee's thought. His was one response to the crisis of Western civilization that defined the first half of the twentieth century. Having lost confidence in reason and committed no longer to freedom, some thinkers found a new faith in fascism. Rejecting liberal society and entranced by a utopian vision of the "end of days," others converted to communism. Shattered by the senseless slaughter of World War I, Toynbee became disillusioned with a Western civilization that had repudiated Christianity for technology and ideologies. Because liberalism had dispensed with Christian love and the Christian precept that man's liberty came from God's grace, it was too selfish and competitive to preserve the sacrosanctity of the personality; because the rationalism of the Enlightenment was spiritually empty, it could not contain the brutal and irrational side of human nature that constitutes man's original sin. Holding that the liberal-rationalist tradition alone was inadequate to protect man from Leviathan or to provide for his spiritual needs, Toynbee has urged mankind to listen again to its religious prophets, who have taught the presence of God, the dignity of man, the unity of humanity, and communion with Absolute Reality as the true purpose of life. If we reject the prophetic ideals of higher religions, he warns, we shall continue to pursue false gods whose power to wreck civilization has been demonstrated. Only through the higher religions can mankind find the spiritual strength to counter the "demonic dynamism" of nationalism, the most dangerous of these idols.

Toynbee has been accused of returning to myths, escaping into illusion, and underestimating the narrowmindedness of religion-dominated societies. Moreover, his critics say, Toynbee's hostility to all forms of parochialism blinds him to differences between varieties of nationalism. For example, to call Zionists disciples of the Nazis seems simplistic, if not grotesque. To some critics, Toynbee's religious orientation is fanciful, foolish, dangerous, and hateful. Nevertheless, he cannot easily be dismissed.

---

50 *Surviving the Future*, p. 43.
After the experience of the twentieth century even the staunchest defenders of the Enlightenment tradition have reservations regarding the capacity of reason to heal humanity's ills, and only the naïve interpret history as linear progress. Nor are we so certain about the efficacy of unrestricted technological growth, and the "noble" principle of self-determination of peoples continues to cause much mischief. Toynbee compels us to confront the irrational, to find a constructive outlet for its creative energies, and to cope with its destructive capacities. He forces the rationalist, the technologist, and the nationalist to ponder the implications of their beliefs, and he reminds a secularly oriented humanity that religious sentiments have not been eradicated but have been rerouted into ideologies, of which nationalism is the most pernicious.
Philosophy of Science
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

Editorial Board:
Book Reviews: James Van Evra.
Assistant Editors: Patricia Ann Fleming and Paul C.L. Tang.
Vol. 41

March, 1974

CONTENTS*

The logico-linguistic mind-brain problem and a proposed step toward its solution, HERBERT G. BOERNERT / An attempt to add a little direction to "the problem of the direction of time," JOHN EARMAN / A pragmatic analysis of idealization in physics, WILLIAM F. BARR / Toward a theory of event identity, A. J. STEINER / Discussion: Spielman and Lewis on inductive immodesty, DAVID LEWIS / Discussion: Models, theories and Kant, A. V. BUSHKOVITCH / Book Reviews / Membership List.

*The contents of Philosophy of Science are indexed in Science Citation Index, ABC Pol Sci, Language and Language Behavior Abstracts, and The Philosopher's Index.

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE is published quarterly by the Philosophy of Science Association, 18 Morrill Hall, Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823. Membership dues are $10.00 a year and include subscription to the journal. Subscription price for non-members is $15.00 U.S.A. ($16.00 non-U.S.A.). Single numbers $5.00. Subscription inquiries should be directed to the Managing Editor.

If you are interested in the study of politics and government, you are invited to join
THE SOUTHERN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

membership includes

THE JOURNAL OF POLITICS

Is it possible for a forward-thinking political scientist to miss the best thought by the best minds in his profession? Not if he reads THE JOURNAL OF POLITICS, a quarterly devoted to enriching and advancing the knowledge of politics. Inside THE JOURNAL's pages all methods, positions, conceptualizations and techniques are expounded by authors who know their subjects and who back their ideas with careful research and positive scholasticism. There is no bias in THE JOURNAL—toward theory, American politics, or anything else. It is an open JOURNAL. Missing it is missing an adventure into the character of political variety.

Upon receipt of this form you will begin a one year's membership in The Southern Political Science Association, including a subscription to THE JOURNAL OF POLITICS.

- Regular . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $ 8 00
- Student . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $ 5 00
- Institution . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $10 00
- Foreign Postage (additional) . . . . . . . $ 1 25

Please make check or money order payable to THE JOURNAL OF POLITICS. Send with name and address to:

THE JOURNAL OF POLITICS
University of Florida
Peabody Hall
Gainesville FL 32611
U.S.A.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Subjective Politics of Power:</td>
<td>Hans Jonas</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dilemma of Postsuperego Man</td>
<td>David Gutmann</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regicide and Revolution</td>
<td>Michael Walzer</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Does a Crisis Mean Today?</td>
<td>Jürgen Habermas</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimation Problems in Late Capitalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivors and the Will to Bear Witness</td>
<td>Terrence Des Pres</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory and Experiment in Psychology</td>
<td>Sigmund Koch</td>
<td>691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Paradox of System Builders:</td>
<td>Robert Lamb</td>
<td>708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plato and Hobbes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Next Stage of History?</td>
<td>Timothy A. Tilton</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Daniel Bell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents and Indices for Volume 40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After p. 766
The Journal of Philosophy

Subscriptions at $10.00/year; $7.00 to students
$12.00 to libraries and institutions

The trustees and editors of the Journal of Philosophy announce an increase in subscription prices, effective in January of 1974. Individual subscriptions will be $10.00/year; library subscriptions will be $12.00/year; student subscriptions will remain as they are: $7.00/year. An additional $1.00/year is charged for postage, to subscribers outside the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Back issues, singly or in volumes, from the founding of the Journal in 1904, are available from this office.

720 PHILOSOPHY HALL, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NYC 10027