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HOMERIC HONOR AND THUCYDIDEAN NECESSITY

THOMAS S. ENGEMAN

Commentators on Thucydides generally agree on at least one point: he is exceedingly reluctant to reveal his own thoughts concerning the meaning of the events which he narrates.\(^1\) Thucydides' reticence has naturally led to confusion in understanding his true intention. For example, was Thucydides a supporter of Athenian imperialism, as is often argued, or did he believe that imperial ambition was inevitably prone to a lack of moderation in success and therefore to ultimate disaster? Looking at the Melian dialogue-Sicilian expedition sequence, it is frequently noted that the skillful juxtaposition of the hubristic speeches of the Athenians at Melos and their defeat in Sicily is designed to teach sensible men that ambition and success breed hope, daring, and defeat. As H. D. F. Kitto judged the Athenians' fate in Sicily, "their success had betrayed them."\(^2\)

However, this conclusion seems to be only an inference based upon the dramatic association of the two events. Thucydides himself ascribes the Athenian defeat in Sicily to the absence of an outstanding statesman who could command the steady adherence of a majority of the citizens to a consistent foreign policy (II.65.10-11). (What is more important, this judgment is borne out by a study of the events which caused the Athenian defeat.) If Pericles had lived, the expedition would not have been undertaken; or if Alcibiades had been trusted by the Athenion demos, Sicily could have been conquered. Thucydides thus indicates that politics depends upon individuals and conditions, not upon the designs of gods or upon fate.\(^3\)

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2 Kitto, Poiesis, p. 336; Strauss, City and Man, p. 153.

3 This is not to deny that there is a connection between the Melian dialogue and the Sicilian defeat. That connection can be in the inability of the Athenians at Melos to understand the essential piety of politics. After Pericles' death the Athenian leaders with the best natures, i.e., those capable of rule (Alcibiades), depreciated the pious understanding of right in favor of the natural understanding of right. Therefore they lost the trust of the demos, who, when sorely troubled by the magnitude and danger of the Sicilian expedition, naturally turned to the pious Nicias, who was from their point of view perfectly trustworthy. Nicias, of course, was unable to execute the plan conceived by the daring Alcibiades. See Strauss, City and Man, pp. 195-209.
The elusiveness of Thucydides can be traced to his singular manner of writing. Kitto has characterized Thucydides as someone who "could say things without saying them." Thucydides (or any one of his characters) can make judgments or speeches which are contradicted by the course of events. A careful reader must compare the events which Thucydides relates with the speeches which he (or any character) makes about those events in order to reveal the deepest reflections of the writer. As Thomas Hobbes says in the "Address to the Readers" of his translation of Thucydides, "But these conjectures [about the meaning of a history] cannot often be certain, unless withal so evident, that the narration itself may be sufficient to suggest the same also to the reader."

The Archeology

The Corinthians at the first Congress at Lacedaemon contrast the Athenian manner and the Spartan manner. Where the Athenians are innovative, swift to desire and attempt, public-spirited, bold, hopeful, and lovers of motion, the Spartans are traditional, slow, self-concerned, cautious, doubtful, and lovers of rest (I.70; cf. VIII.96.5). The Corinthians are describing the characters of the dramatic protagonists Sparta and Athens, whose struggle forms the axis of Thucydides' history. Their struggle, according to Thucydides, is of the greatest importance because these two cities stand at the end of a long period of progress which has made them truly significant. The Greeks, led by Athens and Sparta, now possess a vast quantity of wealth and power that has been stored up during the prior age of progress. The age of progress is also, in one sense, an age of rest; it provides the material needed to wage a "total" war lasting for decades and involving everyone (I.1.1-2, 23.1-4, II.82.1-2, 83.1, 85-87, II.38.2, 62.1). The greatest rest and progress issue in the greatest, not to say the universal, motion of the Peloponnesian War. The war between Athens and her allies and Sparta and her allies is a civil war, a stasis in

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4 Kitto, Poiesis, p. 302.
5 The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1843), Vol. 8, p. viii. Is Hobbes correct in assuming that Thucydides was perfectly free to choose, arrange, or perhaps invent events, i.e., to say anything he wished through his narrative? Is there not a "historiographic" necessity, the accidental occurrence of events, which limits Thucydides' "logographic" potential? Or, to put the question in a more revealing way, to what extent was Thucydides a scientific historian who wanted only to describe accurately the events that occurred, or to what extent was he concerned with discovering the causes of the events? If, as indeed seems to be the case, he was concerned with the latter, wouldn't that task force him, when necessary, to compromise the simply scientific recitation of the literal and unrevealing facts?
Greece which leads to the “universal” stasis in the individual Greek cities, and the rise of the barbarian powers (III.83.1, II.100.1-2). Thucydides shows the growth, the fruition, and the decline of “Greekness.”

The proof of the superiority and significance of modern, or Greek, times and therefore the inferiority and insignificance of ancient times is given in the very beginning of Thucydides’ account, the archeology (I.1-23). In the archeology Thucydides characterizes the ancient (or barbarian) style of life as fearful, poor, confused, weak, and lacking in daring while inferring that it was harsh, brutish, and cruel. Ancient times were marked by an almost universal fear; fear of new migrations, of attacks by pirates, and of depredations by one’s neighbors (I.2-5). In ancient times men were forced to go armed, to plant only as much as could immediately be used, and to move or flee at a moment’s notice.8

The weakness of those times is also found in the unreliability of the ancient poets and storytellers, and therefore in ancient wisdom as such.9 Thucydides directly questions whether Homer, as compared with himself, can be a sufficient witness for anyone (I.9.4, 10.3). Like all poets, Homer magnifies and adorns the events which he recounts; in particular, he adorns the Trojan War (I.10.3). Part of his adornment is his beautification of men’s motives. According to the poets, Agamemnon was able to command the Trojan expedition because the kings of Greece felt bound by the oath of Tyndareus to obey him (I.9.1). However, Thucydides’ unadorned version, which he has learned from the most reliable sources, demonstrates that Agamemnon’s wealth, and hence his power, compelled the loyalty of the other kings. To paraphrase Thucydides, “men are moved not so much by favor as by fear” (I.9.3, 22.4).

The archeology is Thucydides’ defense of the modern age and modern wisdom. As such, it reveals three fundamental elements of his intention. His method is to relate the simple truth of events in order that the universal significance of the Peloponnesian War may be revealed in the events themselves. Previous “wise men” had not proceeded as honestly and truthfully. The storytellers, viz., Herodotus, have concocted fables to supplement the literal truth of their account in order to say something universal, while the poets have magnified and adorned the literal in order to make it seem worthy of receiving universal acclaim (I.10.3, 21.1).10

Thucydides also claims that because the ancient times were poor and weak, man’s political potential (and therefore the true logos of man) had not yet fully developed. The wealth of modern times, a product of the progress of the arts, gives man the equipment to develop his full political

7 Plato, Republic, 469b3-471cl.
10 Benardete, Herodotean Inquiries, p. 30.
and spiritual potential. The warfare of the premier "modern" Greek regimes, Sparta and Athens, fully reveals man's political possibilities, while the understanding of that war and its causes represents the pinnacle of human knowledge. Thus, Thucydides establishes his wisdom and his renown on the "ashes of the past," the destruction of Homer's heroic age. That destruction is necessary because men are traditional beings: they will, when at rest and freed from the rigors of warfare, regard ancient events as more worthy of admiration than recent ones (I.21.2). As the descendants of the Achaean heroes would have revered some ancient struggle—perhaps the legendary war between Athens and Thebes—as more significant than the Trojan War, had it not been for Homer, so the generations which follow the Peloponnesian War would return to their admiration of the Trojan War were it not for Thucydides.

Thirdly, the archeology reveals a portion of Thucydides' intention. It does so by the very fact that the demythologizing of the past undermines political regimes founded on traditional mythology. Thucydides' praise or favoritism toward Sparta seems hollow when it is seen in the light of the fullness of his implied attack, or debunking, of all things "Spartan."

In drawing conclusions from the archeology, we rely on our observation that it is one of the few parts of Thucydides' history in which none of the ambiguities between speech and deed complicate its interpretation. Indeed, Thucydides emphasizes that his presentation of the facts about the ancient times is the most accurate possible. "He [the reader] should regard the facts as having been made out with sufficient accuracy, on the basis of the clearest indications, considering that they have to do with ancient times" (I.21.1).11 One might, like Hobbes, wonder whether Thucydides "best approved of a regal government," but one cannot wonder, it seems, about the reliability of the archeology.12

And yet Thucydides does mention in passing in the archeology that some of the peoples of Greece still live in the old, customary manner of the ancients:

and even today in many parts of Hellas life goes on under the old customs, as in the region of the Ozolian Locrians, Aetolians, Acarnanians, and the mainland thereofabouts. And these mainlanders' habits of carrying arms ['wearing iron," Hobbes says] is a survival of their old piratical life [I.5.3, 5.1-2, 5.6, 6.6].

Thucydides introduces the possibility that the past may be found in the present. This possibility parallels Benardete's observation about the nature of the Herodotean history: "The surface of the earth presents together all the Hesiodic ages, which are not distinguished so much by what metals they use as by their customs."13 The archeology is not self-contained—in

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11 Translations follow C. Foster Smith, Loeb Classical Library (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919), with a few minor exceptions.
13 Benardete, Herodotean Inquiries, p. 29.
spite of Thucydides' deceptive exhortation to accept it as such. The conclusions which he reaches regarding the weakness, harshness, and rusticity of the past as opposed to the strength, mildness, and artfulness of the present, and his picture of the ignorance and adornment of the past versus the truthfulness and honesty of the present, are open to a reevaluation based on the narrative description of the peoples who live by the old customs.

*The "Ancient" Acarnanians*

Of the three peoples who are named by Thucydides, and of the others who live in the "mainland thereabouts," i.e., around the Ionian gulf, the Acarnanians are the people most fully revealed by the Thucydidean narrative. They are not only mentioned by name more than twice as often as the Ozolian Locrians and Aetolians combined but are also, as we shall later see, the close friends and allies of the Athenian generals Phormio and Demosthenes. The latter is, we believe, the true and fittingly undramatic Thucydidean man of action.14 Further following Strauss, we note that the Acarnanians are associated with Demosthenes, a knower of nature (IV.3–4) and that the year in which they figure most prominently in the narrative (the sixth year of the first part of the war) is the only year

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14 "Thucydides nowhere specifically assesses the ability of Demosthenes or the value of his services to Athens, and the general impression given by the narrative is equivocal. That he believed Demosthenes to have been brave, energetic and enterprising, an inspiring leader of men and normally a good tactician, is perfectly clear, but he apparently also regarded him as inclined to be impecunious and found his strategy occasionally unsound and too optimistic. It may be that Thucydides... has designedly chosen to present Demosthenes to his readers with precisely this mixture of approval and disapproval. He seems, however, in some parts of his narrative strangely reluctant to give Demosthenes due credit for the originality and imaginativeness which he undoubtedly showed. These qualities, in the military sphere at least, bore some resemblance to those of Themistocles, which Thucydides praises so warmly" (I.138.2) (H. D. Westlake, *Individuals in Thucydides* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968], pp. 97-98). Professor Westlake, as he clearly demonstrates, is in factual command of Thucydides' narrative. He notes Thucydides' unjust denigration of Demosthenes (compare Thucydides' striking eulogy on Nicias' death with his silence on Demosthenes' [VII.86], but he cannot adequately account for it. One might suggest that Demosthenes was slighted in Thucydides' account because Thucydides wished to dramatize more clearly the rivalry between the pious Nicias and the daring Alcibiades. Demosthenes' true worth would be discovered by an independent assessment of Demosthenes based on the narrative. Demosthenes learns from his mistake in Aetolia—an expedition undertaken on bad intelligence, in too hopeful and incautious a spirit, and without sufficient military preparation. Having learned the "nature" of moderation, Demosthenes cleverly beats the Spartans at Pylos. The defeat forced the Spartans to sue for peace and thus to recognize the Athenian empire—the end sought by Pericles. After the renewal of the war, brought about by Alcibiades, Demosthenes does not reappear until Sicily, when he nearly saves the expedition and his city through his prudent daring and patriotism."
in Thucydides' account which "almost begins (III.89) and literally ends with the mention of natural phenomena." In addition, while describing the events of that year, events which take place around the Ionian gulf where the old customs are still practiced, Thucydides mentions both Hesiod and Homer by name; this is his only reference to Hesiod in the entire history and the only reference to Homer after the archology (III.96.1, 104.4). Finally, an indirect proof of the Acarnanians' singular importance can be seen in the following detail: they are the only one of the peoples named in the archology who practice customs different from those attributed to the ancients by Thucydides. If all the peoples in "the mainland thereabouts" differed from the description in the archology, Thucydides could never have maintained the "progressive thesis" as the preliminary understanding of his work. By so confusing the levels of his thoughts, Thucydides would have been impolitic in a wholly un-Thucydidean manner.

These observations can only be proved or disproved by a proper interpretation of the events which Thucydides narrates. So let us turn to the events so that "the narration itself may be sufficient to suggest the same also to the reader."

At the beginning of the war the Athenians decided that they needed the friendship of the peoples who lived around the Peloponnesian if they were to send fleets to harass the Spartans. The ambassadors sent to the Acarnanians were, however, unsuccessful in establishing friendly relations (II.7.3).

In the second year of the war the Acarnanians asked the Athenians to help them drive the Ampraciots from Amphilochian Argos, the Amphilochians having placed themselves under the protection of the Acarnanians. Successfully defeating the Ampraciots, the Athenians settled the Acarnanians and the Amphilochians in Argos. At this time a treaty was first made between the Athenians and the Acarnanians (II.68).

In the summer of the third year of the war the Ampraciots and the Chaonians, wishing to subdue the whole of Acarnia and detach it from the Athenians (II.80.1-2), persuaded the Spartans to send a fleet and hoplites to aid in the conquest. The Spartans consented to the plan and organized their allies. When this Peloponnesian army arrived, with an accompanying fleet soon expected, the Acarnanians did not join together to defend their major city Stratus, but "each defended his own" (II.81.1). The Stratians, however, without assistance, cleverly managed to defeat the invaders by ambushing the Chaonians—the barbarians who lacked all semblance of order. The Spartans, quickly recognizing defeat, withdrew. Thucydides accounts in part for the success of the Acarnanians by noting that they were thought best in the use of slings (II.80-82).

That winter the Acarnanians joined Phormio in an unsuccessful attack on the Acarnanian city of Oeniadae, the only Acarnanian city hostile to

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15 Strauss, City and Man, p. 223, n. 83.
Homer (II.102).\(^{16}\) Oeniadae, it should be noted, had an obvious reason to oppose the Athenians, having been besieged by Pericles during the early rise of the Athenian empire (I.111.3). In the next year the Athenians sent out Phormio's son to take command in the Ionian gulf, for the Acarnanians had specifically asked that a son or a kinsman of Phormio should be sent to succeed him. Phormio's son led another unsuccessful attack on Oeniadae (III.7).

By the sixth year of the war Demosthenes had become general in the Ionian gulf. The first joint expedition of the Athenians and Acarnanians was launched against Leucas, the inveterate enemy of the Acarnanians. In the course of this campaign Demosthenes was unwisely persuaded to attack Aetolia and from there to march on Boeotia. The Acarnanians angrily withdrew from the expedition, which in due course ended disastrously (III.94). Nevertheless, immediately afterwards, when the Athenians were in danger of being entirely driven from the area, the Acarnanians listened to Demosthenes and relieved Naupactus, the Athenian stronghold threatened by the Ampraciots and Spartans (III.102).

Failing to take Naupactus, the Ampraciots, still wishing to capitalize on Demosthenes' defeat, persuaded the Spartans that the conquest of Acarnania would bring all of the continent into their league. With the Spartans' approval and promise of assistance, the Ampraciots invaded Acarnania and secured Olpae, "the place which the Acarnanians had once fortified and used as a common place of justice (dikasterion)" (III.105). Fearing the arrival of the Spartans, the Acarnanians divided their army: half watched the Ampraciots while the other half tried to prevent the Spartans from joining them. In addition, they sent for Demosthenes and the Athenian fleet sailing off their coast. The Spartans, however, avoided the Acarnanians' attempts at interdiction and joined the Ampraciots, while Demosthenes with a small force joined the Acarnanians before Olpae. In the ensuing battle, the Athenians and Acarnanians, using an ambush similar to the one used by the Stratians against the Chaonians, defeated the Ampraciot-Spartan force. The Acarnanian generals and Demosthenes then made a peace agreement with the Peloponnesians, allowing them to escape and condemning the remainder of the army, the Ampraciots and the other allies, to almost certain destruction. This

\(^{16}\) One should note that while speaking of Oeniadae Thucydides presents a comparatively long disquisition on the natural relationship of earth and water (II.102.2-4). His "observations and speculations" on this subject remind Gomme of Plato's Critias (III.A-B) (Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 250). Also, Thucydides has a lengthy digression on the mythical origins of Acarnania (II.102.5-6). (In the Third Book, at 104, he presents Homer, interrupting his account of the events in Acarnania [compare III.104, with I.8. for a further identification of ancients and moderns]; while at 96.1, describing events in Aetolia, he puts Hesiod and Demosthenes in the same sentence.) As will be shown more fully below, Thucydides continually associates the present Acarnanians with the mythical, poetic past in order for us to see that there is no difference between them.
stratagem was successful. The Ampraciots, having seen the Peloponnesians escaping, attempted to follow them, were cut off by the Acarnanians, and driven into a neighboring country (III.105-13).

After the defeat of the Ampraciots, the Acarnanians refused to invade Ampracia as the Athenians and Demosthenes desired them to do, for they feared that if the Athenians had Ampracia they would be worse neighbors than their present ones. Instead, after Demosthenes and the Athenians left, they concluded a peace treaty with the Ampracians on very liberal terms (III.114.2-4; cf. IV.92.5).

In the summer of the seventh year of the war the Athenians helped capture Anactorium (a city inimical to the Acarnanians [III.114.3]) and turned it over to the Acarnanians, who settled it with their own people (IV.49). That winter the Acarnanians took part with Demosthenes in an unsuccessful attack on the Boeotian town of Siphae. On the return voyage they tried another unsuccessful attack on part of Siconyia (IV.77, 101). The Acarnanians come to sight for the last time in Thucydides’ history in Sicily, having been persuaded by Demosthenes to accompany him there on his relief expedition (VII.31).

What can be learned from these narrative events and Thucydidean remarks (III.113.6, VII.57.10-11) which deepen the understanding of the “progressive thesis” and hence the deprecation of “ancient” life and wisdom? To answer this question we must further distill the sense of the narrative. First, it appears that the Acarnanians are as unorganized as Thucydides had suggested that the “ancients” were (I.3.1). They lack strong political, military, or religious conventions or laws. Politically, they are not even united under the leadership of a single polis. The majority of the Acarnanians live in unwalled villages; they are like an ethnos; the inhabitants of each locality are ruled by tyrants who appear to be the obviously superior men (I.5.1). The Acarnanians are therefore analogous to the people of Attica before Theseus gathered them together (II.15.1-2).

As one might expect, the Acarnanians are also weak militarily. Their weakness is caused by their general inability, and apparent unwillingness, to learn the regimented techniques needed for efficient military organization. They are reluctant to assemble for purposes of warfare; once assembled, they are difficult to order for battle. However, weakness in their case cannot be associated with a lack of individual intelligence, skill, or daring. The Acarnanian generals are resourceful and devious. They plan two effective ambushes and share in the “peace” agreement with the Peloponnesians which gives them the opportunity to destroy their neighbors, the Ampraciots. Individually the Acarnanian soldiers are proficient in the use of slings, an open kind of warfare requiring personal skill

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17 Gomme, Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 429: “Amprakia gets off very lightly after her defeat, and Athens got little by the victory of Demosthenes.”
and daring, as opposed to the discipline of the galley and phalanx, which necessitates strict obedience to convention.  

Finally, Thucydides indicates that the Acarnanians are not excessively pious. In fact, he never shows a single instance of their religious festivals or auspices before campaigns, nor does he mention any Acarnanian temples, nor report oaths sworn to the gods (one certainly would anticipate such oaths to legitimate the treaty with Ampracia; oaths were sworn in each of the three treaties between Sparta and Athens [IV.119, V.18-19, 24]).

In addition to the apparent laxity of the Acarnanian conventions, one is struck by the overall prudence and moderation of their policies. Their prudence is evident in their alliance with Athens and use of Athenian power to maintain and improve their own position—while never allowing the Athenians to become too powerful in the area. But the Acarnanians did not ignore considerations of equity (dike) and loyalty in their deliberations. Originally they allied themselves to Athens only after they had come to respect Phormio. This attachment apparently motivated their request that a kinsman of Phormio be sent to replace him (a request which probably also reveals the nature of their own regime). Finally, their affection for Demosthenes and loyalty to Athens led them into the middle of the Athenian disaster in Sicily.

The source of the Acarnanians' moderation can be traced to their temperate anger, or desire for revenge. Thucydides explicitly draws attention to the fact that the stronghold at Olpae was used as a place where the Acarnanians would meet together for "matters of justice." While this may seem to indicate that in peaceful times they acted justly toward one another, we can see that during the course of the war they are hesitant to inflict injury on their own people. Even though they joined in two expeditions with the Athenians against Oeniadae (an Acarnanian city), both campaigns were marked by inactivity and nonengagement (II.102, III.7). On another occasion when anger or revenge might have been expected, the Acarnanians acted in a generous manner by giving liberal peace terms to the quarrelsome Ampraciots, who had invaded them no fewer than three times during the course of the war. Could the Acarnanians have pitied the Ampraciots because of their stupendous defeat (the greatest defeat suffered by any city, in a short

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18 Occasionally some question is raised as to whether the Acarnanians had a fleet. Since there is no substantial evidence to support the fleet thesis, most commentators agree that they did not; cf. Gomme, Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 411. It is clear, however, that they did have a hoplite force (Commentary, p. 420 [107.4]. These are probably troops from the larger cities and form exceptions to the almost universal slingers (II.81.8, 82, VII.31.5, 67.2).

19 Gomme, Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 11 (9.4), is wrong when he claims that Oeniadae was always at variance with the rest of Acarnania. The Acarnanians settled their own disagreement and made Oeniade become a member of the alliance (IV.77.2).
time, in the entire war? Such a motive would be compatible with their desire not to have the Athenians as neighbors (III.113.6). Whatever the reason, it is certainly an example of moderation in success (VIII.24.4-5). Thucydides notes the anger of the Acarnanians on only one occasion, and one is astonished by its mildness. Even though Demosthenes reneged on his promise to the Acarnanians to attack Leucas, their inveterate enemy, the Acarnanians quickly forgot their anger and helped Demosthenes defend Naupactus (III.102.3). The Acarnanians' moderate anger or desire for revenge is particularly striking because of the overriding emphasis Thucydides puts upon this passion in motivating political men, especially in times of \textit{statis}: "To get revenge on someone was more valued than never to have suffered injury oneself" (III.82.7).\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Thucydides' Justice}

While the comparative mildness of the Acarnanians is surprising in light of the supposed harshness and cruelty of ancient life described in the archaology, not to mention the savagery of modern political man, it is not the only evidence which suggests that life may actually have been gentler in former times (or under different customs).\textsuperscript{21} In a speech designed to assuage the Athenians' desire for revenge against the Mytilenaeans, an otherwise unknown individual named Diodotus makes a sophistical defense of moderation in which he concludes, "Probably in ancient times the penalties prescribed for the greatest offenses were relatively mild, but as transgressions still occurred, in course of time the penalty was seldom less than death" (III.45.3).

Thucydides, through Diodotus, raises the infinite question of the

\textsuperscript{20} The desire for revenge is, according to Thucydides, the strongest and deepest passion found in political man. The first conflict, the conflict which became the expressed cause for the war, issued from the Corinthians' desire to have revenge on Corcyra (I.25). Pericles, in the funeral oration, ennobles anger by saying that the greatest source of honor for citizens is to die seeking revenge upon the enemies of one's city (II.42.4). The ennoblement of anger, i.e., the immortality guaranteed to the spirited defender of the city through the immortality of the city, is the basis of the city's universalism. Such universalism is only possible through an abstraction from the body and its erotic attachments: an abstraction from one's death, children, wife, lover. This abstraction may be consecrated by \textit{nomos} (V.67-69, 72, VII.86.5), or it may be obfuscated by a "public" \textit{eros}—the universal glory and demination of one's city (II.41.4-5, 43.2-4, 44.2-4, I.70.6, VI.16.5). These different ways to public-spiritedness seem to characterize the difference between the Spartans and the Athenians.

\textsuperscript{21} B.nardete has pointed out that the word savage (\textit{αὐγος}) occurs thrice in book III and nowhere else. Its usage is instructive and throws light on several facets of Thucydides' account: (1) the Athenians, after their original harsh judgment of the Mytilenaeans, repented, feeling that they had acted savagely (36); (2) in Corcyra, Thucydides says that men acted savagely (82); (3) it was \textit{reported} that the Eurestanians ate raw flesh (94).
relationship of human nature and convention. Diodotus argues that convention, or the legislative art, is "progressive" like the other arts. But the progress of convention is the same as the strengthening of convention: progress equals power. In the archeology, Thucydides showed that convention has the power to change the relation of motion and rest among men (I.18.1, 6-7). It creates rest, generates wealth, and makes possible "Greekness" and the two premier Greek cities, Sparta and Athens. Putting together Diodotus' speech and the archeology, we observe what price men pay for the progress of convention: it leads to an ever greater reliance on convention and consequently a heightened fear of its contravention and removal. This accounts for the increased punitiveness of laws and men which Diodotus mentions and for the overpowering anger generated by the stasis at Corecyra. Diodotus, the Athenian, appears as the spokesman for the ancient, Acarnanian mildness. But his mildness is a result of reflection, the reflection (and rest) possible in post-conventional, innovative Athens; the Acarnanians' results from the pre-progressive laxness of their conventions. Human nature is corrupted, but necessarily corrupted by convention; the innocence of both the Athenians and Acarnanians is easily and necessarily lost on the level of political affairs—Sparta and her allies defeat Athens and her allies.

However this may be, the importance of the Acarnanians does not end with testimonials to their gentleness and moderation. As an "ancient" people they are undoubtedly associated with "ancient" wisdom. Thucydides emphasizes this association when he digresses to describe the place where Hesiod died and the purification of Delos, in the section recounting Demosthenes' expeditions around the Ionian gulf. The digression on the purification of Delos includes verses from Homer's Hymn to Apollo, which describe a colorful, idyllic festival held long ago on the island of Delos. This romantic scene is the only passage in the whole of the Thucydidean narrative which looks at human affairs peacefully and privately:

At other times, Phoebus, Delos is dearest to your heart, where the Ionians in trailing robes are gathered together with their wives and children in your way; there they delight thee with boxing and dancing and song, making mention of your name, whenever they ordain the contest.

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22 Convention nurtures and rules anger. When convention is removed, as at Corecyra, anger and the desire for revenge are insanely emancipated.

23 One cannot help observing that Thucydides ends his quotation of the second passage of the Hymn to Apollo in mid-sentence. The complete quotation, with the omission underscored, is as follows: "Come now, let Apollo be gracious and Artemis also and farewell, all you maidens. Yet remember me even in after times, whenever some other toil-enduring man, a dweller upon the earth, shall visit this island and ask: 'O maidens, what man is the sweetest of minstrels to you of all who wander hither, and in whom do you take most delight?' Do you make answer, piously and altogether 'The blind man who dwells in rugged Chios'-whose songs are evermore supreme (the best)' (165-73). Homer, in the contest of poets, proclaims his eternal superiority to all other contenders. Entering the lists somewhat late, Thucydides
Temporarily abandoning his political and military or "war" narrative, Thucydides introduces the ancient Homer to speak of private, sexual, and honor-seeking relations (eros). The fact that the only view of peace which is presented in the whole of Thucydides takes place in the past indicates again that the "progress" which produced the greatest motion, the Peloponnesian War, may after all be a regress. Does that progress compensate for the absence of a Homer?

But beyond this, the narrative presence of the Acarnanians further corrects Thucydides' indictment of the past. Thucydides, as we have seen, says that poets are unreliable because they exaggerate and beautify the events they describe (I.10.3). The poets, to take the most important case, claimed that the heroes who served Agamemnon did so to fulfill the oath to Tyndareus. Thucydides corrects that mistaken beautification through his historical research and sober reflection: men are motivated "not so much by favor (or honor) as by fear" (I.9.3). In this light, when Thucydides gives his catalogue of the combatants on the great Sicilian expedition, he naturally reaffirms his unblinking judgment of human things: "they (the allies) chose sides not so much on the ground of right (dike) or even kinship to one another but either out of regard for their own advantage or from necessity (ananke), according to the circumstances in which they happened to be placed" (VII.57.1; for the entire assembly, see 57-58; compare the Iliad II.485-end). And yet when we look down the list of Athenian allies we find near the end the Acarnanians, who came on this long and doubtful venture, as Thucydides himself affirms, not for reasons of advantage or necessity, but out of friendship, good will, and concern. "Some of the Acarnanians served for gain, but the larger portion [were moved] by friendship for Demosthenes and good will toward the Athenians being allies and coming to their aid" (VII.57.10).

does not appear to break the code of good sportsmanship by striking Homer's boast from the record (compare II.62.1-3, I.21, 22.4, 23).

24 Thucydides mentions women only in their connection with political life. For example, they fight at Plataea and Corycra (II.4.2, III.74). Pericles tells them to be silent in their grief (II.45.2). Further, eros is only used once by Thucydides in the nominative, in the unusual love of the Athenians for Sicily (VI.24.3)—while Pericles asks the Athenians to become lovers of their city (II.43.1). (For the exception that proves the rule, consider I.136.3.) Most important, Thucydides' view of the conflict between erotic desire (the private) and a good regime (the public) can be seen in his discussion of the so-called tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton (VI.53.3-59). Thucydides depreciates eros for the same reason Plato does—for the sake of the public and the common, the city (Republic, 420b-421c, 440b, 452c-459e).

25 Strauss, City and Man, p. 236.

26 Thucydides, of course, does take the literal basis of Homer's account seriously, both in the archeology (I.10.3-4) and, more important, in book III, where Thucydides presents Homer to show that there was an ancient festival on Delos (compare I.9.3 and III.104.6).

27 The Acarnanians symbolize the ancient peoples at their best. The Aetolians
Thucydides thus foregoes his customary severity, and permits the Acarnanians, his ancient or Homeric people, to voyage on his epic expedition, not prosaically, for reasons of gain or necessity, but HomERICally, for friendship and honor. In this marvelously "silent" and indirect fashion, Thucydides apologizes to Homer for the injustice he had shown to him in the archeology. Homeric wisdom, which adorns and exaggerates, is restored, and the entire "progressive thesis" of the archeology is corrected. The ancient Acarnanians (the barbarians) are shown to be in fundamental respects the precursors of Athenian and Thucydidean gentleness, intelligence, daring, and moderation (dike).

Thucydides thus qualifies his own account (I.1.1-2, 23.1-4, III.82.1-2, 83.1, II.38.2, 62.1); no war is total war, no motion is total motion. War and the motion which war brings can never become universal. There are always restful places and restful times in the midst of the greatest possible motion, as there are men (the Acarnanians, Demosthenes, and Thucydides) who can live amidst the greatest motion, still guided by passions and opinions which are supposed only to be found in peace—mildness, honor, and patriotism (III.82.2). The wisdom of Thucydides, which looks to an absolute necessity (ananke) caused by absolute motion, is as deficient as the wisdom of Homer, which disguises necessity (war and motion) in a halo of gods and heroes (I.9.3). There is always a combination of motion and rest in both the theoretical and the practical world.

Homeric wisdom is as true as Thucydidean wisdom. The Homeric barbarians are, in many respects, better men than the Greeks: Thucydides allows us to see this. So in the end, ancients and moderns, barbarians and Greeks, Homer and Thucydides, and honor and necessity are all judged by Thucydides in a new and juster perspective.

In summary, one might characterize Thucydides' contest with Homer as follows: Homer proceeds with poetic eloquence and then silently qualifies his great themes through the dramatic denouement. As Benardete has observed about Homer's manner of writing: "the Iliad moves from the apparently higher to the apparently lower; Achilles, the Achaean hero, finally yields to his opposites." One might say that the honor-loving Achilles yields to the wily Odysseus.

Thucydides, on the other hand, claiming to proceed prosaically and severely (in opposition to Homer), in fact fashion a poetic drama, and then silently qualifies both his prosaic and his poetic accounts. He proceeds

serve for gain (VII.57.9), the Ozolian Locrians are no longer mentioned, and none of the other peoples of the Ionian gulf are distinguished by name.

28 The Spartans and the pious Nicias, while appearing from the point of view of outsiders to be at rest and to desire rest, are actually always in motion. Their private and hidden motion results from the potential or actual depredations of helots and gods (I.101-2, IV.41.3, 80, VIII.40.2, VII.50.4).


30 Consider Odyssey XI.488-91, XXIV.
from the prosaic archeology to the grandeur of the Sicilian expedition to the silent teaching conveyed in part by the Acarnanians, whose qualities elevate the archeology (the non-Greeks) and thus diminish the tragedy of the Sicilian expedition and the decline of “Greekness.”

All in all, the contest between Homer and Thucydides is so severe because they have so much in common. Both seek to become the highest standard for the Greeks through their accounts of decisively important men and events. While both their accounts point to a standard which is beyond the particular events they describe, they do not transcend the particular.31 So Homer and Thucydides are forced to emphasize different features of the particular: ancients vs. moderns, fate vs. motion and rest, honor vs. necessity. Plato's Socrates would say that Homeric wisdom and Thucydidean wisdom are in the most fundamental respect the same, i.e., particular, or imitative.32

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32 Plato, Republic 595a-612b.
THEORY AND PRACTICE
IN THE FOUNDING OF THE REPUBLIC

W. B. ALLEN

Those serious, though natural enmities, which occur between the popular classes and the nobility, arising from the desire of the latter to command, and the disinclination of the former to obey, are the causes of most of the troubles which take place in cities; and from this diversity of purpose, all the other evils which disturb republics derive their origin.

—Niccolò Machiavelli, History of Florence, Bk. III

I

A recent interpretation of Montesquieu's contribution to the founding of America argues that the disagreement between Federalists and Antifederalists is of negligible importance. Traditionally, Montesquieu has been held to have contributed to the founding principally through the doctrine of separation of powers. In rejecting that view, this argument does not maintain that separation of powers has been misunderstood in Montesquieu—though that argument is possible. Rather, it is urged that separation of powers was an administrative necessity, and thus historically determined. Thus is Montesquieu rejected, without question as to what he meant to say or as to how he was understood by Federalists and Antifederalists.

The problem in part arises from the difficulty of Montesquieu's principal work, De l'Esprit des lois. It offers the critic an extremely difficult task: to derive the schematic form of a government from a work that, in the final analysis, offers only a picture of its character. The honest critic will only reconstruct the characterization. If, however, one is confronted with an immediate political task as well as the interpretive task, honesty is insufficient. Federalists and Antifederalists—as critics—confronted this difficulty. A possible approach is to limit one's appraisal to the first two sections of L'Esprit des lois, where some dicta as to form and mechanisms can be found. Yet those sections form an incomplete statement, particularly as they are followed by a middle section which develops a definitive characterization of the republic. Still, the founders were forced to focus their attention on the first two sections—Antifederalists still more so than Federalists. Montesquieu, therefore, would seem to have left them behind—and perhaps even to have misled them—as he moves to a consideration of the republic. But whether that could justify the argument that Montesquieu's understanding is not that of the regime can only be determined by judging that understanding in the light of the founding.1

1 Such investigation suggests that the determinist view is not an entirely accurate portrayal. The Federalists, in particular, demonstrate an attachment to modern virtue
In the course of this attempt to avoid an all too rigid interpretation of Montesquieu and separation of powers, the new interpretation succeeds in eliminating Montesquieu (more precisely, denying the importance of theory in the founding of regimes) from any serious discussion of politics in the American regime. Its success, moreover, is qualified: it depends on the notion that the response to circumstance or history—impelled by the circumstance itself—is the only justification of such response. Events or history alone can explain political action. Political speech is ancillary. Now this may be true, but it could only be shown to be true by consulting, in this case, the speeches of the Framers and the writings of Montesquieu. Were it possible, in determinist terms, to say that history qua history has a single, dominating principle, that principle would be the primacy of practice as a precondition for the understanding of human action. Nonetheless, there is a legitimate question as to the ability of history to describe events or actions without the existence of prior understanding of the characteristics or moral qualities of such events or actions. This would seem to suggest that, in fact, history must be preceded by philosophy or theory: history must be Herodotean inquiry.

But that alone would suggest that history consists only in the sounding
of general or theoretical principles. History exists—not *qua* history, but *qua* moral possibility. This says more than that theory must precede practice; this says that practice is impossible without theory. Unless, therefore, philosophy must be held to be commonly practiced, there must be another possible conclusion. Revelation provides one such possibility, yielding definitive descriptions of the characteristics or moral qualities of events or actions and thereby permitting the judgment of such events or actions in the absence of inquiry. This arrangement works well, permitting history *qua* history to exist for just so long as there occur no events or actions that may be adjudged beyond the judgment of revelation—or divine legislation.

The problem is prefigured in Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois*, a complete understanding of which turns on an understanding of the last eight books—the practical books. The opening of book XXIV (the first of the practical books) announces that the author will unfold the proper manner in which to study human things and that he will demonstrate that the possibility of providing men "the best political laws and the best civil laws" is dependent upon such study. This strikes one's attention sharply because book XXIV is entitled "The laws, in the relationship that they have with the religion in each country, considered in its practices, and in itself." In this book, however, there will be things that are true only in "a human sense." The author pleads that he is not a theologian and that he will speak, therefore, not of the best religion, but of the best laws.

It may be possible to explain the historical books, and hence the practical books, through rigorous analysis and close comparison of the *History of Florence* with those books. I am not presently capable of making that analysis, but some things do appear at first glance that may be of more than passing significance. Each author seeks to present the history of his regime—for Machiavelli, the city of Florence, and for Montesquieu, the country of France. But their histories are very different, even where the same facts are material. The history of Florence moves through men (though sometimes reluctantly—"with these idle princes and contemptible arms, my history must therefore be filled" [I, 3, end]); the history of France moves through laws (though the impact of greatness must be admitted—under Charlemagne "l'empire se maintint par la grandeur du chef: le prince étoit grand, l'homme l'étoit davantage" [XXXI, 18, beginning]).

Again, considering the fate of the empire after the death of Charlemagne, Machiavelli lays the blame for its disintegration to the discords among the grandsons: "the Emperor Charles died and was succeeded by Louis (the Pious), after whose death so many disputes arose among his sons that at the time of his grandchildren France lost the empire" (I, 3, end). Fortune, then, paved the way for the empire's destruction as she bred, at differing occasions, the forces of strength or of weakness.

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But Montesquieu saw the "cause principale de l'affoiblissemement de la seconde race" to be less the absence of a Charlemagne to settle the discords of Lothar, Louis, and Charles than the changes made in the constitution left by Charlemagne and Pepin. Had Charlemagne made such changes ruin would also have followed. The changes occurred, it is true, as an outgrowth of the Battle of Fontenay. But it was that portion of the treaty which permitted free men to choose their seignors that brought ruin (XXXI, 25, middle).

Thus it appears that the laws made by regimes maintain their force at the expense of other possibilities and in disregard of fortune.

The history of Florence—a history of returns and reverses—takes one from her origins to her current "imbecility." It is a history into which Machiavelli "descends" (I, 3, end). The history of Florence is of periods—specific events, alliances, and intrigues.

The history of France, on the other hand, takes one from France's first constitutions to her developed constitution. It is a history of practices and ordinances ("cold, dry, insipid and hard writings [which] must be read and devoured as the fable says Saturn devoured stones" [XXX, 10-12]). It is a history of laws, presented by Montesquieu "rather as [he has] envisaged them than as [he has] treated them" (XX, 1).

History. Montesquieu argues, is a particular force—particular to a civilization and thus to its institutions (XXVIII, 23-XXX, 14). Men have positive or negative effects on their laws or institutions, and change may result, but that change would invariably result from such effects, however arrived (XXXI, 18, 25, 32). For Montesquieu, history can exist only to establish continuity (XXX, 10-12). And the first step in establishing that continuity is to know perfectly one's ancient laws and morals. It is only through these that events and actions have meaning (XXX, 15). He does not address the question or place of self-interest in specific acts or events related in his history. Machiavelli relates his interest entirely in terms of self-interest. If history must show continuity, it would appear that interest must not be its basis. Where self-interest is absent or controlled, one ascends; where it is present and uncontrolled, one descends.

It would be unfair, however, to speak of Machiavelli as interested only in the unfolding of selfish conflicts. A discussion of the history of conflicts of interest necessarily points beyond itself to a discussion of the disinterested—this is true even if the discussion beyond only concludes that disinterested behavior is impossible or, at best, unreasonable. Nowhere is this better attested than in a history of interested conflicts that occur in a religious context. As revelation is presumed to supply the basis for questions subject to the judgment of religion, to discuss such questions in terms of interests is to undermine revelation—and thus to point beyond. Such discussion is human and prepares the human judgment of the divine.

Montesquieu urges that religion be judged, politically speaking, in terms of its conformity to law—that is, logos (XXIV, 1). Such an inquiry, therefore, argues a basis for history other than revelation and superior
to it. Machiavelli joins—or, indeed, has led—Montesquieu in establishing the principle of a reasonable judgment of the church.

In the first book of the *History of Florence*, Machiavelli portrays the Church’s influence (he says the pope’s, for he speaks of men, not of laws or institutions) in the decline of Italy. He demonstrates the absurdity of its policy of hiring arms to fight in its behalf and of its attempt to extend its temporal dominance. The pontiffs he holds responsible for nearly all the barbarian inundations, each occasion of which was an instance of pontifical aggrandizement (I, 3, beginning).

As religion in the city must yield to law in Montesquieu, religious principalities must undergo the struggles of interest in Machiavelli. Further, to speak of the ascendance of the religious principality is, *ipso facto*, to speak of the decline of the city. A history which describes such an occurrence, therefore, describes—to the extent that it is human—a decline. The actions of men are determinants of laws and institutions, and what separates the history of Florence from the history of France is the fact that only certain men with certain interests can effect certain changes: “If we only consider the evils which arise to a republic or kingdom by a change of prince or of government; not by foreign interference, but by civil discord (in which we may see how even slight variations suffice to ruin the most powerful kingdoms or States), we may then easily imagine how much Italy and the other Roman provinces suffered, when they not only changed their forms of government and princes, but also their laws, customs, modes of living, religion, language, and name” (I, 2, beginning).

“Frequent changes” of this nature (IV, beginning) render a history of men necessary and introduce Fortuna as the Clio of that history. “Imperfectly organized” republics require “for their welfare the virtue and the good fortune of some individual who may be removed by death or become unserviceable by misfortune,” and “a good, wise, and powerful citizen appears” but seldom. A good republic would have “good laws for its basis and good regulations” for enforcing them. It would not, therefore, require the wise man to balance its contending forces. Most, if not all, histories will be histories of men and contending forces. A history of laws may be written only for that government which properly “may be called free.” It would appear, therefore, that the History of Florence and the history of France differ only in that the one is written for an “imperfectly organized” republic and the other for a perfectly organized republic. And the latter must be understood only in terms of the claim presented for it: in the history of laws, the laws have been presented as they were envisaged rather than as they were treated.

Practice, it would seem, may be informed by theory, but only insofar as it is “good practice” or the practice of the “good regime,” which—decidedly—is not the divine regime. To the extent that the practical books of *L’Esprit des lois* are informed by theory, it is likely that it is the theory of the republic as finally developed in books XIX and XX. But if this be correct, Montesquieu, in proposing that the construction of the
good republic is dependent upon the ability to study human things—
religion, laws, and the "history" of human creation—properly indicates
that theory or philosophy may be born among or in the contemplation of
the imperfect. Put another way, to construct the good regime, one must
study the imperfect as if it were or contained the perfect (see the first eight
books of *L'Esprit des lois*). That the theoretical books come before the
practical books, therefore, can be justified only by the fact that the
theoretical books are preceded by the truly historical books—those that
treat of ancient regimes.

When Montesquieu suggests that one must study the things of politics
politically, he means that political things must be given their fullest
signification (XXIV, 1). And if it be true that it is the legislator's task
to teach and make the laws (XXIX, 19), then the history of laws begins
with the legislator. For if history is truly that of human creation, it is he
who judges history, and he who must be questioned (XXVIII, 3-4). Thus
the practical books begin with the character of the laws and their relation
to the best regime, and then discuss the legislator's task; they conclude
with a history of the laws.

II

An understanding of the American founding—and the problem of
political theory therein—necessarily commences with the American legis-
lators. In Montesquieu's terms this is to focus upon what they did and
said as distinguished from the background that underlay their actions.
A Beardian analysis is out of place because what background and interests
give to political decisions is fully contained in the products of such
decisions. Such things are, as it were, at the bottom. A discussion of the
competing interests that led to the fateful treaty concluding the Battle of
Fontenay cannot obviate the necessity of dealing with the treaty and the
changes that ensued on their own terms.

The problem of political theory—as formulated by Montesquieu—is
the suggestion that what is at the bottom of political practice is unmen-
tionable. That private interest is glaringly present in Machiavelli serves
to heighten its glaring absence in Montesquieu. And there is a similar
muteness in Montesquieu with respect to the corollary of private interests:
individual rights. This position must necessarily inform a discussion of the
American founding, wherein the founders split on the question. Among
Antifederalist founders private interest was important but was not so
obviously discussed. Among Federalist founders individual rights were
important but were not so obviously discussed. Each side is properly silent
about only half of what Montesquieu treats as unmentionable. In the
suggestion that the study of the "perfectly organized" republic is a study
of a history of laws, Montesquieu maintains, *ipso facto*, that the problem
of interests—hence, individual rights—has been accounted for in a
manner transcending or, indeed, obviating the need for further reflection.
The problem—in the discussion among the founders and in *L'Esprit des lois*—is set in terms of a discussion of the circumstances of the regime. Among these the most important, troublesome, and frequently recurrent is the question of combining a republican government with an extensive territory. With this question every other issue is immediately connected in a manner that makes it appear architectonic in scope and effect.3

This result is in agreement with the principal problem to be resolved: the nature of republican government in the modern world. An extensive territory serves to distinguish the ancients from the moderns, but it does not answer finally the question as to the form of republican government. Montesquieu seeks to provide that answer. Federalists and Antifederalists presented rival answers.

Though it has been differently argued,4 it is clear that the founders drew their arguments from opposing conceptions of the nature and possibility of republican government. Professor Kenyon holds that the Federalist-Antifederalist dispute is really a dispute about the possible kinds of federalism. But most Antifederalists agreed with "An Old Whig" that the lessons of history and philosophy teach "that a republican government can exist only in a narrow territory."5 Although it is admittedly possible that one may speak of size and circumstance in explaining federalism, problems arise not from a federal correlation with extent, but from a republican correlation with extent.

One can neither reject consideration of the possibility of republican government nor take it as given. To show the possibility of the republic in the new world, it is necessary to demonstrate why it could not exist in the ancient world. One must show the differences between ancient and modern histories. As Rome's greatness depended on curious circumstances,6 so did the chance for the existence of the republic. In the modern world, all hinges on the capacity to dominate such circumstance, and giving a circumstance an architectonic role serves to detach the new world from a world of architectonic principles.

Though one would seem to be dealing with polarities among the Founders, they seem clearly to form a single pole with respect to one other: the *polis*. It is apparent that both Federalists and Antifederalists discussed the means of establishing a republic well in excess of 10,000—not to mention 5,040—citizens; and they intended to do so without exterminating or exiling everyone above ten years of age. Their dispute over size was not that of bigger vs. smaller; it was rather that of

6 Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*. 
calculation. When, therefore, Professors Kenyon and Borden suggest that Antifederalists were animated by ancient ideals,7 one could be confused. In both cases, their attempt to realize the republic is—as with Montesquieu—an attempt to exceed ancient limitations.

The first eight books of L’Esprit des lois develop the concept of the ancient republic, and it is this that must initially be set against the Founders’ adumbrations of the general principles of the republic. With such principles the Founders permit a discussion of mechanisms. They are not so given to historical analysis as Montesquieu; he reaches a discussion of modern possibilities through a discussion of ancient mechanisms. This difference need not be accounted for merely by the fact that Montesquieu’s political objective is not so immediate as their own. For him the birth of political philosophy must be re-created. There are, therefore, two republics. The first is found among the ancients—in a consideration of first things. The second is to be found in the modern world (IX, 1).

That with which Publius begins is that with which Montesquieu ends: modern virtue and its basis. Publius’ position will be indicated below. Initially, Montesquieu’s prescription must be presented in order to reveal the hideout of private interest.

As suggested above, the design of L’Esprit des lois is of importance. This design, however, would appear to point beyond the immediate purpose of this essay. I am capable of developing it only insofar as exposition of Montesquieu’s political prescription is constrained to follow it. If one does not count the preface, there appear to be two main sections of eight books each, one main section of nine books, and two transition sections of three books each. The section of nine books is central and is introduced by the transition section that ends with the famous book containing the chapter on the English constitution. It is by virtue of this relationship that that oft-quoted chapter is here read as introductory rather than conclusive. Montesquieu suggests this as well through his interpretation of Socrates’ efforts in the Republic.8

Montesquieu reminds the reader of the purpose of the first eleven books (principally to demonstrate ancient limitations) in the central number of the last eleven books: in chapter 23 he advises that “a large state (a), having become accessory to another, weakens itself and even weakens the principal state.” In footnoting this passage (in particular, the expression “large state,” which does not say precisely the same thing as does the passage taken as a whole), he indicates several earlier passages that dealt with the extent of a regime’s territory. Of these citations (twelve), exactly half are contained in the first section and half in the second section,

7 Kenyon, Antifederalists, Introduction; Borden, Antifederalists Papers, Introduction.
8 V, 6; XI, 6. The treatment of the English constitution—analogous to Socrates’ treatment of the Spartan constitution—should yield a statement as to Montesquieu’s purpose that is analogous to the statement as to Socrates’ purpose.
which begins to detail those means which the ancient regimes could employ to remedy their defects and to indicate the first distinctions between ancients and moderns: representation and largeness. But the citations encircle those passages (IX, 1, for example) which hold that a small republic will perish unless it joins a federation.

The passages would seem to be admonitions to the king of France to restrain his appetite for conquest were it not for the fact that some do refer to the problems of republics, and specifically (VIII, 16) indicate that they must be small. It is possible that a dual purpose is involved: the king of France should not seek to establish a "universal monarchy"; and a discussion of the size of states is a convenient means of considering ancient republics.

Again, the passage to which the footnote is attached does not speak of the problem of particular states' exceeding the limits of form. It speaks rather of states' (any states) attaching themselves to other states. And the citation, to repeat, is placed not at the end of this passage—where it should be if meant to apply only to France—but after "large state," suggesting a more general application. To return the reader to these passages, therefore, is to return him to the distinctions of ancients and moderns.

In the first section of *L'Esprit des lois*, it is established that there are only three separate principles that may inform regimes. These are simple principles; in fact, one discovers them by consulting the "least instructed men" (II, I; III, 1). They are, in fact, passions. Fear motivates despotism; honor—a false honor—motivates monarchy; and, curiously, the passion of virtue motivates the republic. This virtue is also called a renunciation of self.

This formulation would suggest the absence of reason in the establishment of governments, but Montesquieu has opened his treatise with the explanation that it is indeed reason which makes man incapable of perfectly obeying the laws of nature and propels him into error (I, 1; V, 14 and preface). In other words, because human nature is more than beastly one can expect more than the beastly. Yet if it is more, it is only so with regard to the rational factor—which, because of error, is seldom prudently pursued and which, because of the need for intentionality, is seldom favored by chance (V, 14).

The presence of intentionality in the formation of governments would necessitate the presence of a legislator from the earliest moment. Montesquieu avoids the difficulties inherent in that position by arguing the existence of a natural desire for association (I, 2). This natural desire makes accident the presiding officer over first societies. The point is emphasized in the refutation of Aristotle's history of kingship. The refutation consists of two parts: paternal rule is not the historical basis of ruling (I, 3), and paternal rule is not the pattern for monarchical power (V, 8).

Paternal rule is little more than historical accident—an accident that is
irrelevant since paternal rule is most useful in that government (a republic) where it is least likely to appear accidentally (the laws attempt to add it there) (V, 7). Political societies begin not among relatives linked by their relationship but, archetypically, among the unrelated. Political power, under such conditions, is a question of political association—that is, of several families. The defective natural association, assuming that an effective such association ever existed, would be transformed by the addition of politics. A legislator must have been present, in however limited a form, at the initial transition. It is the fact that monarchy is intentional which distinguishes it from despotism.

The republic is the intentional form of government par excellence, for it is based upon wanting to be a citizen. Its motive force is self-renunciation—a decision to be something other than what one is (III, 2, 5). To want to be a citizen is to want to have a city, and to want to have a city is to want to be virtuous—to love the city. This virtue is a sentiment within the reach of every man. It is not knowledge; it is opinion, and, ultimately, a passion. And it is a passion which, among ancient republics, required for its indulgence the forgoing of other passions.

This passion, according to Montesquieu, is a substitute for more particular or individual passions: it is general, it is public. As fewer particular passions can be satisfied, this general passion is all the more accessible. It is, in a sense, created by humans as a result of the imposition of social, religious, or political order (V, 2). It serves, therefore, as a higher or ultimate passion which undermines the effect of the ordinary passions. For this reason, Montesquieu can say that political virtue is self-renunciation. It is renunciation of what Hobbes designated as our real selves.

Of the two forms of ancient republics, aristocratic and democratic, only the latter was perfect. It alone could boast that equality necessitated by virtue (II, 2-3; V, 8). It is alone that form in which republican virtue—hence, equality—can be perfected. In a regime that requires self-renunciation as few temptations to ordinary passions as possible should be presented. That means that the differences among men must be negligible. In fact, all "inequalities [are to be derived] from the nature of the democracy and the principle of equality itself" (V, 5). Such a state must limit commerce and the possibility of gain (V, 6), since gain, by definition, cannot be contained within the framework of equal distribution. And where commerce does enter a democracy, it must be held to a "commerce of economy" in order to avoid the real enemy of equality: luxury (V, 6). Individual happiness and "good sense" is dependent on a mediocrity of talents and fortunes in a republic (V, 3).

At this point Montesquieu speaks of the perfection of ancient republics, taking them as they could be. The implication is that such governments are always possible because their principles are always viable. What distinguishes the ancients from the moderns are different intentions or choices, not different possibilities. This is amply demonstrated when
Montesquieu states that most ancient peoples lived under governments which "have" virtue for their principle. The peoples are past; the principles are perpetual.

These ancient republics were the recipients of "singular institutions" (IV, 5). The unusual was necessary because their governments were formed to alter the usual. The task of the legislator has been that of dealing with man's most basic and intransigent desires (IV, 5), and "singular institutions" are the means to that end. "These kinds of institutions" can be instituted in the republic, where virtue is the principle, but only in a small state like the towns of Greece (IV, 6). They require a general education and the raising of all citizens as though they were all brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers (IV, 6).

But, for all that, all ancient regimes are corruptible—monarchy and despotism by their inherent defects. The corruption is entirely a matter of bad founding and refounding (VIII, 12). That which is defective in the principle of the regime leads to its decline. As noted above, that which corrupts the principle of the republic is luxury (VIII, 2-5). To avoid that danger a republic must be small (VIII, 16, 20).

Montesquieu closes the first section with the apparent notion that only the small republic is capable of escaping corruption. This establishes two principles: that the republic offers the possibility for a lasting regime, but that the ancient republic never achieved that goal. The second principle is developed in the next section, which begins with the announcement: "If a republic is small, it is destroyed by a foreign force; if it is large, it destroys itself by an interior vice" (IX, 1).

Montesquieu opens the second section with the notion that no republic can exist except in a federated form. This means that a republic could never have been considered truly viable in the forms heretofore examined. In that sense, this is a clear break with the past, but in the sense that it is an attempt to discover a "useful mean" for making past virtues a part of a viable and enduring regime, it is a modern undertaking. This contradiction is further emphasized by the fact that the remedy—the federated republic—is itself a human construction, i.e., it is put together from things which humans had made.

The federated republic is then twice removed from nature, as nature was understood by the "state of nature" theorists. The break with the past is also a break with the present: Montesquieu holds that the state once-removed from nature is inherently a state of war; the republic is destroyed either from without or within. He thus presents an alternative: the conventions already created out of an imaginary state of nature may be perfected. There is in this a superficial resemblance to the ancient view, and it

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9 It should also be noted that no modern counterpart is offered for either, suggesting that the distinction between ancients and modern offers them no salvation.
suggests that the confederated republic is introduced more as introduction than conclusion, an introduction to consideration of the best regime.

This interpretation is supported, first, by a picture of the federation which sharply diverges from the accepted description (IX, 3). The "beautiful confederated republic" chosen as exemplar, Lycia, seems, in the description, almost like a single regime or administration rather than a gathering of independent cities. Further, this section opens by extolling the virtues of the confederal republic and closes by extolling the virtues of England. The suggestion is that it is the republicanism—in a new setting—that warrants examination. And, were that not enough, Montesquieu focuses the reader's attention on the contrast between the benefit accidentally derived from confederations by the ancients (IX, 1) and the necessity for intentional confederation among the moderns.

The confederation described by Montesquieu is one that must be created, unlike others, for the specific purpose of perpetuating republicanism. It suffers, therefore, certain constraints, among them, that all confederates must be republics (IX, 2). The need for intentionality imposes a need for control of circumstances (IX, 13). That the ancients were unintentional in this respect Montesquieu decrees, when he describes the "best form of government ever imagined by man." That government was neither ancient Sparta nor ancient Rome. It was a form of monarchy among the barbarian Germanic tribes. There, says Montesquieu, is where the history of intentional good government begins (XI, 8).

The Germans began as free and democratic. They became several small monarchies after conquest and separation. These monarchs then assembled to deliberate on common affairs and were thus representatives. They tempered their rule and offered a simulacrum of political liberty. In "Aristotle's Manner of Thinking," one distinguishes regimes by things of accident: virtue and vice. That which distinguishes is the constitution and not the quality of rule (XI, 9). The well-run government is the well-formed government. Then he adds that the English system is based on the barbarian government. From the Germans it is possible to trace the origins of the modern English republic. As Sparta drew her laws from Crete only to have them perfected by Plato, the English laws are drawn from the German tribes only to be perfected—it is argued—by Montesquieu (XI, 6).

In considering ancient laws, Montesquieu begins with their establishment and ends with their corruption. He begins with that which would corrupt the laws of the modern republic. The modern system, too, is perishable, but through mechanical defects (abrogation of separation of powers) (XI, 6). Unlike the ideal republic of Plato, whose corruption is almost insensible, the cause of the decline of the English republic can be precisely known. More exactly, its essential characteristic, liberty, can be studied to see how it might be lost, and also how it might be established. Unlike Harrington, Montesquieu has recognized true liberty and constructs a true state (XI, 6). That liberty consists of the power to be virtuous, and that virtue is modern (XI, 2-4).
Montesquieu concludes the second section by discussing England, not as a model but as the source of that liberty, or virtue, which animates the modern republic. In his teaching, an understanding of liberty in its several variations foreshadows the emergence of the requisites of the republican form. Discussion of England serves to introduce discussion of this liberty, with a focus on political liberty, strictly defined. What follows is a portrait of the republic. Political liberty is the necessary condition of the civil liberty which the citizen exercises. It exists, therefore, in the constitution (XI, 6). Its creation is as dependent upon limiting abuses of power as it is in granting power to do the limited. This is accomplished by using power to check power, that is, in the arrangement. It depends on the legislator.

The citizen exercises civil liberty, and Montesquieu's central section commences with a discussion of it. It is defined as safety, or as the opinion the citizen holds of his safety (XII, 1-2). The most basic form of safety is physical safety, and it is with the body that the bulk of this section is concerned. Civil liberty is based on private interests, and this fact is best seen in its opposite, slavery—the ignoring or destruction of the private—the slave has no will (XV, 1, 7). Montesquieu argues that no one has an interest that requires slavery.

Only after a lengthy discussion of civil liberty (or the demands of the body, including the effects of various climates and the means employed in providing sustenance) may consideration of the best laws be undertaken. This consideration begins with distinctions between laws, morals, manners, etc. The principal distinction, however, is that between interior—and hence nongovernable—and exterior—and hence governable—conduct (XIX, 16-17, 19, 20). Those things attaching to the body and its passions provide a surer basis for the formulation of laws. In fact, citizens will more readily be induced to do great things by their passions than by reason (XIX, 27).

This can be explained, to a large extent, by the fact that citizens will be individualists, which can only mean caring for their private interests rather than public interests, and that their nation will be commercial, "free of destructive prejudices." Wealth and heavy taxes will be introduced, and men of limited fortunes will be industrious. Individual interests will multiply greatly, and conflicts between them will multiply. Positions of power will be greatly distinguished; men will be less distinguished. Men will be esteemed by "real qualities," and those are only two: wealth and personal merit. And there will be luxury, though based on "real needs" rather than vanity (XIX, 27). The men in this regime will be occupied wholly by their interests.

This regime will further distinguish itself by including all men and basing itself on a predisposition in favor of reason. Men will reason in error—they will, in fact, calculate—but it is the reasoning, not its end, that is important. Reasoning brings liberty to a free nation (XIX, 27). It is the forming of opinions—or calculations—about one's safety that is particularly protective of the favored position of reason and thereby of the
regime. As the opinions must undergo as frequent and extensive changes as private interests, the process could be perpetual if the principle of the regime is maintained. To understand the principle of this regime one must consider its basis, commerce, in terms of its relationship to the three possible principles.

It is of note that the book which develops the "free nation" is followed by the book which develops commerce in a "free nation," the final book of the central section. But no mention of principle is made in the former. In the final chapter of the book on a free nation, the word "republic" does not occur. Since it is advertised as further treatment of the regime treated in book XI, where "republic" is used twenty-eight times (seven in chapter 6), this omission is all the more striking: the word "republic" is absent in the one chapter in which it appears that the character of the republic is to be most fully developed. It is still more surprising because Montesquieu suggests a correlation between his "republic" and that of Plato.10 Having substituted his for that of Plato, he then drops the republic and its principle altogether.

This paradox is solved in two ways. First, the free nation of book XIX, chapter 27, is indeed a republic. This is clear from the following book, which demonstrates that the commerce described in this chapter is only possible in a republic and, ultimately, in a modern republic (XX, 3-4, 9, 12, 23). Why, then, was it necessary to avoid mention of the republic in the chapter that most openly speaks of the pursuit of private passion and its place in the regime? The response provides the second solution.

A return to the ancient republic or, more specifically, to what remains of it, once it has been corrected,11 suggests the solution. What remains is the attachment to the regime, l'amour de patrie, without the actual necessity for self-renunciation. That singular passion, virtue, is no longer exclusive of all the other passions. Indeed, excellence is now based on

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10 Bk. V. This correlation helped to explain the position of aristocracy in his scheme: aristocracy is perfect only as it approaches democracy, the true republic, since the two are clearly different regimes. The difference between the two strongly resembles the difference between the Republic and its resultant aristocracy after it has been corrupted. This is Aristotle's criticism of Socrates' presentation: the reason for the corruption is unclear; we do not see the one state becoming the other, as in all the other examples. To the extent that the corrupted version of the ideal state is just that, there must be a principle of movement between them which demonstrates this coming into being. Montesquieu accounts for these factors by denominating the two regimes as examples of the republic, and demonstrating how the more corrupted version can be perfected. If it can be perfected, this process can only move in the direction of being more republican. That which it approaches, then, must be most republican. Montesquieu removes the obscurity of Socrates; then he allows the republic to disappear altogether.

11 If, in the modern world, the republic loses its size (smallness), it follows that it loses the corollaries of that size—i.e., singular institutions such as the community of goods, constant attention of each citizen toward every other citizen, etc.
them. But those very passions upon which the regime must be based are most effective not when consciously reflected upon (men will reason in error) but when sublimated to the exercise of sovereignty (as indeed they were sublimated, for differing reasons, among the ancients).

A politics of the beastly must not be beastly politics: this would seem the true gloss on the statement that a free people can be led by their passions to great things even against their true interests. This assertion can be true only if the fact that men are acting on the basis of interest is not disclosed to them. Their interests must be operative but unmentionable. 

*L'amour de patrie* may only be *l'amour propre*—but it must sound like *l'amour de patrie*.

When the discussion turns to interest proper, the "republic" cannot be mentioned, although this is the true understanding of its principle, virtue and hence equality. It is only his equality which permits ancient and modern republics to bear the same name. Equality is, however, imperfect in the one and perfect in the other; that which unites the two also divides them. The ancient republic grants equality to all citizens; the modern republic grants citizenship to all. This necessitates differing standards of judgment in these contrasting regimes, as indicated by the fact that the ancient citizenship is constructive while the modern is receptive. Modern citizenship thereby conveys those unmentionable rights—the corollaries of interest—while ancient citizenship provides the occasion for greatness to those who can or would be great. Therein lies the meaning of Aristotle's defense of the natural slave; therein lies the meaning of Montesquieu's assertion that Aristotle proves nothing.

Finally, the effort Montesquieu makes to heighten the differences between books XIX and XX (the final books of the central section) suggests that they must be read together if one is to appreciate those differences. The introduction to the former explained that its subject was of great extent; the latter is deemed to be limited. In the metaphors of each introduction contrasts also appear: in book XIX, Montesquieu moves—he moves to the right, slides, pierces, and makes light; in book XX, he is moved—"I want to flow on a tranquil river, carried along by the torrent." In the one he is creative; in the other he is a historian. What book XIX brings into open discussion is hidden again in book XX.

Book XX once again speaks of virtue, of modern virtue, "*humanité*," and of the fact that its place is in the modern republic. It speaks less of interest or passion, except to show its connection with "exact justice" in the commercial republic. In short, Montesquieu retakes the high ground, dissociating his regime from brigandage on the one hand and "those moral virtues" that induce men to renounce self-interest on the other. Commerce, he says, corrupts pure morals but it perfects barbarian morals. It is a civilizing influence, curing the destructive prejudices of pure morals and bringing gentle morals. It is this course, a course of prudent modernity, which he extols. The modern republic, in short, must encourage acquisitiveness, but what it must praise is the peacefulness, civility, gentility—
humanité—for which it is responsible. Books XIX and XX differ so greatly only because they go together.

To say that commerce is the necessary condition of the modern republic obscures the issue of the nature of the confederal republic mentioned above. But it is the understanding of the necessity for a confederal republic—eliminating, as it does, a state of war—which permits the discussion of a modern republic and its necessary condition, commerce. A confederation of republics based on "those moral virtues" will not do. The only noncommercial republic of consequence to have ever existed perished from the very moment at which it tried to survive without plying the arts of a warrior state. Rome failed to provide its citizens with that which Montesquieu says must be assured: subsistence, food, comfortable clothing, and a healthful way of life (XXIII, 19).

The confederal republic established must have a separation of powers to avoid tyranny, since only this separation can bring about the multiplicity of interests essential to the republic's virtue. A regime based on majority rule cannot include more than the majority in the exercise of sovereignty (a pursuit of interests) unless it denies to the majority the right to govern totally or—what is the same thing—to hold power.

Only the commercial republic is capable of becoming the public-interest state. That, then, is the basis of the confederal republic. It was a response to the inner weakness of the large republic and the exterior weakness of the small republic. From its initial consideration, Montesquieu moves to consideration of the republic of singular institutions and of the commercial republic. Legislators, he indicates, create singular institutions in small republics to compensate for what they lack in commercial possibilities insofar as provision must be made for the general welfare (XX, 3, 23; II, 2; V, 3-4, 6).

The legislator's purpose is to create happiness inside the city while maintaining sufficient exterior power to be secure. That purpose is served by the combination of a confederal and a commercial republic. Thus the turn away from the ancient city is complete, if we understand the happiness of which Aristotle speaks to consist in virtuous activity. The happiness provided by the legislator of prudent modernity concerns itself with such activity understood as the Epicurean goal of satisfaction. Such a legislator engages in the construction of ordinary institutions dedicated to the singular purpose of peacefulness. Ultimately, the new virtue is merely the love of peace, and the good city knowns no other good life.

III

The Antifederalists, in the elaboration of their principles, cited Montesquieu as their authority. But in the areas of principal concern, with a few exceptions, they arrived at opposite conclusions. Each, for example, argues the necessity of commerce for establishing the best regime. Montesquieu, however, describes that commerce as one of economy, based on man-
ufactures and trade. What is offered by the Antifederalists is one of sufficiency, based on agriculture. Thus the equality of the Antifederalists' regime is not the same as Montesquieu's description of the best city. It is the equality of yeoman farmers, uncluttered by notions of redistribution of income and other industrial offshoots.

Similarly, the Antifederalists' position, which argues that government is to lead the vicious to virtue, fails to take account of Montesquieu's reference to virtue and vice as accidental matters, outside of the fundamental discussion of politics. Government, in Montesquieu's terms, is not created for the repression of vice. He does not reject the natural law thesis upon which the Antifederalists base their position, but he denies that the moral distinctions to which it gives rise are the necessary basis of political judgments.

It is not, therefore, anomalous that the free people of book XIX will be led by their passions rather than their reason. Their love for the state is first lowered to a passion and only thereby raised to a virtue. The good regime will not repress or punish vice; it will manipulate it in such manner that it is useful to the state. This may be what Montesquieu means when he says that the laws suppose citizens to be good.

As to the necessity of representation, the Antifederalists agreed with Montesquieu. They considered it an essential element of salutary government. But representation must be open, and its essential foundation is equality. And, finally, its proper manifestation is as true a representation of classes as possible. Given such representation, the Antifederalists believed that the danger of the development of separate interests between ruler and ruled could be avoided. But with respect to the republic, Montesquieu states that the positions of power will become greatly distinguished as a direct result of the effect of commerce and the extreme proliferation of interests. And it is this effect that is guaranteed by and guarantees the equality of the regime. Montesquieu argues that the regime is maintained by the arrangement of offices. But this does not mean the arrangement of classes—in terms of rendering them distinct—and the direct representation of interests. His republic calls for a confounding of classes. This is still, it may be argued, an arrangement. The point is conceded, but one notes that it is not the arrangement sought by the Antifederalists.

The Federalists are more often to be found in agreement with Montesquieu, though occasionally disagreeing on matters of significance. Initially, their ability to appreciate the defining characteristics of the regime's circumstances laid the foundation for this agreement. In its absolute form, Montesquieu's dictum with respect to territory led the Federalists, properly, to decide that government would be impossible; hence the intent of Montesquieu must have been directed to something less damaging for the prospect of human affairs. They reasoned that the principle of representation ameliorated this difficulty.
This conclusion was reached through consideration of the fundamental question of governing, not of its extent, but of its nature. When Montesquieu states as a general rule that small states must be republican, mediocre states, monarchic, etc., he seems only to be saying that one can discover its essential nature in its classical locus. When he says that a small republic is destroyed from without, etc., he is suggesting that the durability of the republic cannot depend on recreating the classical locus. In other words, a change in the nature of republican government to remove its handicaps removes the strictures of size as well as its fundamental incapacity. The Federalists concluded with Montesquieu that under a system in which the people held all powers "all would be lost." This constitutes their parting glance at ancient democracies. Tiny agricultural republics uniting the citizens in single bodies for the management of affairs were rejected as tyrannical. In fact, so long as the people hold the greater power of legislating, they are the holders of all the powers of government. This is why the legislative power is seen as greatest. Although it is true that a people may commit themselves to the hands of governors because of an extensive territory, the Federalists held such action to be an independent good. It remains only to adduce the basis of a regime so constituted.

Montesquieu's view of the negotiant and the political officer as natural allies and the Federalists' view of the manner in which compromises and coalitions of interests form the stuff of republican politics combine in a concept of political knowledge as reflected in interested behavior. The attempt to build homogeneity through a proliferation of interests, therefore, unites the theories of Montesquieu and Publius.

Publius argues that the American states will become more like each other, not because all will be reduced to a common denominator but because all will be raised to an equal level of interested behavior. Montesquieu holds that a general mediocrity will exist wherein the poorest must work to survive, the richest to conserve. The multiplication of interests will serve to attach all to the general interest. It is, at bottom, this trade and finance that must be instituted if the representation is to be effective.

The Antifederalists appear to have fully appreciated the modern predisposition to provide for the body, but they approach that task more directly than either Montesquieu or Publius. Their call for a wider representation—specifically, for representation of the middle class, though it is often aimed at all or most "interests"—is based on the assumption that the protection of equality and individual rights must be an open affair. This may require the acknowledgment that men have private interests, but that is part of the bargain. Reminding men of their rights is not viewed as reminding them of their passions. In that sense, the regime is not to be protected by noble lies or wise men; it is to be protected by its motive force, equality as derived from natural law.
Indeed, government exists specifically to enforce whatever limits there are to the pursuit of happiness.

The Federalists reasoned in terms of satisfying private interests, and they were not ashamed of discussing the place that interests occupy in human affairs. Yet they were reluctant to discuss the fact that the establishment of government on the basis of interest vests a right in citizens to pursue their passions. They posited the fact of such behavior as the occasion for instituting government but discreetly treated government as existing independent of such behavior. The confounding of classes that was created treated equality as the elimination of distinctions between rich and poor while creating the distinction of interests. As not all interests can be equal, the multiplicity of interests represents an inequality. Yet that inequality exists only between specific interests and is drawn from the regime's equality itself. It is this inequality created by equality that renders necessary a silence as to rights: this is so because it is impossible for government to enforce, equally, every limit on the pursuit of happiness.

That Federalists and Antifederalists must jointly be considered the Founders of America—thus uniting their contrary positions—is appropriate. Together they present a complete interpretation of the regime. With respect to that about which one should be mute in founding and maintaining regimes, they either follow and are properly silent or reject, on the basis of an older prudence, the prudent modernity of Montesquieu. Whether one accepts the one or the other is dependent upon the extent to which the problem of political theory is seen to be embodied in the American founding.

If virtue is the answer to the problem of the possibility of modern republican government, if this virtue consists of that excellence particular to the pursuit of private interests, understood as love of one's country or whatever makes such excellence possible, if an extensive commerce is the basis of such a constitution, then Montesquieu's dictum that small republics suffer an incurable defect and large republics a curable defect is readily understood. A constitution can prudently control the form and nature of that to which it alone applies. The virtue of a republic's citizens can not be a guarantee of the virtue of those of its neighboring regimes. Small republics are prey to conquest, and this, says Montesquieu, is incurable. Large republics can, of course, provide for their defense if they are sufficiently virtuous to avoid the internal defect of dissension. They can only be thus virtuous in a commercial republic, identifying their virtue with their immediate interests. The public-interest state speaks not to the interest the citizens hold in the city, but to the interest the public nurtures in the citizen.
To write books about other people's books (for this is roughly what intellectual biography amounts to), can it ever be more than an acceptable form of parasitism—at best a retailing of goods from a manufacturer's warehouse, at worst an attempt to sell something which is already available for free?

I propose to address the question: what contribution to our understanding can we reasonably expect from somebody who undertakes to give an account of how some noteworthy writer came to think as he did? The enterprise itself is a recent one. A century ago, when biography and panegyric were barely distinguishable, it was considered scarcely proper to ask how so-and-so developed or changed his ideas. Nowadays there is no lack of books which center their attention upon this specific question. We have Leon Trotsky on Tolstoy; G. J. Warnock on Wittgenstein; Peter Munz on Hooker; Peter Brown on St. Augustine; Shirley Letwin (in The Pursuit of Certainty) on Hume, Bentham, J. S. Mill, and Beatrice Webb; Gertrude Himmelfarb on Darwin and Acton. Of these, the last-named might, indeed, be called a professional intellectual biographer.

The expression "intellectual biography" suggests the life of a mind, and thereby something less than a complete life; there is abridgement, abstraction, restriction. Less is said about the lively subject than might be said. It is, of course, true that all biography, whether or not it avows a limited range of vision, must be something more than a comprehensive catalogue of events threaded on to a time sequence. An exhaustive compendium of human responses between the margins of birth and death may be conceivable, but if one were ever to be found it would no more be biography than chronicle could ever be history.

If we look at the general, apparently unqualified, biographies, we find they are commonly built around some theme, or some phase represented as the high point of the story; how he became a millionaire, prime minister, or the founder of the Salvation Army. Sometimes there is more than one theme; the career, domestic life, favorite diversions, or the ups and downs of his church membership. Some general biographies might be called an account not of one life but of several, which happen to converge in one lifetime, which is itself a mere physical junction. Michael Holroyd's Lytton Strachey composes a literary career, a social saga, a sex life, and some pure natural history. Ivone Kirkpatrick on Mussolini is an essay on two simple themes: a political career and a domestic life. Julian Symons gives us in a study of his brother A. J. A. Symons a bibliophile, a social climber, a gastronome, a biographer, and a collector of knick-knacks.
There is, in principle, no limit to the number of themes which might be constructed out of the records of a man's life, especially the public life of a modern man, lived in times when to be civilized probably means little more than the ability to run several concurrent lives in one lifespan. Theme-building will be limited only by the biographer's own interest and by what the documents will permit; you could hardly get a mathematician's career out of Cromwell's letters and speeches, or a sociologist's out of Calvin's Institutes.

Turning now from the allegedly general to the avowedly qualified biography, here we have a self-conscious, deliberate attempt to draw the subject into categorically close focus, to fix upon a theme believed to have an identity of its own, owing nothing of a direct nature to other pursuits or interests which the subject may have followed. The prototypes of all qualified biography are the lives of the saints, beginning with *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* and its successors. In the nineteenth century there was a flood of spiritual biographies and autobiographies coinciding with the heyday of British missionary societies. Well does one recall some of the titles on a Nonconformist family bookshelf: *My Call to Tibet*, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, *Forty Years with Christ in China*, *Mary Slessor's Life of Service*, *Adventures with the Bible in Brazil*. These were all lives of nineteenth-century Protestant saints. They told, and set out only to tell, a single story, which was that of a pilgrim's progress. How impossible he was in the home, his venereal inclinations or lack of them, his like or dislike of the finer arts, his management of his financial affairs—none of this appeared or needed to appear. The biographer wrote a circumscribed life of the soul; how so-and-so became a moral exemplar, or a globe-trotter for God, how he came to be as he was in a certain special respect.

What about lives of the mind? If we look to the nineteenth century for books portending the modern intellectual biography we find them less in missionary and more in literary biography, under titles like *The Life and Works or Life and Times* of somebody, and written sometimes by scribes of the class of Froude, Lockhardt, Macaulay, or Cavendish. In the main they were eulogies of their subjects, but insofar as they attempted a critical assessment of the career, they germinated a biographical idiom of which we now have the mature offspring.

Now, what are we to expect from the qualification "intellectual" before the word biography? A "mind life"; everybody of course has one, but we are looking for a particular one, whether or not a living is earned with it. A reputation, and possibly a livelihood, is acquired by the practice of a mental skill, and it is this skill which is our quarry. The skill of the intellectual, we may say initially, is that of sophisticated utterance. The uttering will not necessarily be done with words; C. R. Leslie's book on John Constable is a biography of a mind which uses visual materials almost exclusively, while Norman del Mar's three-volume study of Richard Strauss is a recent addition to the library of musical biography. But for
the most part, sophisticated utterers will be dealers in words, in short, writers.

We may note in passing that sophisticated utterance, or intellectual work, is more precise than "mental work," but less definite than, for instance, philosophy, mathematics, or political thought. The adjective "intellectual," indeed, holds a place in the scale of conceptual definition comparable to that of "moral." Moral relationships are a specific kind of human relationship, but they are less definite than particular relationships of mutual obligation like those between doctor and patient, landlord and tenant, teacher and pupil.

Sophisticated utterance, then, is more than idle thoughts. It is speech, writing, gesture, all organized into statements which are designed to be mutually reinforcing, that is to say, argumentative. The intellectual, we may say, is one who constantly feels a need to add to what he has already said. He will try to be ready with another statement to buttress the first, and, if asked again, will oblige again, or try to. He is chronically self-conscious, living out his life in the shadow of anticipated supplementary questions, doing his best to answer them before they are asked. His discourse has to be argumentative, and he is liable to find it difficult to put a stop to the process, or, indeed, to speak in any other fashion. Now we know a considerable variety of such writing, but for our purpose it may be helpful to distinguish two types, which I shall call, adapting Aristotle's terminology, the formal and the substantial.

Formal arguments are complete in themselves, which never invite query as to their point or their justification. They say all that needs to be said in order to make their sense. Mathematical theorems and philosophical arguments leave nothing unsaid which is needed to make the discourse complete and intelligible. One need never ask the point of a Euclidean proof, or of Aristotle's classification of the ancient polis into six exhaustive and mutually exclusive types. The disclosure within the argument is total, and such arguments are self-terminating. They cannot be "settled out of court."

Substantial arguments are pieces of reasoning intended to make sense of, to justify, or to bring about a result which is not part of, and cannot be put into, the argument itself. They have an activating occasion and a subsequent outcome in terms of which the reasoning itself becomes comprehensible. If initial occasion and anticipated outcome disappear, so does the argument. Political arguments and legal proceedings are of this kind. They can live only as long as they are not dropped, or settled out of court. In 1971 the Wilberforce tribunal in Britain concerned itself with settling upon a fair rate of pay for electricity employees. The argument was properly confined to questions of differentials, comparable wages in comparable jobs, productivity scales, and the like. What was not mentioned in the proceedings was that the argument was the result of a strike, and took place under the threat of further strike action. These were
the circumstances which gave the argument its beginning and its end, which made it intelligible, but were not themselves a part of it.

Thus intellectual practice is argumentative in these two ways. And the credo of intellectualism is a belief that the boundaries of argument should be extended as far as possible, that it be let loose into the whole tide of life. The besetting sin of the intellectual, the excess, the folie de grandeur of which he is always on the brink, is the refusal to recognize any limits at all, to see the whole of life as ideally to be translated into the compass of discourse. He is occupationally vulnerable to the belief that, with sufficient industry and acumen, you can press every human wish, every impulse, onto the discursive field of battle, a field on which final victories are to be won, where victory consists in pre-empting all possible responses. Your vanquished opponents are given a grace-and-favor leasehold on condition that they end all verbal resistance. The refusal to keep this kind of discourse in its place betrays, perhaps, an inability to distinguish between formal arguments, which have a total and self-justifying quality, and substantial ones, whose ultimate justification lies outside themselves. The ideal society of the complete intellectual is one where the talk of this kind never stops and where nothing else ever starts, or, if it starts, it owes its life entirely to the permission of argument.

Now the man we can call an intellectual has this skill, but we need to know more, because it can be turned in different directions. It can set itself onto problems in formal logic or arguments for and against coeducation, or it can engage in the weird casuistry which surrounds peace talks. If a man writes exclusively about one of these matters we usually call him simply a logician, an educational theorist, or an authority in strategic studies. And biographies and autobiographies will reflect such specialism. We shall find books and theses entitled *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, *The Educational Ideas of Cyril Burt*, and *The Political Thought of Henry Kissinger*. If, however, he does not specialize but writes in all three, and perhaps in addition finds writing a novel not beyond him, together with some books on marriage and morals, we may rest content to call him an intellectual, meaning, simply, that his capacity for organized thought is generously employed. He is a general practitioner of the discursive art. The ideal intellectual is a citizen of the whole systematic world. At the end of his biography it seems that he has left no territory unvisited. Such a man may, of course, have one love, one corner of the world which he calls his home, where he is recognized to be resident expert. For Russell this was mathematics. Or he may be nomadic, passing, as Arthur Koestler has done, from sex manuals to capital punishment, to the history of science, to Eastern mysticism, to the Thirty Years War, with no permanent roots in one or the other.

Most intellectuals restrict their travels somewhat. The history of that diverse body of letters called political thought displays a line of such travelers, who have divided their trudgings between the flat plains of political and moral recommendation and the high peaks of theology and
philosophy. In recent years some have roamed the lower slopes of economic theory, seeking there a heavenly model for an earthly city.

Such, then, is the activity of the intellectual. How is this mind to be accorded biographical treatment? Biography, if it is a genuinely historical undertaking, turns on the recognition of change and movement. The biographer's task will be to perceive and render intelligible the shifts and alterations in a man's life. As a historian he has an advantage not shared by many of his colleagues; he has chosen, in biography, a field of study whose outer limits are made for him. The termini of the general, unspecified biography are the life and death of the subject. Those of the intellectual biography are the beginning and the end of a working life, from the moment when the subject first puts pen to paper to his last publication, including, if you are lucky enough to find them, some usable unpublished manuscripts which nobody else has noticed.

At any rate you have a body of finished work, and whatever falls outside it belongs to another story, that of posthumous influence or reputation. There are almost as many books on "machiavellianism," which fall into this class, as there are on Machiavelli, while Lawrence Bongie's study of Hume's thought has a lengthy tailpiece on what later writers made of Hume. A prologue of writers who allegedly influenced your subject, of course, falls within the biography itself, since it tells entirely of what he made of them. Peter Munz's study of Hooker is in fact constructed entirely in this way, with chapters on the use which Hooker made of Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas, and Marsilius of Padua.

This asset of having limited boundaries within which to work is, however, about the only solid advantage which the intellectual—or any other—biographer may call his own. There is a daunting catalogue of difficulties, and of these the central one, and it is as old as Boswell, is that you, the biographer, are entering inescapably into competition with your chosen subject, a competition in which you are very likely to be worsted. He, the subject, has used words as precise instruments of the imagination. Can you, the recorder of his labors, do less? He has already said plenty about himself, and you are presuming to add, without supererogation, to a formidable corpus. You make yourself as vulnerable as Hesketh Pearson knew himself to be in writing about Wilde and Shaw. Intellectuals are those whose work is in a sense their own intellectual autobiography, and you are trying to improve upon what is already creditable.

Philosophers present the greatest challenge to the biographer, since it is the essence of philosophy to strive for total transpicuous self-explanation. Philosophers provide their own skepticism and their own commentary, and those who write about their working lives usually have to rest content, like Diogenes Laertius, with an account of the lifetime of the man, an elliptical presentation of his doctrines, and perhaps some potted criticisms. Sometimes, it is true, the biographer may detect and set out to explain an apparent mutation in a philosopher's thinking. G. J. Warnock records the
long-recognized hiatus between Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*, and tries to set forth an underlying consistency.

Less challenging but still rewarding subjects are political scribblers who employ generalized reasoning to support their causes. Such writers often show changes of mind, or of front, and you may try to plot these alterations of course. The most rewarding subjects of all are those gentlemen of letters who write at different levels of abstraction, whose thinking tends to slip from one level to another, now engaging in formal analysis, now in sharply seasoned polemics and apology. John Locke, whose work has always teased commentators with its supposed incoherences, offered excellent material to Maurice Cranston. Montaigne, Machiavelli, and Pascal, all moralistic writers with a penchant for philosophy, have provided similar opportunity.

Whether one accepts the big challenge of writing about a philosopher or the lesser one of trying to detect intellectual system in a rumbustious political writer, the question one faces is what can be added to an already highly articulate piece of self-declaration? I suggest that biographers' contributions may be classified exhaustively into four types. The types are, of course, abstract, and any actual intellectual biography will often be found to contain elements of more than one. In order of ascending complexity they are phasing the story; detecting themes in it; accounting for change within a single major theme; and trying to relate one theme, or interest, to others.

First, and most modest, you may detect phases in the life's work of your subject, making seams in the hitherto seamless robe of time and thereby giving structure and line to what would otherwise be mere commentary. Geoffrey Faber's book on Benjamin Jowett presents three phases in the story, which he calls "Apprenticeship," "Ascendancy," and "Decline and Fall of a Reputation." This is a simple enough formula, a slightly elaborate version of the even simpler one of beginning, middle, and end. Faber's work, by carrying us past Jowett's death, might be called the story of a career plus posthumous reputation. The focus is upon the Master of Balliol's career rather than upon changes in his ideas, and is thus hardly a "pure" intellectual biography.

Second, you may be a little more ambitious and sort the story out into themes. In Gertrude Himmelfarb's book on Lord Acton, change and movement are virtually restricted to the first and last chapters. The rest of the book is thematically organized under headings like "Conflicts with the Papacy," "Liberal Politics," and "Writings on Liberty." The contribution, which stays close to its sources, is that of classification, or reclassification. Miss Himmelfarb knows that she is not inventing the themes; they are the declared interests of Acton himself. In the preface she admits to giving only a "textual analysis" of a prolific writer, and defends the procedure by pointing to the dangers of "overintellectualizing," that is, of attributing to a writer a level of thought to which he never aspired or which he never attained.
Peter Quennell, writing on Ruskin, likewise shapes the story into themes, denoted by chapters headed "Opinions of an Art Critic," "Influence of a Social Reformer," and "Literary Development." As with Miss Himmelfarb’s *Acton*, there is no attempt to locate a master interest or central concern in the subject's work. Quennell claims only to have attempted "a balanced portrait." The book stays close to the sources, but gives shape to them.

This way of writing is not easy. It is beset, like all historical writing, with the bugbear of preserving chronological movement while analyzing the themes. As soon as a theme is explored to any depth, the time sequence suffers disruption. Biographers have employed various techniques to keep the two in some kind of balance. Michael Holroyd, in his *Lytton Strachey*, employs flashbacks and flash-forwards. Ivone Kirkpatrick keeps his *Mussolini* moving steadily forward save for one static chapter which analyzes the character of his subject. Elie Halevy on Bentham (in *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*) and Maurice Cowling on J. S. Mill present critical studies of intellectual positions assumed to be more or less fixed.

The third contribution is to record and account for a change of mind or belief in one of the interests—usually identified as the central one—of the chosen intellectual. He may, of course, have given an account of this himself, but this will rank as only one piece of evidence, and initially suspect evidence at that, to be tested against other evidence. Charles Darwin, in his later years, said that the idea of the mutation of species by natural selection was germinating in his mind while aboard the "Beagle," yet Miss Himmelfarb, going through the "Beagle" diaries and Darwin, in his later years, said that the idea of the mutation of species which apparently remained intact throughout the voyage, followed shortly afterwards by a blinding inspirational period. For the historian of ideas the mature rejections of a writer on his own work are never to be taken at face value.

Overt changes of mind like those of Darwin give the biographer something fairly definite to fix upon. Much more elusive to trace are shifts of interests or failing engagement, since your subject may be inarticulate, reticent, or even ignorant of these. Peter Munz, writing on Hooker, was faced with the question of how Hooker, having marshaled all the Thomist arguments about the mutual complementarity of the orders of nature and grace, of the *regnum* and the *sacerdotum*, came, in the last three books of his great work, to fall into a Marsilian strain of argument which stressed the priority of civil peace and therefore of the civil order over the ecclesiastical. Munz accounts for the change from within Hooker, referring to the political commission to defend the Settlement from which the great apologist started. He had begun with the firm conviction that the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity could be represented in Thomist terms, with grace supplementing, not supplanting, nature, and church and civil government harmoniously cooperating under a monarch and Supreme
Governor united in one person. By the time he had reached book VI, however, his growing and painful awareness of the realities of Tudor practice had undermined his ability to use Thomist categories with confidence. He then turned to Marsilius for generalized arguments more appropriate to the situation he saw before him.

Here, then, is an account of a change in a writer's direction drawn not from extraneous sources but from the record itself. The evidence is entirely internal, and relates the collapse of the formal argument to the subject's changed view of the substantial circumstances which first set his pen to paper. Munz points to later passages of Hooker which betoken disillusionment and in fact adduces Hooker's growing uneasiness about the coherence of his work as a hypothesis to explain his failure to finish writing it.

This theme of disillusionment is a frequent motif of intellectual biography and points sharply to a major difficulty of keeping to the "life-of-the-mind" brief. In writing of intellectuals you are examining the doings of super-civilized people whose whole life represents an engagement to self-knowledge. But their passion for consistency often makes them reticent or even determinedly unaware of their changes of mind, and in exploring these the biographer is treading the outer reaches of the mind itself, where the intellectual and the affective life meet and merge. If one follows any account of a writer's change of front, abandonment of an argument, or switch in style of apology, one encounters words like "disappointment" and "disillusionment" and phrases about realizing the incompatibility of something with something else or references to a growing sense of ineffectiveness. The language of sensibility invades the story of an argument. C. R. Leslie, setting out to draw the mind of Constable, observes that in Constable's case the invasion is near-total, since "the affections of the heart were inseparably blended with all that related to painting."

Mrs. Letwin, in The Pursuit of Certainty, acknowledges an emotive component in the thinking of Hume and of J. S. Mill. In a chapter entitled "The Philosophical Enthusiasm Renounced" she shows that Hume's increasing feeling for the complexity of everything undermined his energy for philosophy, that his "sentiments" turned him towards history and essay writing as more suitable media for thinking on paper about politics. On Mill, she notes that the friendship with Harriet Taylor was followed by a new interest in "the souls of men" as well as in the machinery of government. Accounting for a change of mind, front, or commitment to a central interest, therefore, is a third way of shaping an intellectual biography. In complexity it outdistances the phasing of a story or its classification into more or less self-contained themes.

The fourth and most intricate contribution the biographer can make is to connect the diverse interests of his subject—to find, if he can, a unifying principle which will bind the whole corpus together. He is challenged by, and must respond to, a many-sided mind. If writing of a philosopher, he will search for an even more comprehensive master idea than his
subject used in order to improve the coherence. J. W. N. Watkins joins Hobbes' conception of the method proper to philosophy with his political thought to demonstrate a total "system of ideas." Arnold Kaufmann, in his book on Nietzsche, reargues the old belief that "the will to power." not atheism, is the centerpiece of Nietzsche's thinking.

This impulse to find consistency is not limited to those who write about philosophers. C. R. Leslie discloses a single mind of Constable, based on the paintings and on letters, some of which refer to the paintings. Leon Troyat takes Tolstoy's novels and matches them with the diaries in order to determine how far the novels are autobiographical. Irene Coltman, in *Private Men and Public Causes*, sets the literary interests and the political commitments of some seventeenth-century Englishmen of moderate Royalist persuasion alongside each other; the point of convergence is a demonstration that these intellectuals were indecisive ditherers in politics. Russell, in his lectures in the 1890s, tried to unify Leibniz's two major interests, theology and metaphysics. He argued that Leibniz's theory that the essence of matter is not extension met a demand for a theory of the Eucharist as well as the requirements of formal logic, citing as evidence the open perturbation suffered by Leibniz on discovering that belief in a vacuum conflicted with the theological principles of continuity and plenitude. Russell repeated this procedure of connecting philosophical with extraphilosophical interests in his *History of Western Philosophy*, which could be styled a history of Western intellectualism.

Whatever subject he chooses, the biographer who follows this fourth manner of writing needs to detect and match up at least two distinct interests of the mind before him, to strive to connect them, without, however, forcing upon his subject a contrived and total consistency. Whichever of the four methods is adopted, the whole argument must take account of change and must contrive to say something which the subject has not already said for himself.

Perhaps the most inviting pitfall in the biographer's track is to write about himself, and there are two ways of doing this. The more obvious way is to use his chosen subject as target practice for his own beliefs and preferences. K. R. Popper's studies of Plato and Hegel and Maurice Cowling's of J. S. Mill tell more of their authors than of their subjects. In both cases there is visible a luminous passion to discredit. The less obvious method is to use the subject as a sympathetic vehicle on which the biographer may load his own preoccupations, worries, even obsessions. Tolstoy, the would-be philosopher who made do as a novelist, the fox who would for preference have been a hedgehog, has inspired at least one writer to translate his own career into an interpretation of Tolstoy's intellectual life. The intellectual biographer, more than any other writer, frequently offers the bargain of two lives for the price of one.
ATHEISTIC FREEDOM AND THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF SAVAGE CUSTOMS: AN INTERPRETATION OF CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS*

HARRY NEUMANN

In Plato’s Republic Socrates denounces poets who unearth hidden passions which his utopia wishes to suppress. By publicizing interdicted cravings, these intellectuals undermine publicspiritedness. Unlike ordinary citizens, their attachment to the prevailing morality is not jeopardized once they discern the skeletons in its closet. Instead, they champion its forbidden or illicit side. Thus their fight with unsophisticated, old-fashioned morality is a family quarrel between the same morality’s noble and its repulsive forms. Indeed the intellectuals seem more loyal to than others to that morality, since they, unlike pious citizens, embrace its ugly, repellent forms.

Philosophers, however, take their insight into the questionable foundations of the regnant morality as grounds for doubting its worth. Unlike old-fashioned citizens, they do not shun those questions but believe that intellectuals should question the value of the shocking side of the predominant orthodoxy instead of defending it against suppression by traditional faith and morals. From a philosophical standpoint, both intellectuals and traditionalists are defenders of the prevailing orthodoxies. The philosopher’s belief in his ignorance of the true value of the orthodox morality is responsible for his neutrality in the war between its traditionalist and its sophisticated defenders. Depending on circumstances, he supports one or another of these warring camps.

In Heart of Darkness, Conrad or his Marlow are not philosophers but intellectuals in the sense just defined. On their horizon, the affirmation of Western morality’s illicit underground presents itself as a triumph of wisdom and ethics, far more noble than its puritanical repression or

* This article was assisted by a research fellowship from the Earhart Foundation.
2 Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in From Max Weber, trans. H. H. Garth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1958), pp. 147-48: “We realize today that something can be sacred not only in spite of its not being beautiful, but rather because and in so far as it is not beautiful. You will find this documented in the fifty-third chapter of the book of Isaiah and in the twenty-first psalm. And, since Nietzsche, we realize that something can be beautiful, not only in spite of the aspect in which it is not good, but rather in that very aspect. You will find this expressed earlier in the Fleurs du Mal, as Baudelaire named his volume of poems. It is today commonplace to observe that something may be true although it is not beautiful and not holy and not good. Indeed it may be true in precisely those respects.”
" tepid skepticism" about its value (pp. 72-73). By "Western morality" I mean the authoritative ethics in governments which derive their right to govern from the consent of the governed. This definition includes all important modern regimes, Nazi as well as Communist and liberal democratic. No less than Jefferson or Lenin, Hitler insisted that his rule was legitimized by the consent or will of the people (Volk). Consequently he (like his Communist and democratic opponents) ridiculed the Japanese theocracy as unenlightened superstition, for there the people existed for the sake of their divine emperor, whose legitimacy was not dependent upon their consent; in fact, his will or consent was responsible for their legitimacy.

Western contempt for Japanese theocracy arose from the belief that individuals should not be subject to moral authorities which they do not freely choose to accept. Legitimate acceptance depends solely upon individual choice, not upon some natural or divine compulsion which precludes free consent. In this paper, moralities dependent for their acceptance upon that freedom are called atheistic. Atheism thus understood need not deny the existence of gods or moral standards. The crucial point is the atheist's insistence that his reason or will is not governed by standards whose authority he is not at liberty to reject.

I suggest that atheism springs from the opinion that the individual's reason should emancipate itself from the morality authoritative in his regime. Once emancipated, he can strive for an impartial evaluation permitting him to accept or reject that morality on its own merits. However, the belief that men should attempt this emancipation is itself questionable. Consider Genesis (2:16-17). If its value is not demonstrable, the faith in its worth arises from an atheistic assertion of will and not from impartial insight. That self-assertion is the hallmark of what this paper calls atheism. For atheists, belief in the existence of divine or natural standards is subordinate to an unwillingness to recognize any authority which denies the right of self-determination. Atheists may believe in gods, but not in gods which preclude this right.

Atheism, the crime for which Socrates was executed, emerged with Greek philosophy or science. Of course, it appears as atheism only to men skeptical of that philosophy's claims to demonstrate the justice of rational emancipation from the gods of one's city. This paper assumes—never forgetting that it is an assumption—that atheistic self-assertion and not impartial reason have informed European or Western civilization since its birth in Socrates or some other Greek. Mr. Kurtz, the hero (or anti-hero)

5 Neumann, "Is Philosophy Still Possible?"
of *Heart of Darkness*, is that civilization's moral triumph: "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (p. 50).

Marlow, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, begins his description of Kurtz with a discussion of a pre-atheistic regime, the Rome which conquered Britain (p. 6). He contrasts Roman exploitation of British savages with European imperialism in Africa. The fundamental difference is the regnant morality of the two civilizations. Since the Roman's ultimate moral authorities, his gods, were concerned solely with Rome's happiness, Roman consciences experienced no qualms about ruthless exploitation of foreigners: indeed, Roman civic piety encouraged it. On such an horizon, loving one's enemies appears atheistic. However, modern or atheistic morality is concerned with the right to self-determination of individuals which are believed to be morally independent of any communal bonds. Indeed, these bonds are interpreted as the free creations of morally autonomous individuals. Thus atheists justify support for democratic, Communist, or Fascist regimes by appealing to moral concerns common to all liberated individuals. Consequently, their moral exhortations are universal; they tend to stress common human goods and not the self-aggrandizement to which in fact atheistic morality does subordinate all common goods.7

Marlow knows that any atheistic regime, whether imperialistic or anti-imperialistic, needs the siren song of lofty ideas to enlist support for its crusades: "An idea at the back of it . . . and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to" (p. 7). In a variant reading, he envies Romans the narrow civic piety responsible for their lack of concern with such propaganda, those "pretty fictions" designed by atheists to seduce others into their heart of darkness (p. 7). His revulsion at the "philanthropic pretense of the whole concern" (p. 25) causes his respect for Kurtz's abandonment of that pretense.

The relation between atheism's pretty fictions and Kurtz's final nightmare resembles that between the loftiness of his original report to the ISSSC (the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs) and his later subscriptum to it:

He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, "must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings—we approach them with the might as of a deity," and so on, and so on. "By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded," etc., etc. From that point he soared and took me with him. The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. . . . There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a

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method. It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: “Exterminate all the brutes!” [p. 51].

Mr. Kurtz here reveals the atheism informing Western civilization’s pretty fictions. In the absence of that revelation, men storming barricades in the name of those fictions appear to be “emissaries of light . . . weaning ignorant millions from their horrid ways . . . emissaries of pity and science and progress. . . . We want for the guidance of the cause entrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose” (pp. 12, 25-26). The ISSC’s claim to these lofty qualities (except for its obvious singleness of purpose) is atheistic propaganda intended to devalue the “horrid ways” of pre-atheistic regimes such as the ancient Romans or African tribes, for those regimes preclude atheistic liberation since their tribal or civic piety does not permit its devotees to experience themselves as free to reject its divine authority. Freedom of choice has no place in tribal or civic piety for which only fellow citizens who share that piety count. Thus the pious Romans who ruthlessly exploited Britain perceived themselves primarily as Romans and only secondarily, if at all, as human beings. In their eyes, only slaves, men without a tribal or civic religion of their own, were primarily human beings.

Ancient citizens piously traced their written and unwritten laws back to lawgivers who were gods or received their laws from gods. Consequently they saw themselves not as autonomous individuals but as subordinate to their sacred families and cities. Emancipation from those bonds was inconceivable to them. Only atheists would claim such freedom. Only gods who permitted or encouraged atheism would create men capable of it. For such gods, a man’s free acceptance or rejection of their authority is the prerequisite to true piety. They prefer free atheistic rejection of their authority to the denial made by civic piety that citizens are at liberty to reject its authority. Thus both atheists and the gods who

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8 Edmund Burke, *Burke’s Politics*, ed. J. Hoffman and P. Levack (New York, 1949), p. 466: “In the French Revolution . . . the philosophers had one predominant object which they pursued with a fanatical fury: that is, the utter extirpation of religion. To that every question of empire was subordinate. They had rather dominate in a parish of atheists than rule over a Christian world. Their temporal ambition was wholly subservient to their proselytizing spirit, in which they were not exceeded by Mahomet himself.” Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 254-63: “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heaven of a hell, a hell of heaven. / What matter where, if I be still the name, / And where I should be, all but less than he / Whom thunder hath made greater? here at least / We shall be free; th’ Almighty hath not built / Here for his envy, will not drive us hence. / Here we may reign secure, and in my choice / To reign is worth ambition, though in hell / Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.”

Atheistic Freedom

are possible in atheistic regimes would subscribe to the ISSSC's revulsion at the "horrid ways" of tribal and civic piety.

Freedom, and specifically intellectual freedom, is atheism's core. What one does with one's freedom—whether one supports democratic, anarchist, Communist, or Fascist regimes—is less important than its adamantly determination to undermine the belief in moral authorities which preclude atheistic liberty. Western propaganda glorifies this freedom, encouraging one to overlook its bestial forms. Men acquainted with Communist and Fascist terror hardly need Kurtz's Africa to discover atheistic freedom's heart of darkness. Yet why condemn any use of freedom, including Hitler's and Stalin's, if that freedom itself, and not its products or its justifications, is the ultimate court of appeals? Should not atheists despise such condemnations as relapses into a now-discredited past governed by tribal and civic superstition?

Does not fear of punishment or disgrace preclude full atheistic use of one's freedom, preventing the unleashing of the lusts forbidden by unenlightened tastes?

The joy of killing... and why not? The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What is there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, apathy, valor, rage... you can't understand. How could you?—with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums.... These little things make all the difference [pp. 36-37, 50].

For Conrad, the more the respect for non-atheistic morality declines, the more atheistic licence comes into its own. Kurtz in Africa, far from accustomed restraints, found that "there was nothing on earth to prevent him from killing whom he jolly well pleased" (p. 57). The solitude of the wilderness uncovered the abyss of freedom within his atheism. Had he never come to Africa, he might have been fooled by the altruistic propaganda glorifying martyrdom for the sake of human self-determination, the rights of man. In commenting upon the heads which Kurtz had impaled on stakes around his house, Marlow notes that

they only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts.... whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say.... But the wilderness had found him out early.... I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core [pp. 58-59].

Mr. Kurtz came to regard the whole universe as his property to be dealt with at his pleasure:

You should have heard him say, "My ivory, my intended, my station, my river, my—" everything belonged to him... but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. That was the reflection that made you creepy all over [p. 49].
Marlow considers Mr. Kurtz's atheism inhuman unless moderated by internal checks (pp. 22, 26-27, 32-34, 42, 49-50, 58-59, 67-69). However, no rational basis for checks exists if morality's true ground is liberty unfettered by prior restraints. Consequently, Marlow believes it fortunate that most advocates of freedom as the ground of virtue fail to comprehend their commitment's abyss. "The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily" (p. 34). Aware of this problem, a Platonic clerk who glorifies the ISSSC's messianic zeal nevertheless refuses to practice what he preaches: "I am not such a fool as I look, quoth Plato to his disciples" (p. 11). Marlow's aversion to lies (p. 27) is moderated by his refusal to deprive Kurtz's fiancée of the illusion which ennobles her life: "bowing my head before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion which shone with an unearthly glow in the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her... from which I could not even defend myself" (p. 77).

Marlow's "triumphant darkness" is not self-subsistent; it arises from the atheist refusal to acknowledge any moral authorities which would preclude unbridled self-indulgence. If those authorities are natural, then atheism is an unnatural effort to conquer nature, a rebellion against nature. In that case, atheism degrades what is naturally experienced as good to the level of edifying lies. Yet the charge that it is contrary to nature rests upon the assumption that unchecked self-determination is unnatural. Thus both atheism and the case against it seem to spring from unproved opinions which, if accepted as true, become noble or ignoble lies.

Faith in the truth of what atheism despises as pretty fictions is the remnant of pre-atheistic tribal or civic piety in regimes dedicated to the destruction of that piety. Such faith almost invariably fails to discern its conflict with the liberty which it claims to justify. For atheistic freedom justifies anything from intellectual emancipation to cannibalism, from Socrates and Jesus to Lenin and Hitler. Mr. Kurtz finally comprehends what readers of Heart of Darkness usually fail to grasp. Far from being in conflict with the ISSSC's lofty endorsement of human freedom, his cannibalism is its moral triumph. In his "extremist" pursuit of liberty (p. 74), Kurtz practices what the ISSSC preaches.

Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor rightly notes that most people abhor the consequences of atheistic freedom and censures Jesus for founding a religion dependent for its acceptance on man's freedom. To the Inquisitor and the dying Kurtz, religions of this sort seem inhuman. Probably for similar reasons, Tacitus characterizes Christians as haters of mankind (Annals 15:44). Kurtz both embraces his freedom and reviles it. Since some of his passions—especially those which formed him prior to his African odyssey—were not fully atheistic, they opposed the boundless freedom of atheism. Thus Marlow "saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly

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10 Cf. Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (Glencoe, Ill., 1958), p. 327, n. 287.
with itself" (p. 68). Appeals to Kurtz's less atheistic passions were frustrated by the strength of his newly acquired atheistic cravings, and no appeal in the name of atheism's altruistic fictions could carry much weight:

The awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts... had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations... I had to do with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had to invoke him—himself—his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above him or below him... He had kicked himself loose of the earth, of every restraint [p. 67].

On Marlow's horizon, Kurtz's last words ("The horror! The horror!") were sparked by true self-knowledge. Furthermore, Marlow discerns moral greatness in them:

He had summed up—he had judged. "The horror!"... it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth—that strange commingling of desire and hate... It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory. That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last [p. 72].

If morality's essence is freedom and not obedience, Kurtz's last words may well signify moral victory. Few have been so alive to atheism's capacity to uproot men from all earthly ties. Atheism's hegemony is responsible for what Heidegger calls homesickness (Heimweh), the pain of that rootlessness.11 This pain becomes global as Western morality discredits the last remnants of tribal and civic piety. At best, those remnants are lumped together with the ennobling illusion which Marlow encouraged in Kurtz's fiancée. At worst, they are scorned or patronized as "disadvantaged," "deprived," or "backword" peoples. Marlow discerns only "superstition... some kind of primitive honor" in the restraint preventing some hungry cannibals from devouring him (p. 42). Interpretations of this sort spring from the opinion that atheistic self-determination is the true ground of morality. All powerful contemporary regimes subscribe to this opinion, although only Marxists officially recognize the atheism informing Western civilization since its origin in Greek thought.

If Conrad agrees with Marlow's ascription of self-knowledge and moral triumph to the dying Kurtz, he thereby shows his Greek or atheistic prejudice. To be sure, traditionalists attached to atheism's pretty fictions may censure Conrad's glorification of Kurtz just as Socrates condemned poets who exposed the lack of nobility in his utopia's noble lies. However, denunciation of Kurtz in the name of man's right to self-determination misses the point, if Kurtz is the perfect embodiment of that right. The real question is not whether Kurtz misused his freedom but whether that

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freedom, however used, is good. To comprehend this question, one must pay serious attention to the strongest case against that freedom. One must leave regimes whose main struggle is between old-fashioned defense of atheism's pretty fictions and sophisticated glorification of its hideous depths and embark on historical studies centering around the conflict between Socrates and his Athenian accusers. In particular, one must strive to free one's mind of atheistic prejudice if grasp of the worth of the accusation of the Athenians is to emerge.

Socrates' accusers perceived the atheistic implications of the philosophical devaluation of non-atheistic pious attachment to noble or ignoble lies and unenlightened prejudices impeding human freedom. The question of the rightness of the condemnation of Socratic atheism by pious Athenians remains the question of Western civilization. That civilization emerged with Greek thought and culminated in what Marlow calls Kurtz's moral victory. So long as Western man's question remains questionable, the issue should not be prejudiced in favor of Socrates or Kurtz, for Plato's Socrates is to Conrad's Kurtz as atheism's noble exterior is to its heart of darkness. Is not skepticism the proper response to both atheism's Socratic and its Kurtzian forms, however difficult such detachment may be for Western moral tastes? Probably philosophers strive to embrace this skepticism, while intellectuals such as Marlow and Kurtz shun its tepidity (p. 71). Perhaps something of this philosophical effort is implied by the Platonic clerk's praise of the ISSSC's business at a distance and his refusal to engage directly in it (p. 11).
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