

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2019

Volume 46 Issue 1

3	<i>Hannes Kerber</i>	Leo Strauss on Exoteric Writing
27	<i>Marco Menon</i>	An Interpretation of Machiavelli's <i>Favola</i>
45	<i>Lloyd Robertson</i>	Review Essays <i>Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary</i> by Stephen L. Cook
61	<i>David Lewis Schaefer</i>	<i>Political Philosophy and the Republican Future: Rediscovering Cicero</i> by Gregory Bruce Smith
87	<i>Matthew Berry</i>	Book Reviews <i>The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know</i> by George Hawley
93	<i>Marco Menon</i>	<i>All'alba di un mondo nuovo</i> by Angelo Panebianco and Sergio Belardinelli
99	<i>Will Morrisey</i>	<i>The Kingdom of Man: Genesis and Failure of the Modern Project</i> by Rémi Brague
107	<i>Mary P. Nichols</i>	<i>Aristotle: Democracy and Political Science</i> by Delba P. Winthrop
119	<i>David A. Nordquest</i>	<i>Educating Liberty: Democracy and Aristocracy in J. S. Mill's Political Thought</i> by Christopher Barker
125	<i>Wendell O'Brien</i>	<i>Tractatus Politico-Philosophicus</i> by W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz
131	<i>Alexander Orwin</i>	<i>Glaucon's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's "Republic"</i> by Jacob Howland
137	<i>Joshua Parens</i>	<i>Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers</i> by Geoffrey M. Vaughn
141	<i>John Ray</i>	<i>Nourishment: A Philosophy of the Political Body</i> by Corine Pelluchon
145	<i>David Lewis Schaefer</i>	<i>Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad</i> by Michael Walzer
155	<i>Georg Simmerl</i>	<i>Von Carl Schmitt zu Hannah Arendt?</i> by Sebastian Huhnholz

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

- Editor-in-Chief* Timothy W. Burns, Baylor University
- General Editors* Charles E. Butterworth • Timothy W. Burns
- General Editors (Late)* Howard B. White (d. 1974) • Robert Horwitz (d. 1987)
Seth G. Benardete (d. 2001) • Leonard Grey (d. 2009) •
Hilail Gildin (d. 2015)
- Consulting Editors* Christopher Bruell • David Lowenthal • Harvey C.
Mansfield • Thomas L. Pangle • Ellis Sandoz • Kenneth
W. Thompson
- Consulting Editors (Late)* Leo Strauss (d. 1973) • Arnaldo Momigliano (d. 1987) •
Michael Oakeshott (d. 1990) • John Hallowell (d. 1992)
• Ernest L. Fortin (d. 2002) • Muhsin Mahdi (d. 2007) •
Joseph Cropsey (d. 2012) • Harry V. Jaffa (d. 2015)
- International Editors* Terence E. Marshall • Heinrich Meier
- Editors* Peter Ahrens Dorf • Wayne Ambler • Marco Andreacchio •
Maurice Auerbach • Robert Bartlett • Fred Baumann • Eric
Buzzetti • Susan Collins • Patrick Coby • Erik Dempsey •
Elizabeth C'de Baca Eastman • Edward J. Erler • Maureen
Feder-Marcus • Robert Goldberg • L. Joseph Hebert •
Pamela K. Jensen • Hannes Kerber • Mark J. Lutz • Daniel
Ian Mark • Ken Masugi • Carol L. McNamara • Will
Morrisey • Amy Nendza • Charles T. Rubin • Leslie G.
Rubin • Thomas Schneider • Susan Meld Shell • Geoffrey
T. Sigalet • Nicholas Starr • Devin Stauffer • Bradford P.
Wilson • Cameron Wybrow • Martin D. Yaffe • Catherine
H. Zuckert • Michael P. Zuckert
- Copy Editor* Les Harris
- Designer* Sarah Teutschel
- Inquiries* ***Interpretation, A Journal of Political Philosophy***
Department of Political Science
Baylor University
1 Bear Place, 97276
Waco, TX 76798
- email* interpretation@baylor.edu

Leo Strauss on Exoteric Writing*

HANNES KERBER

CARL FRIEDRICH VON SIEMENS STIFTUNG, MUNICH

hannes.kerber@lmu.de

Abstract: Leo Strauss's claim that many philosophers of the past wrote exoterically is without a doubt his most fruitful contribution to the study of the history of ideas. However, to this day this claim remains highly controversial. To gain a better understanding of Strauss's position, this essay analyzes his three thematic discussions of exotericism, "Exoteric Teaching" (1939), "Persecution and the Art of Writing" (1941), and "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing" (1954). I show that each of the three essays begins its exploration of the phenomenon from a different starting point in order to emphasize a different reason that led philosophers to practice exoteric communication. Whereas "Persecution and the Art of Writing" highlights the threat of censorship and other forms of oppression, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing" is almost completely silent on this topic and instead focuses on the tension that exists between philosophy and the political community. "Exoteric Teaching," the least known of the three texts, differs from the other two in its concentration on the reader's experiential response to exoteric writing or, as Strauss puts it, on "the irretrievably 'occasional' character of every worthwhile interpretation."

A writer who knows what he is doing can be expected to avoid repetition. Accordingly, the following essay argues that Leo Strauss's three thematic discussions of exotericism should be seen not as repetitions but as three independent attempts to introduce the reader to a threefold phenomenon. I will show in the first two sections that Strauss's published articles, "Persecution and the Art of Writing" (1941) and "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing" (1954), are primarily addressed to two different groups of readers and that each uses as its starting point a particular experience of those addressees.

* This essay is based on a talk I delivered at the invitation of Thomas L. Pangle as the Joe R. Long Lecture at the University of Texas at Austin on April 5, 2013. A shorter version was previously published in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 203–14.

Taken together, Strauss's published accounts of exotericism enable the reader to think through the relationship between politics and philosophy with regard to exotericism. In the third and longest section, I will show how the fragment "Exoteric Teaching," written in December 1939 but published only posthumously, differs from the two aforementioned essays: "Exoteric Teaching" does not start from common experiences but instead highlights an exceptional experience made possible by exoteric writing—an experience which grounds "the irretrievably 'occasional' character of every worthwhile interpretation."¹

I. "PERSECUTION AND THE ART OF WRITING"

"Persecution and the Art of Writing" as well as other sources suggest that Strauss understood exotericism as a subject both timely and untimely when he began to publish on his new hermeneutic approach at the end of the 1930s. He was convinced, on one hand, that historicism had made it more difficult, or, to begin with, even impossible,² to take seriously the remarks about exotericism made by earlier thinkers.³ On the other hand, he hinted repeatedly at a unique opportunity for contemporary readers to understand anew the influence that persecution or censorship had on writing at almost any point in history. For political or religious persecution "was, as it were, the natural condition to which public expression of free thought had to adapt itself." Only the "discontinuation of persecution of free thought which took place in the

¹ Cf. Leo Strauss to Hans-Georg Gadamer, February 26, 1961, in "Correspondence concerning *Wahrheit und Methode*," *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1978): 5–6: "It is not easy for me to recognize in your hermeneutics my own experience as an interpreter. Yours is a 'theory of hermeneutic experience' which as such is a universal theory. Not only is my own hermeneutic experience very limited—the experience which I possess makes me doubtful whether a universal hermeneutic theory which is more than 'formal' or external is possible. I believe that the doubt arises from the feeling of the irretrievably 'occasional' character of every worthwhile interpretation." My edition of the complete correspondence between Gadamer and Strauss will be included in the forthcoming volume of Strauss's *Gesammelte Schriften*.

² In a handwritten plan for "Exoteric Teaching," Strauss wrote in 1939: "To-day the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching is wholly opposed—this opposition is due to the fact that modern philosophy has destroyed the possibility of understanding—and that class. scholarship has made tremendous progress" (*Reorientation*, 287; cf. "On the Study of Classical Political Philosophy" [1938], in *Toward "Natural Right and History": Lectures and Essays by Leo Strauss, 1937–46*, ed. J. A. Colen and Svetozar Minkov [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018], 128, and "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* [Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952], 26, 31–32).

³ Based on his wide-ranging study of the history of philosophy, Arthur M. Melzer reaches the following conclusion: "The single most striking thing about the testimonial evidence is in fact not its quantity but its universality: it just shows up everywhere.... It is in fact difficult to name a single major philosopher from any time or place before 1800 who did not somewhere make open and approving reference to this practice, regarding either his own writings or those of others (or both)" (Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014], 25).

eighteenth century”—an event Strauss once calls “the most epoch-making event in the history of literature as such”—allowed this hitherto nearly universally known phenomenon to be forgotten.⁴ That Strauss saw the late 1930s and early 1940s as a privileged opportunity for recollection is due to the terror in Germany and Europe that forced him and many other thinkers to flee their homelands. In February 1938, Strauss wrote in a letter to a friend: “Our situation is becoming more and more medieval [*immer mittelalterlicher*], the difference between freedom of thought and freedom of expression more and more visible. That is ‘progress.’”⁵ The experience of this change, “an experience we are unfortunate enough to make to-day,”⁶ provided an occasion for Strauss to think through the relationship between politics and philosophy with regard to the effects of persecution.

In the preface to the book *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Strauss points to the peculiar timeliness and untimeliness of exotericism: “In the article ‘Persecution and the Art of Writing,’ I have tried to elucidate the problem by starting from certain well-known political phenomena of our century. As I state in the Introduction, I became familiar with the problem mentioned while studying the Jewish and the Islamic philosophy of the Middle Ages.”⁷ This remark shows that in the first thematic account of the

⁴ “On the Study of Classical Political Philosophy,” 133. In the Fall of 1939 as well as in the Fall of 1940, Strauss announced a class on “Persecution and Freedom of Thought” at the New School for Social Research: “Down to very nearly the end of the 18th century persecution was, in a manner of speaking, the natural atmosphere to which free thought or the expression of free thought had to adapt itself. In order to understand the ultimate reasons underlying the struggle between the forces of persecution and of independent thinking, as well as the devices by the use of which independent thinkers succeeded in defeating persecution, it is helpful to refer back to the classical example of that struggle, the trial of Socrates; its meaning is discussed on the basis of the writings of Xenophon and Plato” (*Toward “Natural Right and History,”* 287; cf. 285–86).

⁵ Leo Strauss to Jacob Klein, February 16, 1938, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2008), 3:550: “Unsere Situation wird immer mittelalterlicher, die Differenz zwischen Freiheit des Denkens und Freiheit der Äusserung immer sichtbarer. Das ist ein ‘Fortschritt.’” Similar hints can be found, for example, in “The Spirit of Sparta and the Taste of Xenophon,” *Social Research* 6, no. 4 (1939): 535; review of *Spinoza and Religion* (1942), in *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (New York: Free Press, 1959), 273–75; *On Tyranny* (1948), rev. ed., ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 27; and *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 5, 8, 22, 24, 32, 56, and 190.

⁶ “Lecture Notes for ‘Persecution and the Art of Writing’” (1939), in *Reorientation*, 293.

⁷ “Preface,” in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 5; cf. 8. In the “Plan of a Book Tentatively Entitled ‘Philosophy and the Law: Historical Essays,’” Strauss wrote about “Persecution and the Art of Writing” in 1948: “What we can observe in the totalitarian societies of our time, i.e., in societies which as a matter of avowed policy suppress freedom of speech, supplies us with important clues to the understanding of the conditions under which many free minds of former centuries thought, spoke, and wrote” (*Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997], 469).

problem of exotericism he published, Strauss took as the starting point of his rhetorical strategy the personal experience many of his contemporaries had made with actual persecution and self-censorship. This allowed him to present in a more familiar way a problem that he himself had become acquainted with in turning to a rather unfamiliar environment—“to other ages, if not other climates.”⁸ To appeal to an audience acquainted with persecution, Strauss gave at the beginning of the article “Persecution and the Art of Writing” the fictional example of a nameless historian of religion who presents the heterodox results of his historical investigation “between the lines” in order to avoid censorship by the ruling totalitarian regime. Strauss called this somewhat odd tale “a simple example which, I have reason to believe, is not so remote from reality as it might first seem.”⁹ The case of the anonymous historian’s self-censorship was likely to resonate with many European refugees who knew from firsthand experience that regimes or societies at times endanger the freedom of expression and the freedom to philosophize publicly. That this example was, however, not meant to be more than a suitable starting point for Strauss’s rhetorical strategy—a strategy similar to the one he would use in *On Tyranny*¹⁰—is made clear by the course of the argument as well as by his later response to the criticism of the French scholar Yvon Belaval: “Belaval is quite right when he says that one cannot infer an *essential* antinomy between philosophy and politics from the *factual* persecution of philosophers by political authorities. I am quite certain that I did not make this mistake.”¹¹ An example, be it fictional as at the beginning of the article

⁸ “Introduction,” in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 8. The reference to “climates” could be understood as a reference to “intellectual climates” (“Persecution and the Art of Writing,” 29; “On a Forgotten Kind of Writing” [1954], in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 227–28) or to the difference of climatic conditions. The latter difference leads—according to, for example, Alfarabi, Ibn Khaldun, Montesquieu, and (last, but not least) Lessing—to the development of different national characters and, thus, to the essential multiplicity of religions. Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Ernst und Falk*, in *Werke und Briefe* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2001), 10:29 (second dialogue): “Many of the smaller states would have quite a different climate, therefore quite different needs and satisfactions, therefore quite different habits and mores [*Sitten*], therefore quite different morals [*Sittenlehren*], therefore quite different religions.” Strauss refers to this passage in “Exoteric Teaching”: “It may be added that Lessing points out in ‘Ernst und Falk’ that the variety of religions is due to the variety of political constitutions: the religious problem (i.e. the problem of historical, positive religion) is considered by him as part and parcel of the political problem” (“Exoteric Teaching,” in *Reorientation*, 277).

⁹ “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” 24.

¹⁰ Cf. Eric Voegelin, review of *On Tyranny*, *Review of Politics* 11, no. 2 (1949): 241 and Alexandre Kojève, “L’action politique des philosophes,” *Critique* 41 (1950): 46 (this passage was omitted in the enlarged version of the essay which was, under the title “Tyrannie et sagesse,” included in Strauss’s *De la tyrannie* [Paris: Gallimard, 1954]).

¹¹ “On a Forgotten Kind of Writing,” 230, my italics. Cf. Yvon Belaval: “Pour une sociologie de la

“Persecution and the Art of Writing” or historical as in *On Tyranny*, cannot replace an argument; but it can serve as a tool to draw people into taking an argument seriously. Nevertheless, this popular rhetorical strategy comes at a price: readers who easily jump over the stumbling blocks Strauss put in their way¹² might be induced to limit the thesis first and foremost to the past or to narrow the problem of exotericism to very rare and extreme cases of religious or political persecution.¹³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, for example, called the question posed by Strauss an “extraordinary problem” (*Sonderproblem*) and felt obliged to make the following “countersuggestion”: “Is the conscious disguise, the camouflage, and concealment of one’s own opinion not in truth the rare extreme case as opposed to the frequent, nay, universal normal condition [*Normalsituation*]?”¹⁴ Strauss’s emphasis on the correlation of “persecution” and the “art of writing,” which is meant to highlight the relevance of the problem for his contemporaries in the 1930s and 1940s, also allows for such a marginalization of exotericism to an unusual historical phenomenon and might thus lead readers to exaggerate the importance of “persecution” as the primary cause of the “art of writing.”¹⁵

politique,” *Critique* 77 (1953): 864: “Encore une fois, de ces persécutions de fait avons-nous le droit de conclure à une antinomie essentielle? Sans doute pas, si l’on accepte avec M. Kojève...que le Politique *finit* par obéir au Philosophie.”

¹² Some of these stumbling blocks were pointed out by Christopher Bruell, “True Esotericism,” in *Gladly to Learn and Gladly to Teach: Essays on Religion and Political Philosophy in Honor of Ernest L. Fortin*, A. A., ed. Michael Foley and Douglas Kries (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 273–75.

¹³ For examples of this tendency see Catherine H. Zuckert and Michael P. Zuckert, *The Truth about Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 120–21; Zuckert and Zuckert, *Leo Strauss and the Problem of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5–7 and 59–60; as well as Vittorio Hösle, *Kritik der verstehenden Vernunft: Eine Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2018), 380–89, esp. 382–84.

¹⁴ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hermeneutik und Historismus” (1965), in *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), 2:421: “I do not want to question Strauss’s interpretations—they largely make sense to me—but I want to make a countersuggestion [*Gegenerwägung*] that is perhaps justified in these cases, but is most certainly so in others; for example, in the case of Plato. Is the conscious disguise, the camouflage, and concealment of one’s own opinion not in truth the rare extreme case as opposed to the frequent, nay, universal normal condition [*Normalsituation*]? Just as persecution (by governmental or ecclesiastical inquisition, and so forth) is only an extreme case compared to the intentional or unintentional pressure that society and the public sphere [*Öffentlichkeit*] exert on human thought. Only if one is conscious of the continuous transition from one to the other one is able to estimate the hermeneutic difficulty of the problem that Strauss has tackled.”

¹⁵ Adrian Blau goes so far as to claim that “Strauss’s own theorizing primarily addresses persecution” (Blau, “Anti-Strauss,” *Journal of Politics* 74 [2012]: 145). For a critique of this demonstrably false claim, see Dietrich Schotte, “The Virtues and Vices of Leo Strauss, Historian: A Reassessment of Straussian Hermeneutics,” in *Reading Between the Lines: Leo Strauss and the History of Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Winfried Schröder (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 62–63. For Strauss’s first and final word on the question of “persecution,” see below, note 54.

II. "ON A FORGOTTEN KIND OF WRITING"

"On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," Strauss's second thematic account of the problem of exotericism, pursues a different rhetorical strategy, which does not rely in the same way on the at once timely and untimely character of exotericism. At the beginning of the essay, Strauss writes that he was prompted to restate his earlier suggestion by a perplexed student and then gives a brief summary of the thesis laid out in "Persecution and the Art of Writing."¹⁶ Against all expectations, this summary does not mention the word "persecution" or the word "censorship" even once. Instead of using the still familiar phenomenon as an illustrative starting point (after all, Strauss explicitly reminds his readers of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy who had become the chairman of the Committee on Government Operations in the very year the article was written), Strauss presents a straightforward four-step syllogism for the essential and insuperable tension between philosophy and society as the ground for exotericism: "[1] Philosophy or science, the highest activity of man, is the attempt to replace opinion about 'all things' by knowledge of 'all things'; but [2] opinion is the element of society; [3] philosophy or science... thus endangers society. [4a] Hence, ...philosophers or scientists must respect the opinions on which society rests....[4b] They will distinguish between the true teaching as the esoteric teaching and the socially useful teaching as the exoteric teaching."¹⁷ One might expect that Strauss would point out that the fourth step of this argument is somewhat problematic.¹⁸ But accord-

¹⁶ Among Gadamer's papers at the Deutsche Literaturarchiv (Marbach) I have found a carbon copy of Strauss's letter to F. N. "Chip" Karmatz (entitled "Letter to the Editor of the *Chicago Review*" and dated December 24, 1953) which became "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing." The first paragraph of this letter reads: "Dear Sir: You have told me that a suggestion which I have made both in the classroom and in print has proved to be of interest to some of your readers but that it is not sufficiently clear to them. You mentioned that it would be helpful if I were to write a note on the matter for your *Review*. In order not merely to repeat what I have written elsewhere, I believe it will be best if I discuss here those objections to my suggestion which have been made publicly. I suspect that these objections arose out of difficulties similar to those that some of your readers have felt." David Janssens's "Fishing for Philosophers: Strauss's 'Restatement' on the Art of Writing," in *Leo Strauss's Defense of the Philosophic Life: Reading "What Is Political Philosophy?"*, ed. Rafael Major (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 173–90, is the only study that has adequately grasped the starting point of "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing."

¹⁷ "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," 221–22; cf. *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 257–58 as well as "A Giving of Accounts," *The College* 22, no. 1 (1970): 4: "I arrived at a conclusion that I can state in the form of a syllogism: Philosophy is the attempt to replace opinion by knowledge; but opinion is the element of the city, hence philosophy is subversive, hence the philosopher must write in such a way that he will improve rather than subvert the city."

¹⁸ In all three cases of the argument mentioned in the previous footnote, the argument's suppressed premise seems to be that philosophers need society. Cf., for example, "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*" (1954), in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 119 and 125–27.

ing to “On a Forgotten Kind of Writing,” the seemingly shaky premise of the argument is the second one. To strengthen his argument, Strauss immediately makes clear that the Platonic premise that opinion is the element of society “is accepted by many contemporary social scientists.”¹⁹ This strange way of assuring the reader of the truth of the premise—after all, agreement among the present-day academic community is hardly a necessary or sufficient condition of the truth—shows that Strauss is arguing, once again, *ad hominem* or *ex concessis*, that is, that he is accommodating the argument to his readers in taking their prejudices or preconceptions as his starting point. A perplexed student of the social sciences, the explicit addressee of the article, might very well share the position of “many contemporary social scientists” and, hence, be inclined to take Strauss’s train of thought seriously. However, Strauss once again had to pay a price for the realignment of his rhetorical presentation. The straightforward, or even blunt, account of exotericism entails, as before, the blurring of certain aspects of the problem: exotericism is treated with almost no regard for the reader’s personal experience. Neither censorship nor persecution, but a rather abstract sense of “respect” for the “opinions on which society rests” is presented as the primary cause of the “forgotten kind of writing.”



In his two published accounts of exotericism Strauss thus chose two very different ways of presenting one and the same thesis in order to appeal to two different audiences. In his first programmatic essay, “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” Strauss addresses the readers of *Social Research*—the journal of the New School for Social Research, Strauss’s university at the time, whose faculty members were primarily fellow refugees from Europe. He appealed to these readers by starting from the all-too-timely phenomenon of political persecution and used this starting point to show that from the point of view of philosophy, exotericism is necessary because society can endanger the public exercise of philosophy. In “On a Forgotten Kind of Writing,” Strauss reoriented his argumentative strategy and argued in a syllogistic manner from such presuppositions as the readers of the *Chicago Review*, a popular literary magazine published by students of the University of Chicago, would be most likely to share. In this essay, he put the justification of exotericism the other way around—from the point of view of politics, exotericism is necessary because the public exercise of philosophy can endanger society. Hence, each essay presents the problem by starting from a partial point of

¹⁹ “On a Forgotten Kind of Writing,” 222; cf. 227 and 229. See, for example, George H. Sabine, review of *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, *Ethics* 63, no. 3 (1953): 220.

view. However, the limitations of the starting points may lead the reader to the comprehensive point of view of political philosophy in the strict sense in which Strauss defined it when he introduced the term in 1945: “The adjective ‘political’ in the expression ‘political philosophy’ designates not so much a subject matter as a manner of treatment; from this point of view, I say, ‘political philosophy’ means primarily not the philosophic treatment of politics, but the political, or popular, treatment of philosophy, or the political introduction to philosophy—the attempt to lead the qualified citizens, or rather their qualified sons, from the political life to the philosophic life.”²⁰ With regard to exotericism, political philosophy therefore takes a higher point of view than both the partial points of view of philosophy and of politics as they are presented in “Persecution and the Art of Writing” and in “On a Forgotten Kind of Writing.”²¹

III. “EXOTERIC TEACHING”

“Exoteric Teaching” is, as far as we know, Strauss’s first attempt at a comprehensive and thematic explanation of the concept of “exotericism.” If read in light of the published accounts, the fragment, which was not published by the author himself, enables the reader not only to cast a unique glance at Strauss’s workshop and at the genesis of his hermeneutics, but it also allows him to see a profoundly different aspect of the phenomenon. Its peculiar approach distinguishes the essay, which was written in December 1939, not only from its next of kin, “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” but also from most other studies, written and published mainly during the 1940s, in which Strauss applied his thesis of exoteric writing: while the principal subjects of these articles are writers from the Jewish and Islamic Middle Ages, “Exoteric Teaching” presents the issue exclusively from the point of view of what we may somewhat loosely call the Western tradition.

²⁰ “On Classical Political Philosophy” (1945), in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 93–94. Strauss’s most explicit statement on the limitations of his argument can be found in a footnote to the original version of “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” which was not reproduced in the book: “Only the exoteric teaching is of interest to the sociologist of knowledge, for only the exoteric teaching had, could have and was intended to have a popular appeal. But sociology is not enough: there were people who were not merely exponents of the society to which they belonged, or of any society, but who successfully endeavored to leave ‘the cave’” (*Social Research* 8, no. 4 [1941]: 503n21).

²¹ On the peculiar character of Strauss’s philosophical project which connects the art of writing, the philosophical life, and political philosophy, see Heinrich Meier, “The Renewal of Philosophy and the Challenge of Revealed Religion: On the Intention of Leo Strauss’s *Thoughts on Machiavelli*,” in *Political Philosophy and the Challenge of Revealed Religion*, trans. Robert Berman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 26–28.

“Exoteric Teaching” discusses the Enlightenment philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and the Neo-Protestant theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, while mentioning such writers as Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, Zeller, Kant, Ferguson, Rousseau, and Jacobi. The list shows, above all, that the essay avoids naming or citing any non-Western thinker. This silence is particularly puzzling in the case of Moses Maimonides, who played a crucial role in Strauss’s rediscovery of exotericism well before he conceived of “Exoteric Teaching.” Even more perplexing is the fact that, while Maimonides’s name does not occur in the typescript, the acronym for his traditional name Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon is mentioned in an early handwritten plan of the essay. In this plan, the heading for the penultimate section of the essay’s first part reads: “Lessing—Leibniz—Hobbes (vera—pia dogmata)—Spinoza—RMbM—.”²² In the corresponding section of the manuscript of “Exoteric Teaching,” Strauss later replaces Thomas Hobbes with René Descartes but does mention Maimonides at the end of the sequence of exoteric writers: “Leibniz is...that link in the chain of the tradition of exotericism which is nearest to Lessing. Leibniz, however, was not the only 17th century thinker who was initiated. Not to mention the prudent Descartes, even so bold a writer as Spinoza had admitted the necessity of ‘pia dogmata, hoc est, talia quae animum ad obedientiam movent [pious dogmas, that is, such as move the spirit to obedience]’ as distinguished from ‘vera dogmata [true dogmas].’ Despite, or because of, that admission, Spinoza rejected Maimonides’ allegorical interpretation of the Bible as ‘harmful, useless and absurd.’ Thus, he cannot be considered a genuine spokesman of the tradition.”²³ However, the typist did not transcribe the last two sentences—with the ambiguous personal pronoun that could refer either to Maimonides or to Spinoza²⁴—and Strauss also did not reinsert them later by hand. Whether this omission was a considered and, hence, authoritative decision or one of the typist’s many blunders overlooked during the preliminary proofreading cannot be determined with certainty, since Strauss never prepared “Exoteric Teaching” for publication. Another and more detailed plan of the essay slightly changes

²² “Early Plan of ‘Exoteric Teaching,’” in *Reorientation*, 287.

²³ “Exoteric Teaching,” 285–86 with n117. For Spinoza’s critique of Maimonidean hermeneutics, see *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, in *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Carl Bruder (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1843/1846), 3:120–23 (chap. 7, §§75–87). On this question, cf. *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft: Untersuchungen zu Spinozas Theologisch-politischem Traktat* (1930), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2008), 1:224–26.

²⁴ The fact that Strauss left unclear whether it was “despite, or because of” this admission that Spinoza rejected Maimonides’s allegorical reading of Scripture lends further support to the supposition that the ambiguity of the personal pronoun was not a slip of the pen.

the heading for the passage in question but does not resolve the problem: “Lessing—Leibniz—Spinoza (—RMbM).”²⁵ How should one interpret the fact that Strauss here has put Maimonides’s acronym in parentheses? Do the parentheses indicate that Strauss wanted to include the ambiguous suggestion about Spinoza’s critique? Or do they show that Strauss decided to drop the reference to Maimonides altogether after writing the manuscript? However these questions might be answered, the textual difficulties highlight the fact that non-Western thinkers would have played only a minor role, if any, in “Exoteric Teaching.”

The peculiar approach of “Exoteric Teaching” is reflected not merely in the essay’s silence about Maimonides, but first of all in its focus on Lessing and Schleiermacher. Neither thinker is prominently featured in Strauss’s published writings, but they were of considerable importance for the development of his thought during the 1930s. Recalling his early studies of Spinoza, Strauss remarked decades later that at this time “Lessing was always at my elbow.”²⁶ The influence of Lessing’s writings was, according to Strauss’s own account, subtle and initially unrecognized: “I learned more from him than I knew at that time. As I came to see later, Lessing had said everything I had found out about the distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech and its grounds.”²⁷ This subsequent reconsideration of Lessing, which took place around 1936/1937,²⁸ shows that the young Strauss’s thought was ripe for the discovery of exotericism years before he began to write “Exoteric Teaching.”²⁹ Schleiermacher, by contrast, was certainly not constantly at Strauss’s elbow during the 1930s, but (to continue the metaphor) he would frequently breathe down Strauss’s neck. According to “Exoteric Teaching,” it is Schleiermacher who “introduced that style of Platonic studies, in which classical scholarship is still engaged” and which Strauss would set out to replace with his own approach to ancient philosophy.³⁰ In a similar way, Strauss had to oppose Schleiermacher’s enduring influence in his early attempts to recover what he

²⁵ “Later Plan of ‘Exoteric Teaching,’” in *Reorientation*, 292.

²⁶ “A Giving of Accounts,” 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ See, above all, “Einleitung zu ‘Morgenstunden’ und ‘An die Freunde Lessings’” (1937/1974), “Sache Gottes oder die gerettete Vorsehung” (1937/1962/1974), and “Eine Erinnerung an Lessing” (1937), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2013), 2:522 and 607–8.

²⁹ The distinction is already present in *Philosophie und Gesetz: Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und seiner Vorläufer* (1935), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2:3–123, for example, 47, 82–83, 88–89, and 123.

³⁰ “Exoteric Teaching,” 279. On the role Schleiermacher played in shaping the scholarship on Plato according to Strauss, see below, note 65.

would later call the theologico-political problem. For not only is Schleiermacher one of the forefathers of the then-reigning “philosophy of culture,” but he also “inaugurated” the modern “philosophy of religion,” which Strauss in 1935 subjected to a sharp critique in “The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns in the Philosophy of Judaism,” the programmatic first chapter of his *Philosophie und Gesetz*.³¹ Thus, the “great theologian,” as Strauss calls him in “Persecution and the Art of Writing,”³² looms rather large in the background of Strauss’s remarkable reorientation during the 1930s.

Although “Exoteric Teaching” eventually hints at an important lesson that can be learned from Lessing, its most substantive part is a discussion of Schleiermacher’s way of reading Plato and his argument against interpreting Plato as an exoteric writer.³³ As the introduction that Schleiermacher wrote for the first volume of his groundbreaking translation of the Platonic dialogues into German shows, he, like many earlier writers but unlike many of his successors, was very much alive to the problem of exotericism.³⁴ While doing away with what he sees as the most common misconceptions of earlier interpretations, Schleiermacher reports that past scholars “have formed the opinion, induced partly by individual statements of Plato himself [and] partly by a widespread tradition, which has preserved itself since antiquity, of an esoteric and exoteric [dimension] in philosophy, as if his proper wisdom were either not at all contained in Plato’s writings or only in secret allusions, which are difficult to locate.” While Schleiermacher’s attempt to refute the opinion that Plato wrote exoterically is complex because, according to his judgment, the concept is “utterly vague” and “has cultivated itself in the most manifold forms” (*hat sich*

³¹ *Philosophie und Gesetz*, 30 and 35; cf. 41 and 60. Fritz Bamberger calls attention to the ultimate target of Strauss’s “penetrating criticism” of Julius Guttman: “Strauss’ answer is implicit in his criticism. He recognized that Guttman’s concept of philosophy was strongly conditioned by Schleiermacher. He pointed out that it was in the tradition of Schleiermacher that Guttman, like other modern philosophers, had replaced the medieval concept of belief—rationalistic or supernaturalistic, but in any case intellectualistic—with one built on the ‘innerness of the religious consciousness’ (*Innerlichkeit des religiösen Bewusstseins*). Strauss rejected this concept” (“Julius Guttman—Philosopher of Judaism,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 5, no. 1 [1960]: 19–20).

³² “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” 28.

³³ It is no accident that Plato forms the contentious point of Strauss’s confrontation with Schleiermacher: “What philosophy is seems to be inseparable from the question of how to read Plato” (Seth Benardete, “Strauss on Plato,” in *The Argument of the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, ed. Ronna Burger and Michael Davis [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 407).

³⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Lutz Käppel and Johanna Loehr (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), section 4, vol. 3, 15–59. Schleiermacher published his introduction for the first time in the first edition (1805) of *Platons Werke*. However, the corrections from the second edition (1817) reflect his mature position.

in die mannigfaltigsten Gestalten ausgebildet),³⁵ two views of exotericism stand out: (1) The pre-Platonic Pythagoreans declared certain *subjects* to be “esoteric,” such as the political teaching that they did not wish to discuss in public.³⁶ (2) Those post-Platonic thinkers who mixed Socratic philosophy with sophistry used the distinction between exoteric and esoteric to refer to two different *manners of treatment or presentation*: what could not be explained in a popular or “exoteric” lecture in front of laymen, but could very well be explained in a lecture for an expert audience, was here called “esoteric.”³⁷

Schleiermacher strongly denies that either of these two views of exotericism is correct in the case of Plato: “in whichever of the two senses one would want to apply these concepts to the Platonic writings and philosophy, in order to divide thereby both into two parts, one will get caught up everywhere.”³⁸ In Schleiermacher’s eyes, the latter view—according to which there is one genre of philosophic writings that is easy to understand, that is, popular or “exoteric,” and another genre of philosophic writings that is hard to understand, that is, scientific or “esoteric”³⁹—is fruitless with regard to Plato, because all of Plato’s writings are hard to understand and therefore he “could have confided his most difficult and most mysterious wisdom just as well” through

³⁵ Ibid., 23–24.

³⁶ “For among the first Pythagoreans this distinction [between an exoteric and esoteric philosophy] referred so immediately to the subject [*Inhalt*], that subjects were denoted as esoteric about which they did not want to talk beyond the bounds of their most intimate association; and it is to be supposed that their political teaching [*politisches System*] occupied the place of the esoteric [philosophy] far more than their metaphysical speculations, which were as imperfect as they were above suspicion. But at that time philosophy was bound up with a practical fraternization [*praktische Verbrüderung*] which afterwards did not occur again among the Hellenes” (ibid., 25).

³⁷ “In later times, by contrast, that was principally called esoteric which could not be communicated in the popular manner of presentation [*in dem populären Vortrag*], to which, after the admixture of the Sophists with Socratic philosophers some condescended, and the distinction [between an exoteric and esoteric philosophy] therefore referred immediately to the manner of presentation [*Vortrag*], and only mediately, and on account of the other [that is, the manner of presentation] to the subject matter” (ibid.).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ever since Jacob Bernays’s *Die Dialoge des Aristoteles in ihrem Verhältniss zu seinen übrigen Werken* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1863), German scholars have debated the question of exotericism intensively by the example of Aristotle’s multiple but enigmatic references to *exōterikoi logoi*. They seem to have settled on the view that the term primarily refers to a genre. Cf. Michael Erler, “Philosophische Literaturformen,” in *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*, ed. Hubert Cancik (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2000), 9:874: “In Aristotle, but probably already in Plato, one can distinguish three areas in which philosophical texts were used: literary works (‘dialogues’) for the public; ‘exoteric’ exercises or public courses of instruction; and strictly academic lectures and discussions within the school.” See Konrad Gaiser, “Exoterisch/esoterisch,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 2:865–67.

these writings.⁴⁰ The Pythagorean view, on the other hand, which implies that Plato spoke about certain issues only within the confines of the Academy and on principle never in writing, almost refutes itself because “in the field of philosophy nothing might be found on which a judgment could not be encountered in [Plato’s] writings, [expressed] either directly and clearly or at least according to its reasons [*den Gründen nach*].”⁴¹

Setting aside other differences for the moment, one cannot fail to notice that Strauss, who does not explicitly mention Schleiermacher’s critique of these two versions of exotericism in “Exoteric Teaching,” agrees with him in rejecting them. Like Schleiermacher, Strauss would object to those interpreters of Plato who follow (to use Schleiermacher’s vocabulary) either the Pythagoreans or the Socratic sophists. While both Strauss and Schleiermacher are convinced that the dialogues are the sole basis for understanding Plato’s teaching, the two groups in question give up the material completeness of the dialogues. The so-called Pythagoreans—very much like the proponents of the Tübingen School in the twentieth century—do not rely on the dialogues but have recourse to an oral tradition.⁴² Orality, while being the original form of philosophic communication and therefore a conceivable option for the transmission of the esoteric teaching,⁴³ has major defects: not

⁴⁰ Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 25–26. Schleiermacher’s critique of this version of exotericism is also directed against Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, one of the most important interpreters of Plato at the time. According to Tennemann, Plato investigated subjects “about which most confused and most erroneous notions prevailed, but which had acquired such a reputation by virtue of their age, by virtue of their connection to holy truths, [as well as] by virtue of the protection of priests and the state, that they were considered to be an inviolable property of humankind.” Plato therefore “chose the dialogical form by which he could say truths without being responsible for them.” Based on these considerations, Tennemann asserts that it is likely that “the writings of his esoteric philosophy were written in a different form.” (Tennemann, *System der Platonischen Philosophie* [Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1792], 1:128. On the “esoteric” writings, cf. 114, 137, 141, 149, 162–64, and 264–66. See also Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie* [Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1799], 2:205–22.)

⁴¹ Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 26. Cf. Plato, *Seventh Letter* 341c.

⁴² For a short but lucid introduction to the approach of this school, see Thomas A. Szlezák, “The Tübingen Approach,” in *The Continuum Companion to Plato*, ed. Gerald A. Press (London: Continuum, 2012), 303–4. Cf. also Vittorio Hösle, “The Tübingen School,” in *Brill’s Companion to German Platonism*, ed. Alan Kim (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 328–48. Unfortunately, Strauss’s position was not adequately portrayed in the fruitless controversy between Szlezák and Tanja Staehler in “Plato’s Unwritten Doctrines: A Discussion,” *Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2014): 160–66. On this question, see my review of Melzer’s *Philosophy Between the Lines* in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 123, no. 1 (2016): 285–89.

⁴³ In “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” Strauss makes clear that those ancient philosophers who had become convinced of the essential difference between philosophers and nonphilosophers had to choose one of two ways but then discusses only the latter: “They must conceal their opinions from all but philosophers, either by limiting themselves to oral instruction of a carefully selected group of pupils, or by writing about the most important subject by means of ‘brief indication’” (“Persecution

only does oral communication require permanent political stability and perfect comprehension on the part of each successor, it also limits the potential audience to those who happen to be a link in the chain of the tradition.⁴⁴ Therefore, oral *traditio* is very unlikely to achieve the goal of preserving over time an undistorted *traditum* for the intended audience.⁴⁵ In light of these considerations it becomes clear that the observation of Plato's Socrates that writings are naturally accessible to all who can read is not only a warning but also a promise.⁴⁶

While the Pythagoreans and their modern successors tear apart the material completeness of the dialogues by assuming the existence of an oral tradition that communicates certain "esoteric" subjects independently of the writings, the Socratic sophists make the very same mistake in a different manner. According to their view, "exoteric" books are intended for nonspecialists outside the school, while other writings are "esoteric," that is, intended only for the students within the school. The main task for the interpreter is therefore to distinguish between the two genres and to disregard⁴⁷ all books that belong to the former since they contain exclusively "exoteric" matters that are philosophically well-nigh worthless.⁴⁸ This rather crude way

and the Art of Writing," 34–35, my italics).

⁴⁴ On this question, see the discussion of "Diaspora" in "The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*" (1941), in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 48–51.

⁴⁵ In the manuscript of "Exoteric Teaching," Strauss crossed out a sentence that seems to turn this line of argument against Schleiermacher: "[Schleiermacher] forgets the fact that Plato has not written his dialogues for his pupils only, but rather as a possession for all times, or that not all readers of Plato are pupils of Plato" (*Reorientation*, 280n50). For the expression "possession for all times," see Thucydides, *Historiae* 1.22.4.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d9–e3. Cf. "Persecution and the Art of Writing," 35.

⁴⁷ According to a widespread though probably spurious tradition, Andronicus of Rhodes, Aristotle's eleventh successor as head of the peripatetic school, did not include the "exoteric" writings in his edition of Aristotle's works. —As I have indicated in note 39 above, Aristotle's usage of *exōterikoi logoi* has led many scholars to believe that the term always refers to a genre of writings. This view, which entirely ignores the crucial fact that there is no consistent antonym to "exoteric" throughout the *corpus Aristotelicum*, can easily be refuted on the basis of *Physics* Δ 10 because the *exōterikoi logoi* (217b31) mentioned here simply cannot be understood as referring to other writings by Aristotle.

⁴⁸ Hegel's critique of Tennemann's notion of exotericism (cf. note 40 above) in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* emphasizes the absurdity of a *material* division of exoteric and esoteric teaching: "How simpleminded! This makes it look as if the philosopher is in possession of his thoughts in the same way as of external goods. But the thoughts are something utterly different. Instead of the reverse, the philosophic idea is in possession of the human being. When philosophers elaborate on philosophic subjects, they follow of necessity [the course of] their ideas; they cannot keep them in their pockets. Even when speaking externally [*äußerlich*] to some people, the idea must be contained [in this speech], if the matter [*Sache*] has any content at all. It does not take much to hand over an external item [*Sache*], but the communication of an idea requires skill. The idea always remains something esoteric; hence, one does not merely have the exoteric [*das Exoterische*] of the philosophers. These notions are

of dividing a twofold audience by membership cards is problematic, not only because every successful school has to include a variety of disciples,⁴⁹ but also because it is to be expected that all writings become public eventually. Its political precariousness alone renders this “exotericism” impractical. Hence, Strauss was fully aware that if there is any need at all for exotericism, “no written exposition can be strictly speaking esoteric.”⁵⁰

After debunking these two views of exotericism in the introduction to his translation of Plato’s dialogues, Schleiermacher mentions a third view, which he does not ascribe to a specific group, one that for him is not even worth discussing in any detail: “And those indeed who trace back the distinction between the esoteric [and the exoteric teaching] merely to the quarrel with polytheism and with the popular religion, in fact dissolve [*aufheben*] [the distinction] completely and either make it into a legal protection [*rechtliche Verwahrung*]⁵¹—which would be highly insufficient because Plato’s principles on that topic are clear enough to read in his writings, so that one can scarcely believe that his pupils might have needed further instruction, the publication of which he shied away from—or into a childish performance [*kindische Veranstaltung*], which delights itself in saying in a loud voice behind closed doors what in fact may also be said publicly but only in a low voice.”⁵¹ This statement provides the first vulnerable point in Schleiermacher’s argument, which Strauss exploits in “Exoteric Teaching”: only because Schleiermacher refrains from calling a spade a spade, Strauss points out, is he able to lend credibility to the view that Plato did not rely on “legal protection,” that is,

superficial” (*Werke* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986], 19:21–22). Cf. 76–77: “One does not have to make the distinction [of the esoteric and the exoteric] as if Plato had two such philosophies: one for the world, for the people; the other, the internal, saved for the confidants. The esoteric is the speculative that is written and printed and nevertheless remains hidden for those who have little interest in straining themselves. It is not a secret but still hidden.” See Strauss’s reference to Hegel in the later plan of “Exoteric Teaching” (*Reorientation*, 291).

⁴⁹ With one eye to the centrifugal forces within the philosophical school founded by Strauss himself, Heinrich Meier writes in his “Preface to the American Edition”: “For the school, no less than for the commonwealth, it holds true that different addressees have to be addressed differently, that they grasp the teaching differently and pass it on differently” (Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, trans. Marcus Brainard [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], xix; cf. 15 with xvii–xx). For Strauss’s own critique of philosophical schools, see his “Restatement on Xenophon’s *Hiero*,” 113–16.

⁵⁰ “How to Study Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise*” (1948), in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 187. Cf. “On a New Interpretation of Plato’s Political Philosophy,” *Social Research* 13, no. 4 (1946): 349: “According to the *Seventh Letter*, as well as according to the *Phaedrus*, no writing composed by a serious man can be quite serious.” Cf. Plato, *Seventh Letter* 344c1–d2 and *Phaedrus* 276d1–e3 and 277e5–278b4.

⁵¹ Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 26.

that Plato refrained from concealing his denial of the religious convictions of the city even though such impiety was forbidden in Athens under penalty of death.⁵² The ambiguity of the expression “polytheism and the popular religion” enables Schleiermacher, according to Strauss, to assert that Plato’s “principles” on the topic are easily recognizable in his writings. If, however, “Schleiermacher had used the less ambiguous expression ‘belief in the existence of the gods worshipped by the city of Athens,’ he could not have said that Plato’s opposition to that belief is clearly expressed in his writings.”⁵³ Thus, Strauss not only calls into question Schleiermacher’s criticism of exotericism for reasons of political caution, but he also provides a toehold for that argument in favor of exotericism that he would later elaborate most prominently in “Persecution and the Art of Writing”: if a writer tries to conceal an opinion from the censor for fear of persecution but nevertheless wants to communicate his true thoughts to the reader, he must write in a way that achieves both ends.⁵⁴

However, Strauss’s most important objection to Schleiermacher’s criticism is a different one. In “Persecution and the Art of Writing” Strauss makes clear that Schleiermacher’s major point against those interpretations that distinguish between Plato’s exoteric and esoteric teachings is his “unusually able

⁵² “Socrates was executed for not believing in the gods of Athens, in the gods of the city. By considering and reconsidering this fact, we grasp the ultimate reason why political life and philosophic life, even if compatible for almost all practical purposes, are incompatible in the last analysis: political life, if taken seriously, meant belief in the gods of the city, and philosophy is the denial of the gods of the city” (“The Spirit of Sparta and the Taste of Xenophon,” 531–32). “In the time of Xenophon, impiety constituted a criminal offence. Thus philosophy, which is essentially incompatible with acceptance of the gods of the city, was as such subject to persecution. Philosophers had therefore to conceal if not the fact that they were philosophers, at least the fact that they were unbelievers” (ibid., 534).

⁵³ “Exoteric Teaching,” 280.

⁵⁴ For the first elaborate version of this argument, cf. “The Spirit of Sparta and the Taste of Xenophon,” 534. In the very same article, Strauss indicates the limitations of this argument: “It would, however, betray too low a view of the philosophic writers of the past if one assumed that they concealed their thoughts *merely* for fear of persecution or of violent death” (ibid., 535, my italics). Strauss makes a similar remark in the “Introduction” to *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, where he calls persecution “the crudest reason” for exotericism (17). This remark, among others, allows the reader to see why the “Preface” claims that the “Introduction” states the problem “from the side of philosophy” (5). —According to Steven Jay Lenzner, by largely avoiding the topic in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* Strauss points to the fact “that persecution is of secondary importance when compared with the other concerns that prompt authors to write exoterically.” “In three of the book’s five chapters, including the ‘Introduction’ and the central essay on Maimonides, Strauss fails to employ ‘persecution’ even once” (Lenzner, *Leo Strauss and the Problem of Freedom of Thought: The Rediscovery of the Philosophic Arts of Reading and Writing* [PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003], 26–27; cf. 24–25). See also Christopher Lynch, “A Presentation of Exotericism in Classical Political Philosophy,” in *Toward Natural Right and History*, 122–23.

argument...that there is only *one* Platonic teaching.”⁵⁵ Schleiermacher’s writings on Plato indeed emphasize, time and again, the unity of Plato’s thought, which is reflected in the unity of his teaching,⁵⁶ and Schleiermacher blames those who distinguish between exoteric and esoteric teachings for tearing this unity apart.⁵⁷ At the same time, Schleiermacher supports his rejection of exotericism by taking seriously the difficulties that had led some scholars to deny the unity of Plato’s philosophy or its doctrinal presentation. According to Strauss’s account in “Exoteric Teaching,” Schleiermacher explains the appearance of multiplicity in Plato that had allegedly misled many scholars with the observation that while there is only *one* Platonic teaching, “there is, so to speak, *an infinite number of degrees of the understanding of that teaching*: it is the same teaching which the beginner understands inadequately, and which only the perfectly trained student of Plato understands adequately.”⁵⁸

The seeming multiplicity that overshadows the underlying unity is, then, due to the process of understanding. In this process, the reader starts out with an imperfect and therefore fragmentary understanding of the teaching that will improve gradually and continuously *ad infinitum*. While the understanding thus changes, the teaching that is understood remains one and the same. Plato ensures, according to Schleiermacher’s theory, that this ongoing enhancement of the reader’s understanding has the character of a “self-activity” (*Selbsttätigkeit*).⁵⁹ Plato forces his readers to think for themselves by writing in the literary form of a dialogue, that is, by not teaching directly what the reader is searching for in a treatise but by “exposing the [reader’s] soul to the necessity to search for [the end of the investigation] and to guide [the soul] to the way on which it can be found.”⁶⁰ For this purpose, Plato, in Schleiermacher’s presentation, first brings the reader to realize his state of ignorance and then

⁵⁵ “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” 28, my italics.

⁵⁶ Cf. esp. Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 21–22.

⁵⁷ Cf., once again, *ibid.*, 24–25.

⁵⁸ “Exoteric Teaching,” 280, my italics. I here quote the wording of the manuscript and the alternative reading of the typewritten versions (280n44) because “degrees of understanding” shows more clearly than “levels of understanding” the connection of this statement to the one that occurs later in the essay: “The difference between the beginner and the philosopher (for the perfectly trained student of Plato is no one else but the genuine philosopher) is a difference not of degree, but of kind” (281).

⁵⁹ Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 30. Cf. also 29–33, 50, and 583. On the self-motion of the soul, see, for example, Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a1.

⁶⁰ Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 31. On rhetoric as *psychagōgia*, see Plato, *Phaedrus* 261a7ff. and 271c10ff. Cf. also Plato, *Gorgias* 452e9–453a5 with Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, in Gorgias von Leontinoi, *Reden, Fragmente und Testimonien*, ed. Thomas Buchheim, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2012), 2–16. See my review of Ulrike Weichert’s study of Strauss’s hermeneutics in *Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 21, no. 1–2 (2014): 302.

relays the actual thought to the reader indirectly in two ways. On one hand, Plato achieves this indirect communication by “weaving contradictions into a riddle to which the intended thought is the only possible solution” and giving “in a seemingly strange and accidental manner such allusions as will be found and understood only by him who searches genuinely and independently.”⁶¹ On the other hand, he communicates indirectly by dressing up “the actual investigation with another [investigation], not as if with a veil but as if with an adnate skin [*angewachsene Haut*], which conceals from the inattentive [reader] [*dem Unaufmerksamen*], but only from him, that which actually ought to be observed or found, but which for the attentive [reader] [*dem Aufmerksamen*] sharpens and chastens the sense for the internal coherence.”⁶²

At first sight, Schleiermacher’s remarks about Plato’s two sets of literary devices come very close to Strauss’s own way of reading Plato. Both put emphasis on the fact that Plato teaches in his dialogues through riddles, contradictions, and brief indications, as well as through a meaningful differentiation between the foreground and the background of the text. Unsurprisingly, Strauss praises Schleiermacher in “Exoteric Teaching” for making “five or six extremely important and true remarks about Plato’s literary devices, remarks the subtlety of which has, to my knowledge, never been surpassed or even rivaled since.”⁶³ This proximity between the two thinkers is due to that fact that, unlike many other interpreters, both Schleiermacher and Strauss believe that the literary form of the dialogue merges the advantages of spoken and written communication and therefore has to be seen as Plato’s answer to Socrates’s critique of writing in the final exchanges of the *Phaedrus*.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, closer consideration exposes a deep disagreement between Schleiermacher and Strauss regarding the proper solution of the problem of the Platonic dialogue—a disagreement that manifests itself in two ways.⁶⁵ First, while Schleiermacher stresses the continuous character of the process of understanding, according to Strauss understanding is

⁶¹ Schleiermacher, “Einleitung,” 31.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Exoteric Teaching,” 280.

⁶⁴ Cf., for example, Schleiermacher’s “Einleitung,” 29–30 with Strauss’s *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 52–53. It should be noted that Plato’s Socrates does *not* consider writing speeches something shameful (*aischron*) in itself (Plato, *Phaedrus* 277d1–278b4).

⁶⁵ In a letter to Eric Voegelin, February 25, 1951, Strauss credits Schleiermacher as the first one to discover the “problem of the dialogue.” In the same breath, he calls Schleiermacher’s “solution” to this problem “demonstrably false” (*beweisbar falsch*) (*Glaube und Wissen: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Eric Voegelin und Leo Strauss von 1934 bis 1964* [Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2010], 88–89).

characterized not by continuity but by discontinuity. Second, what Schleiermacher takes as an indefinite multiplicity of degrees of understanding turns out, in Strauss's view, to be a strict duality of the Platonic teaching.

In Strauss's eyes, it is this implicitly assumed continuity of the advancement of understanding that has caused Schleiermacher to misinterpret Plato: "Schleiermacher tacitly assumes that the way from the beginning [of the process of understanding] to the end is continuous, whereas, according to Plato, philosophy presupposes a real conversion, *i.e.* a total break with the attitude of the beginner."⁶⁶ Against Plato, Schleiermacher thus describes the phenomenological structure of understanding not as a *periagōgē* but as a continuous process. While Schleiermacher could argue that he was forced to depart from Plato's view (since Plato might have been wrong about the structure of understanding), Strauss shows the high price Schleiermacher had to pay for understanding Plato supposedly better than Plato understood himself. Schleiermacher's assumption of continuity made him blind not only to "the difference between the morality of the beginner and the morality of the philosopher...which is at the bottom of the difference between exoteric and esoteric teaching,"⁶⁷ but also to the very form of rhetoric that, in Strauss's eyes, is employed by Plato. This form of rhetoric, to come to the second point of disagreement between Schleiermacher and Strauss, is compatible with both the material completeness of the dialogues and the unity of the author's thought because it comprises in one and the same text two kinds of teaching, each of which addresses a different audience.⁶⁸ One teaching is conveyed by the explicit

⁶⁶ "Exoteric Teaching," 281. For the meaning of this "conversion," see *Socrates and Aristophanes* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 314. Cf. *City and Man*, 93 and *On Political Philosophy: Responding to the Challenge of Positivism and Historicism*, ed. Catherine H. Zuckert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 78.

⁶⁷ "Exoteric Teaching," 282. Strauss's most radical discussion of this problem, which in Plato comes up as the difference between *aretai politikai* and genuine virtue (for example, *Phaedo* 82a10–b3), can be found in "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*" (1943): "It is hardly necessary to add that it is precisely this view of the non-categorical character of the rules of social conduct which permits the philosopher to hold that a man who has become a philosopher, may adhere in his deeds and speeches to a religion to which he does not adhere in his thoughts; *it is this view, I say, which is underlying the exotericism of the philosophers*" (*Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 139, my italics).

⁶⁸ In his review of Schleiermacher's *Platons Werke*, the classical scholar August Boeckh criticized Schleiermacher's rejection of exotericism and suggested an alternative: according to Boeckh, Plato's true teaching, which he communicated straightforwardly in the Academy, can also be found in some "more or less 'dark corners'" (*mehr oder weniger "dunklen Winkeln"*) of his writings: "Accordingly, the difference of the esoteric and the exoteric [teaching] is based neither on the subjects nor on the external form of the presentation alone, but on the higher or lower degree of the unveiled scientific explanation, in such a way, that the exoteric [teaching], like the myth, has an externally manifest side, which the uninitiated accept, but it also has an internal meaning, which is intelligible only for the initiated.... Plato [in his writings] would have acted coyly in a curious fashion if he would have had

statements that the author deposits in plain view on the surface of the text, while the other teaching is indicated only “between the lines.” This twofold presentation is the reason why the process of the reader’s coming to understand such a text is characterized by discontinuity rather than continuity.

As opposed to Schleiermacher, Lessing would fully agree with Strauss regarding the two points in question: his “experience of what philosophy is and what sacrifices it requires”—an experience which Strauss explicitly calls a “conversion”—led Lessing, according to “Exoteric Teaching,” “in a straight way to the distinction between the two groups of men...and therewith to the distinction between the two ways of presenting the truth.”⁶⁹ Lessing concurred, in other words, with Strauss’s account of Plato’s hermeneutic claim according to which the advancement from the surface teaching of a book to its “hidden” teaching is experienced by the reader as something like a radical turnaround.⁷⁰ But whereas the agreement regarding the strict twofold exotericism is supported in “Exoteric Teaching” with unambiguous quotations from Lessing’s *Ernst und Falk* and from his writings on Leibniz, Strauss illustrates the agreement regarding the experiential discontinuity of understanding by having recourse to a break in Lessing’s life around 1771. While much evidence can be marshaled in favor of Strauss’s interpretation of this biographical break, there is more direct evidence that supports Strauss’s original point. The agreement regarding the experiential discontinuity of exotericism becomes unexpectedly apparent in Lessing’s emphatic approval of Clement of Alexandria’s statement that a careful author can lead his readers to the truth, which indicates in writing what is unwritten.⁷¹ Commenting on this passage, Lessing writes: “He who learns nothing from books except what can be found in the pages of the books, has not made even a half-use of the books.

no esoteric [teaching] [*nichts Esoterisches*]” (August Boeckh, “Kritik der Übersetzung des Platon von Schleiermacher” [1808], in *Gesammelte kleine Schriften* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1872], 7:7).

⁶⁹ “Exoteric Teaching,” 283. For the “sacrifices,” cf. “The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*,” 56: “Freedom of thought being menaced in our time more than for several centuries, we have not only the right but even the duty to explain the teaching of Maimonides, in order to contribute to a better understanding of what freedom of thought means, i.e., what attitude it presupposes and what sacrifices it requires.”

⁷⁰ Seth Benardete emphasizes this structure of understanding: “Something happens in a Platonic dialogue that in its revolutionary unexpectedness is the equivalent to the *periagōgē*, as Socrates calls it, of philosophy itself” (“Strauss on Plato,” 409). The fact that the progress of understanding is experienced as a turnaround does not imply that it happens automatically or could forgo external effort. Rather, as Strauss writes once—and only once—“inquisitorial brutality and recklessness” are necessary “for extorting his serious views from an able writer who tries to conceal them from all but a few” (“How to Study Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise*,” 185).

⁷¹ Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.1.10.1.

He who is not enabled by books to learn to understand and judge also what they do not contain; whose mind is not sharpened and enlightened by the books, would be hardly worse off if he had not read any books.”⁷² Another, perhaps less subtle, sign of the striking agreement between Strauss and Lessing is that Lessing simply calls the experience made possible by such carefully written books *die Platonische Entwicklung*, “the Platonic development.”⁷³

Of course, Strauss’s metaphorical description of the hermeneutic experience as a *periagōgē* is itself in need of interpretation and may be best elucidated by giving one or two concrete examples. In “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” Strauss lists several material disagreements, rooted in the principles of modern scholarship, between contemporary historians and their predecessors.⁷⁴ One of these examples is the gulf between the older and the more recent understandings of Thomas Hobbes’s attitude toward religion: Strauss asserts that while many earlier “philosophers and theologians believed that Hobbes was an atheist,” most present-day historians “tacitly or explicitly reject that view.”⁷⁵ In a footnote to this statement, Strauss refers to the studies of five contemporary scholars who oppose the older opinion that Hobbes was an atheist. Among these studies is Strauss’s own book *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*, which was published more than a decade earlier and in which Strauss asserts that Hobbes came very close to atheism, but was not “an atheist in the theoretical sense of the term.”⁷⁶ While Strauss thus merely alludes to his earlier misinterpretation and recent reassessment of Hobbes’s attitude toward religion,⁷⁷ the reference to his own book

⁷² Lessing, *Sogenannte Briefe an verschiedene Gottesgelehrten, die an seinen theologischen Streitigkeiten auf eine oder andere Weise teil zu nehmen beliebt haben*, in *Werke und Briefe*, 10:196: “Wer aus den Büchern nichts mehr lernt, als was in den Büchern steht, der hat die Bücher nicht halb genutzt. Wen die Bücher nicht fähig machen, daß er auch das verstehen und beurteilen lernt, was sie nicht enthalten; wessen Verstand die Bücher nicht überhaupt schärfen und aufklären, der wäre schwerlich viel schlimmer dran, wenn er auch gar keine Bücher gelesen hätte.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ In the central paragraph of the essay, Strauss lists seven items: (1) the distinction between ancients and moderns, (2) Averroës’s attitude toward religion, (3) the Greek physicians’ attitude toward religion, (4) the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching, (5) Eusebius of Caesarea’s attitude toward religion, (6) Thomas Hobbes’s attitude toward religion, and (7) the lucidity of the plan of Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des loix* (“Persecution and the Art of Writing,” 27–29).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 28. Even today, “the dispute over the sincerity of Hobbes’s professions of faith” is “one of the most fundamental and divisive splits in Hobbes scholarship” (Devin Stauffer, *Hobbes’s Kingdom of Light: A Study of the Foundations of Modern Political Philosophy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018], 83n2; cf. 86 [with n6], 127–28, and 132n8).

⁷⁶ *Die Religionskritik Spinozas*, 145.

⁷⁷ For this reassessment, cf. “On the Basis of Hobbes’s Political Philosophy” (1954), in *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 182–89. Cf. *Natural Right and History*, 199n43. On Strauss’s and Hobbes’s approach,

in the footnote of “Persecution and the Art of Writing” is meant to illustrate the typical consequence of the rejection of exotericism. The assumption that there is only one doctrine for all practical purposes amounts to taking the author’s words at face value. By doing so, the reader closes his eyes to the fact that authors in the past did hide their thoughts for political, philosophical, and didactic reasons, or that not everybody has come into the world to bear witness unto the truth in front of everyone.⁷⁸ As Strauss knew from firsthand experience, thinking through the reasons that induce a writer to present his thought in a twofold manner for a twofold audience can be tantamount to a complete turnaround of one’s understanding of that writer. While the young Strauss’s Hobbes was an agnostic, the mature Strauss recognized Hobbes as a philosopher who “expressed himself with great caution in writings which he published with his name on their title pages” but who anticipated in his thought the infamous heretical fragments by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, which were published by Lessing a century later.⁷⁹

The only example for the revolutionary potential of a hermeneutic reorientation even more impressive than the reevaluation of Hobbes is the change in Strauss’s understanding of Maimonides’s *The Guide of the Perplexed*. While Strauss referred to Maimonides in *Die Religionskritik Spinozas* as a “believing Jew,”⁸⁰ a series of careful studies written during the 1930s brought to light the philosopher Maimonides.⁸¹ According to Strauss’s own account, this new interpretation of Maimonides that was sparked by an *aperçu* on Plato was

see Heinrich Meier, “The Renewal of Philosophy and the Challenge of Revealed Religion,” 62n77.

⁷⁸ While Christian authors have often used “milk,” instead of “solid food,” in order to communicate the One Truth, Karl Barth calls the distinction between “exoteric” and an “esoteric” teaching *einen unchristlichen Gegensatz*, an “unchristian opposition” (*Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert: Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* [Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1946], 400). Using the examples of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Frederick J. Crosson underlines the differences between the philosophical tradition of exotericism and the Christian tradition of “latent” teaching: “A central difference is that in the Christian tradition the manifest teaching expressed in similitudes and metaphors and parables aims at communicating the truth, at bearing witness to the truth, in a form in which it is able to be understood (at least partially) by all. There is only one doctrine, presented in different depths of meaning to the two audiences” (“Esoteric versus Latent Teaching” [2005], in *Ten Philosophical Essays in the Christian Tradition* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015], 24).

⁷⁹ “On the Basis of Hobbes’s Political Philosophy,” 189.

⁸⁰ *Die Religionskritik Spinozas*, 238 and 254.

⁸¹ See, above all, the article “The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*,” which was written in 1938 but published for the first time in 1941. For the role Maimonides played in Strauss’s understanding of exotericism, cf. also “Quelques remarques sur la science politique de Maïmonide et de Fârâbi” (1936) and “Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis” (1937), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2:125–58, esp. 137–38, 144–45, 148, and 152–56; see also 134n28 with Strauss’s marginal note (160); and 179–90, esp. 183–87.

crucial for the development of his own understanding of exotericism.⁸² The fact that neither Maimonides nor Hobbes played a decisive role in “Exoteric Teaching,” whereas Lessing did, shows not so much that the essay should be understood as an autobiographical supplement that informs the reader of a further source of Strauss’s insight, but rather that the *periagōgē*, which we associate with the name of Plato, can be experienced when studying philosophers from any time or place who engage in exoteric teaching.

⁸² Cf. “A Giving of Accounts,” 3: “Maimonides was, to begin with, wholly unintelligible to me. I got the first glimmer of light when I concentrated on his prophetology and, therefore, the prophetology of the Islamic philosophers who preceded him. One day when reading in a Latin translation Avicenna’s treatise *On the Division of the Sciences*, I came across this sentence (I quote from memory): the standard work on prophecy and revelation is Plato’s *Laws*. Then I began to understand Maimonides’s prophetology and eventually, as I believe, the whole *Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides never calls himself a philosopher; he presents himself as an opponent of the philosophers. He used a kind of writing which is in the precise sense of the term, exoteric.”

An Interpretation of Machiavelli's *Favola**

MARCO MENON
UNIVERSITY OF PISA
marco.menon@cfs.unipi.it

Abstract: This paper proposes a new interpretation of Machiavelli's *Favola*, a little piece which has not received much attention from scholars. One of the most interesting readings shows the philosophical layer of the *Favola* by pointing out its underlying criticism of traditional religion. In partial agreement with such a reading, the present paper maintains that the *Favola*'s main teaching concerns human misery and how it can be avoided. First, the paper shows the *Favola*'s strong narrative unity, in contrast to most interpreters who see in this tale a confused combination of different sources. Second, it offers a detailed analysis of the main characters, focusing primarily on Belfagor in his threefold manifestation (devil, man, spirit) and the unassuming peasant Gianmatteo del Brica. The main teaching of the *Favola*, which is articulated in full in the last paragraph, amounts to a bitter sapiential view of the human condition: most men are condemned to misery on earth and a mild form of damnation in hell; only by chance is one endowed with such qualities as are apt to keep one away from unhappiness.

Of all the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, the *Favola*,¹ also known as *Belfagor* in the English-speaking world, has received perhaps the least amount of scholarly attention. One need only glance at the huge and ever-growing

* I would like to thank Garrett Allen, Fabian Brandt, Ferdinand Deanini, Laurenz Denker, Hannes Kerber, Marco Lass, Timothy McCranor, Stefan Leicht, Christopher Lynch, Isabel Rollandi, and Ryan Scheerlinck for their helpful comments on the first draft of this paper. My enduring gratitude goes to Prof. Heinrich Meier and the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung for their invaluable support.

¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Niccolò Machiavelli. Sezione III. Opere letterarie*, vol. 2, *Scritti in poesia e in prosa*, ed. Antonio Corsaro, Paola Cosentino, Emanuele Cutinelli-Rèndina, Filippo Grazzini, and Nicoletta Marcelli (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2012), 303–17. This *Favola* is the only fable which Machiavelli decided to put in writing, and there is reason to suspect he conceived many. See Matteo Bandello, *Opere* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966), 464. For a general introduction to Machiavelli's poetical works, see Albert R. Ascoli and Angela M. Capodivacca, "Machiavelli and Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 190–205. On the relation between the *Favola* and the literary genre of the *novella* (unified and codified by Boccaccio), see Samuel Ghelli, "La *Favola* di Machiavelli: Belfagor Arcidiavolo," *Forum Italicum* 41 (2007): 285–96.

secondary literature on Machiavelli's thought to get a taste of the enduring importance of, say, *The Prince* or the *Discourses* in contemporary political philosophy and political theory. A simple overview of this literature confirms that the *Favola* does not belong to the achievements which have earned Machiavelli his status as a great political philosopher, like Plato and Aristotle. At first glance, this apparent lack of interest seems to be wholly justified. The *Favola* is traditionally understood as a quite scathing but inconclusive² and misogynistic satire of conjugal life. The aim of this paper is to put this little work under a different light, and to show in what sense it can contribute to illuminating a less explored aspect of Machiavelli's thought: his reflection on man's misery.

The peculiarity of the *Favola* is represented, most evidently, by its literary character and, on a different level, by a meaningful thematic feature. In his main works, *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, where he discloses everything he knows, Machiavelli never mentions hell, the devil, or the soul.³ What in those books remains literally invisible is made visible in the *Favola*; the beginning of the *Favola* takes place in hell, where the souls of the damned must stay for eternity in the company of surprisingly humane devils. One might rightly investigate the reason for this arrangement; or ask why Machiavelli allows us to suspect that hell, the devil, the soul, and the afterlife are fitting subjects for a fable—no more and no less. Machiavelli could be trying to persuade his readers that one should not fear punishment in hell, for the devil is not as fearsome as the Christian tradition maintains. At worst, the devil, as Belfagor's story shows us, is simply laughable and inept. In this respect, the *Favola* shows Machiavelli as the forerunner of the Enlightenment, which tries to ridicule traditional beliefs in order to overrule the "Kingdom of Darkness" by hook or by crook.⁴

² Cf. Michelangelo Picone, "La *Favola* di Belfagor tra *exemplum* e novella," in *Niccolò Machiavelli: Politico storico e letterato. Atti del convegno di Losanna, 27-30 settembre 1995*, ed. Jean-Jacques Marchand (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1996), 146-49.

³ See Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958), 31. On his personal copy of *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, Sebastian de Grazia noted, regarding the passage just referred to, that maybe such subjects were *too important* to be mentioned in a book about politics. See Sebastian de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) for a detailed interpretation of these "too important" subjects in Machiavelli's thought. On de Grazia's annotation, see William Connell, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jgIt9pKZO0> from minute 7:00.

⁴ See Theodore Sumberg, "Belfagor: Machiavelli's Short Story," *Interpretation* 19 (1982): 243-50. For a survey of the first interpretations of the *Favola*, see Franco Manai, "Note sulla *Favola* di Machiavelli: Gianmatteo, il villano più furbo del diavolo," *Rivista di studi italiani* 4-5 (1986-1987): 11-28.

This interpretation is very interesting, for it shows the presence of a critical stance against traditional religion in the *Favola*, and by doing so ferrets out its philosophical layer. The present reading, while confirming the “illuministic” character of the *Favola*, tries to bring to the fore another important teaching, one regarding man’s misery and the possibility of avoiding it. But, primarily, it contrasts those readings which see this piece merely as a clumsy satirical invention lacking coherence and structural cohesiveness.⁵ In fact, much of this paper is dedicated to showing that this is not really the case. In the *Favola*, three narrative moments can be clearly distinguished: a prelude in hell; a part centered on Roderigo’s marriage; and a part centered on the common venture of the devil and Gianmatteo. The second and the third narrative moments appear, upon initial reading, to be simply juxtaposed, or unrelated. In truth, the prelude is essential to understanding the nature and the limitations of Belfagor’s errand on earth and, in particular, in Florence; in a similar fashion, the events of the third part must be explained in light of what Belfagor experiences in the second part.⁶ In the conclusion, I will summarize the results of the textual analysis and try to articulate what, in my opinion, is the main teaching conveyed by the *Favola*. I do not assume to have solved all the riddles. But the resulting view on misery and the way to avoid it is significant, even though it is quite disheartening. For this avoidance requires a detachment from life in the city; namely, a detachment from the conjugal life and, by implication, from the political life. The ending of the story, by exhibiting the triumph of an unassuming peasant, hints at a peculiar way of life which transcends both the city and the family into the dimension of a retired life, self-sufficient and tranquil, which one might tentatively describe as apolitical and anerotic, but not necessarily as ascetic.

PURPOSE AND REQUIREMENTS OF BELFAGOR’S MISSION TO EARTH

§1. At the beginning of the *Favola*, the author refers to his source, the annals of Florence. This source refers, in turn, to the revelation which a most holy man of the past received in a vision while he was concentrated on his prayers.

⁵ “Machiavelli’s little ‘favola’... is a strange literary hodgepodge, a textual Frankenstein monster. ... Its plot consists mainly of two separate stories that have little to do with each other,” says Sante Matteo, “To Hell with Men and Meaning! Vesting Authority in Machiavelli’s ‘Belfagor,’” *Italica* 79 (2002): 2; cf. also 11. See also Pasquale Stoppelli, *Machiavelli e la novella di Belfagor: Saggio di filologia attributiva* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2007), 17–18. In contrast to these readings, according to another interpreter, the *Favola* is a work written with the utmost care, where every single word is meaningful. See Filippo Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore: Morfologia e ideologia della novella di Belfagor con il testo della “Favola”* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1990), 4–5.

⁶ In the text I will refer to the sections of the *Edizione nazionale*, cited above, n. 1.

Thus, we are reading a more-than-second-hand account: a holy man had a vision; he told somebody what he saw; someone wrote down his account; our author read that account in the annals of Florence; the same author, in turn, tells us the story. It is not clear why he fails to transmit his primary source to us, the text of the annals. Being ancient, it may be written in Latin; the fable, on the other hand, is written in Italian. Perhaps the author wants the story to be more widely accessible, or perhaps he is simply hiding the fact that it is all his own invention. Moreover, we cannot even be sure if the holy man rightly understood what he divined. Nonetheless, thanks to the title we know that we are reading a fable, and a fable does not claim to be true.⁷ But we may expect that a fable conveys a moral lesson; at least, we can enjoy the wit of the storyteller and meditate on his intended teaching.⁸

According to the holy man's vision, innumerable damned souls trace their disgraced condition back to their marriages. The choice of words is peculiar and gives us some fundamental information. Apparently, the bulk of hell's population is made up of husbands. What about the minority? Not every damned person is a married man. Those who do not curse their marriage could be bachelors like Castruccio Castracani or Friar Timothy from *La mandragola*. And, maybe more significantly, not every miserable mortal human being is a man. Women are, after all, mortal as well; perhaps some women go to hell and do not curse their marriage. If we recall the story of Adam and Eve, the Fall of Man is brought about by a woman—the first man is lured into transgression by a woman. There is, or there seems to be, a kinship between woman and sin; nonetheless, hell is populated primarily by men. At most, women make up a small percentage of hell's population. In any case, the holy man's vision tells us something of the utmost importance for our life on earth, something which cannot be apprehended simply by looking at the world. The holy man is literally “abstracted,” that is, detached from the world, and learns something about the destiny of the human soul.

§§2–3. We hear no more about this holy man, but we may assume the rest of the story derives from his vision.⁹ We are told that the infernal judges,

⁷ Cf. Antonio D'Andrea, *Strutture inquiete: Premesse teoriche e verifiche storico-letterarie* (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 151n30.

⁸ See Michelangelo Picone, “La Favola di Machiavelli: Una lettura intertestuale,” in *Dal primato allo scacco. I modelli narrativi italiani tra Trecento e Seicento*, ed. Gian Mario Anselmi (Rome: Carocci, 1998), 172; Ghelli, “La Favola di Machiavelli,” 293. Cf. Picone, “La Favola di Belfagor tra *exemplum* e novella,” 145ff. on Machiavelli's relative novelty if compared to his Oriental and Western sources; see also Stoppelli, *Machiavelli e la novella di Belfagor*.

⁹ For a contrasting view, see Matteo, “To Hell with Men and Meaning,” 5.

including Minos and Rhadamanthus, are extremely puzzled by what the souls of the damned affirm regarding the primary cause of their condition.¹⁰ Since the complaints are growing in number every day,¹¹ the infernal judges inform Pluto and the other infernal princes, who then decide to assemble. The speech given by Pluto before the infernal council is perhaps the most insightful and politically dense passage of the whole *Favola*; Inez Kotterman-van de Vosse mentions it¹² for the subtlety of its phrasing in representing the mind of a wise king under the rule of law. Pluto possesses his *stato* by virtue of the interplay of necessity and chance.¹³ This state of things is absolutely irrevocable. In the following, Pluto further explains that he does not respond to any judgment, be it celestial (godly) or earthly (human); not even God would be able to take hell away from him and give it to someone else. If Pluto is right, then God cannot be omnipotent, because something else “rules” above him. Furthermore, we learn from Pluto himself that *all* men who go to hell say their wife is the reason. If the accusations are true, then the infernal judges have never sentenced the souls of the damned fairly. There are, therefore, two possibilities: either the infernal authorities pass judgment in accordance with this information, simply believing what every damned person says, or they should dismiss all accusations at once. Neither would be a good choice. In the first case, infernal judges and princes would be held to be “gullible.” In the second case, judges and princes would be held to be “lacking severity”

¹⁰ A different reading of the “prologue,” interpreted in the context of Renaissance writings on the virtues and vices of women, is offered by Laura A. Blaj, “Reading Literature in Context—Profeminist and Antifeminist Rhetoric in Machiavelli’s ‘Favola di Belfagor Arcidiauolo,’” *Analele Universității din Oradea Fascicula Limba și Literatură Română* 1 (2014): 1214–29.

¹¹ The fact that the complaints are growing day by day could appear somehow surprising. At the beginning, we learn that “infinite anime” go to hell, and that all of them, or almost all of them, trace back their misery to their marriage. The growth in number of complaints might be explained as follows: if it is not due to a mere “population growth,” then those who did not complain earlier are encouraged to do so by their more vocal fellows.

¹² Inez Kotterman-van de Vosse, “Hayek on the Rule of Law,” in *Hayek, Co-ordination and Evolution: His Legacy in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas*, ed. Jack Birner and Rudy Van Zijp (London: Routledge 2002), 255–56.

¹³ The phrase “celeste dispositione,” as Christopher Lynch acutely pointed out to me, has an astrological meaning, not a theological one. Nonetheless, to some interpreters it seems possible to suggest, perhaps with the support of *Mandragola* 5.4, that “celestial disposition” here stands for “what Heaven wants” (“quello che ’l Cielo vuole”; see Niccolò Machiavelli, *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Niccolò Machiavelli. Sezione III. Opere letterarie*, vol. 1, *Teatro: Andria, Mandragola, Crizia*, ed. Pasquale Stoppelli [Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2017], 221, emphasis mine), that is, for a superhuman will, not a blind astrological necessity. Of this opinion is Grazzini, who reads the dualism of “celeste dispositione” and “fatale sorte” as hinting at the diarchy of God and Fortune in *The Prince* 25 (*Machiavelli narratore*, 16). Matteo maintains that “celeste dispositione” implies a “supernatural *design* by a greater power.” He also points out the paradoxical character of Pluto’s “fatal sorte” itself, which he reads as “ineluctable chance”: a manifest oxymoron (“To Hell with Men and Meaning,” 8, emphasis mine).

and to be “lukewarm lovers of justice.” Pluto’s main concern is to avoid both infamies. Hence, the action of the story is set in motion by Pluto’s preoccupation with honor and reputation, for his rule, as we have seen, is “irrevocable.”

§§4–5. The majority in the council commands that one or more devils go to earth, take human form, and find the truth about the marital condition. The suggestion made by the defeated minority (interrogation assisted by torture) implies that hellish punishments are not the most painful. Or perhaps there is no torture at all; our narrator speaks of “various,” not of new, different, or more painful torments—the more we learn about Pluto’s reign, the less we fear it, provided the holy man’s vision is not a fraud. It seems nonetheless difficult to trust someone who has been condemned to eternal estrangement from God, and who therefore can harbor a desire for vengeance. Perhaps the husbands are trying to draw Pluto’s attention to the hitherto undetected guilt of women in order to drag them into hell. However, the damned could also be wrong, for they could simply have a confused mind. In any case, if torture is perceived as a valid alternative, we might infer that hell is not as terrible as we are accustomed to believe. The chosen one is the arch-devil Belfagor (this is the first time we hear of him). Belfagor is a former archangel; his original home was heaven, not hell. He is a fallen angel, but not every infernal prince or judge was formerly an angel. Pluto is no former angel; the same is true of Minos and Rhadamanthus. The name “Belfagor” stems from the biblical tradition; Baal-Peor was a Moabitish god whose main characteristics are remotely reminiscent of a minor Greek god, Priapus.¹⁴ The narrator does not give us such information. On the contrary, he tells us only that Belfagor is a fallen one, and we are led to infer that he was a follower of the fallen one par excellence, Lucifer. Belfagor, who has been chosen by lot, is far from eager to go to earth. Nonetheless, Pluto’s power (his *imperio*) compels him to acquiesce to the council’s solemnly formulated demand. Belfagor will immediately receive one hundred thousand ducats,¹⁵ then go to earth, assume the shape of a man, and get married. He will live with his spouse for ten years: time enough to father many children, but not to experience the pains of old age and the loss of loved ones. This experiment would offer, according to the infernal princes, a comprehensive specimen of what the marital condition truly implies. After staging his death, he will eventually return to hell and, on the basis of his firsthand experience, report to his superiors the pros and

¹⁴ On this point see Bernardina Moriconi, *Le metamorfosi di un arcidiavolo: Il personaggio di Belfagor da Machiavelli a oggi* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2013).

¹⁵ There must be a purpose for storing money in hell. Perhaps infernal residents practice some form of trade or receive a wage. No doubt, money is useful for missions to earth, like Belfagor’s errand.

cons of marital life. There is a provision: Belfagor is to be subject to all the troubles and ills to which men are subject and that draw with them poverty, prison, sickness, and every other misfortune men incur, unless he can liberate himself from them by deceit and cleverness.

His experience would permit a fair assessment of the actual responsibilities and guilt of husbands. Seeing with one's own eyes is better than simply listening to someone else's account. For a judge needs evidence, and evidence must be verifiable by everyone in the light of day. In this respect, firsthand experience (experimentation) is preferable to secondhand experience (tradition). Nonetheless, all except one will have to rely on someone else's account, for only one devil will go to earth. Infernal princes and judges must rely on Belfagor's report. They do not know the truth about wives, and therefore they do not know the truth about the husbands who inhabit hell. Belfagor's task has a remote philosophical implication,¹⁶ since it raises the question concerning the status of married couples and the principal cause of eternal damnation. But Pluto and his companions want to ascend from opinion to knowledge for the sake of reputation, not for knowledge's sake. Belfagor's experience, moreover, will be the necessary starting point for a possible reform of hell's judicial system.

BELFAGOR'S EXPERIENCE OF THE MARITAL CONDITION

§§6–7. The account of Belfagor's settling in Florence is particularly allusive and works on more than one level. On one hand, the arch-devil assumes the identity of a certain Roderigo of Castile, a name and a birthplace reminiscent of Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo de Borja), and finds a new home in *borgo d'Ognissanti*, a place which brings to mind the Holy City. Not unlike Rodrigo de Borja, Roderigo of Castile is a devil in disguise who settles, along with his minions, in a most holy place in order to ply a most impious trade (usury).¹⁷ On the other hand, in order to justify the origin of his wealth, Roderigo explains that he left Spain as a child and moved to Aleppo, where he built a fortune, before finally coming to Italy to get married.¹⁸ It does not seem amiss to translate this lie into its effectual truth: "Spain" stands for heaven (where

¹⁶ I partially follow Grazzini in underlining the philosophical character of Machiavelli's *Favola* (*Machiavelli narratore*, 11, 22, 23, 128); Ghelli describes it as an instrument of knowledge ("La *Favola* di Machiavelli," 293).

¹⁷ For an allegorical reading of the *Favola* along these lines, see Michael Paden, "Un'allegoria per Alessandro VI e Monna Belfagor," *Belfagor* 49 (1994): 65–73.

¹⁸ Grazzini identifies Roderigo as a Sephardic Jew escaped from Spain (*Machiavelli narratore*, 37–38, 120–21).

he was created as archangel), “Syria” stands for hell (where he moved and received a fortune, namely, one hundred thousand ducats), and “Italy” stands for earth (a place more humane and more apt to civil life and his *animo*, his spirit or disposition). Since Roderigo later moves to Naples (ruled by Charles I, of French and Spanish dynasty) and then to “France” (ruled by Louis VII), we can infer that he is trying to get closer to “Spain,” that is, heaven.

§8. The arch-devil appears as a handsome man in his thirties. He is very rich, humane and liberal. For these reasons he is popular in Florence, and many noble, but poor, citizens want to marry their daughters to him. Hell’s envoy chooses the most beautiful of the daughters of a certain distinguished, but very poor, Amerigo Donati: Onesta. Her name refers to a moral virtue (“honesty”), but her only actual quality is her natural beauty, her youthful bloom. Along with nobility, beauty seems to be the other standard adopted by Roderigo when choosing a wife. He then organizes a sumptuous wedding in accordance with his grand financial resources. This otherwise happy event represents a turning point in Roderigo’s Florentine stay. The devil begins to enjoy worldly honors and pomp, as well as the praise of other men; but, more importantly, after a brief cohabitation with his bride, he falls madly in love with her. This might be considered the beginning of his actual experience of the marital condition, insofar as it is not yet characterized by poverty, imprisonment, or illness. As the narrator now informs us, the devil is forced by the infernal law to experience “all human passions.” But if we confront the two formulations of what the infernal law commands, we see that the first one (§5) asserts something quite different. It states that Belfagor must undergo (*sottoposto*) all the evils and hardships which married men undergo and that draw with them poverty, imprisonment, illness, and other misfortunes. The second formulation (§8) asserts, on the contrary, that Belfagor must undergo (*sottoposto*) all human passions. Perhaps the second formulation might be interpreted as a clarification of the first one. If so, it would exhibit Belfagor’s actual obligation; we note, in addition, that “all human passions” are more comprehensive than “marital hardships.” Perhaps the author means to say that the marital condition offers a significant sample of “all human passions.” I will return to this later.

§9. Onesta, who is beautiful and of noble birth, is also proud. Surprisingly, her hubristic pride (*superbia*) outdoes Lucifer’s.¹⁹ *Superbia* appears to

¹⁹ It is the first and only time that the narrator, or the holy man, mentions the Fallen One par excellence. We do not hear of him when Pluto speaks; perhaps he is too proud to take part in a council. In any case, one thing is certain: he is not the prince of hell. The sovereign of the underworld is a pagan

be an extreme form of arrogance. It has been the specific sin of Lucifer or, as Machiavelli informs us, the sin which caused the fall of some “blessed spirits”: “Once we were blessed spirits: / Because of our pride / We have been expelled from Heaven.”²⁰ Lucifer was the most beautiful angel in heaven, and the most beloved by God. Onesta is one of the most beautiful noble girls in Florence, and she is the beloved wife of a devil in disguise. Her pride is already superior to that of Lucifer, but it reaches its peak thanks to her husband’s devotion.²¹ She lords it over him, without compassion or respect; Onesta treats Roderigo like a slave, bound to his marital obligation by the influence of her family, by their vows, and, above all, by his great love for her. The wife takes advantage of the husband’s sentiment; apparently, she does not feel any affection for him. Onesta’s cruel, insolent nature also drives Roderigo’s minions away: they would rather endure the flames of hell (at last, we come to know its main torment) than be the toe rag of such a tyrannical woman. This passage proves that Roderigo’s love is not simply characterized by sexual desire. He wants to make Onesta happy; he cannot live if she looks sad. For this reason, as well as for the unparalleled pride of his wife, he is compelled to spend a large amount of money. Here, for the first time, the narrator addresses the reader using the first person: “I prefer not to talk about the great expenses. . .” The narrator intervenes only once and fails to give detailed information about Roderigo’s expenses, and by doing so, underscores the problem. The wife’s tyranny over the husband has a manifest consequence: great and continuous spending; it has also a tacit, but no less important, consequence: the need for acquisition, since poverty and bankruptcy are the alternatives to be avoided. Once the fundamental needs are satisfied, it is vanity or pride—fed by the always changing trends which thrive in a city like Florence—which makes acquisition necessary. Perhaps the narrator wants to conceal the further consequences of this conjugal tyranny. Since the household cannot thrive without the city, we are led to infer that, in a very telescopic way, the attitude of haughty wives keeps in motion the whole city. The husbands are compelled to acquire because of their spouses; the city must expand ultimately because of men who fall in love. The author’s declared silence on Roderigo’s great

deity, not a fallen angel from the biblical tradition; the “sovereign” of the whole is the interplay of chance and necessity, not the biblical God.

²⁰ “Già fummo, or non siam più, Spirti beati: / Per la superbia nostra / Siàno stati dal ciel tutti scacciati” (Machiavelli, *Scritti in poesia e in prosa*, 221).

²¹ God did not love Lucifer as a husband loves his wife. Instead, he crushed the rebel creature and hurled it into the abyss. Roderigo, on the contrary, as many other husbands, seems to love his wife more than his soul.

expenses underlines his silence on the city's need for acquisition, an important topic in Machiavelli's political works.

§§10–13. Roderigo spends the rest of his money helping Onesta's sisters get married and supporting her brothers so that they can each start a business and settle down. Notwithstanding the almost complete vanishing of his fortune and the unbearable temper of his wife, he still seems to bear the whole situation quite well. The situation escalates when one of his brothers-in-law dies in a shipwreck, destroying what was left of Roderigo's assets.²² Knowing what the infernal law compels him to undergo, he flees Florence and his once beloved wife. It is fear of poverty, imprisonment, and illness that counteracts the love for his wife. Roderigo is soon chased by creditors, magistrates, and other citizens; somehow the city itself pursues him. He flees on horseback, riding on the road which leads from Florence to Prato. Soon he will leave the road and cross the open fields; he will be forced to leave his horse and proceed on foot, through vineyards and rushes. The culmination of this progressive return to nature from civilization is the heap of manure in which a peasant—the main character of the third part of the fable—hides him. The movement from the city to the country implies at the same time a peculiar movement from publicity to secrecy. Roderigo will eventually lose his human body, his public identity, and become an invisible spirit whose identity remains secret to all but one. The rule of law and responsible human beings belong to the city; trickery and conspiracy belong to the country, where rustic spiritedness, as opposed to phony humanity and liberality, seems to be the only virtue left.

§§14–15. By chance, Roderigo meets the spirited peasant Gianmatteo del Brica who agrees to help him, given the promise of becoming rich afterwards. Gianmatteo does not know who Roderigo is; he simply trusts him because he is interested in his promise and has nothing to lose: if Roderigo is a liar, nothing bad will happen to Gianmatteo because he possesses nothing except his low job, a house, and a pile of manure (we do not hear a word about his family),²³ or because he fears nothing. For example, he does not tremble

²² The second brother-in-law has gambled his fortune away; the third does not seem to care about his family. As we might deduce from their failures, Onesta's brothers have no virtue at all; accordingly, we may surmise that she represents her family in full. She has a beautiful appearance and a detestable character; she has the name of a moral virtue, but she is anything but virtuous; her family is noble, but very poor. "Onesta" is deceitful semblance. Her substance contradicts her semblance. Her "semblance" will also play a key role later, in the last exorcism.

²³ If we conform to Aristotle's definition of *oikos*, which stems from Hesiod (*Politics* 1252b9–12), we see that Gianmatteo is obviously a poor person who does not really possess a household, which consists of (1) a house, (2) a wife and (3) a servant/ox for ploughing. Gianmatteo is driving the oxen home; we are not told that he owns them. He owns a house and, ironically, "has" a pile of manure.

before the threats made by Roderigo's pursuers (i.e., the magistrates, creditors and other sycophants, who in fact represent the city), thus saving his new accomplice. Once the pursuers have retreated, Gianmatteo asks Roderigo to fulfill his promise. We then hear Belfagor/Roderigo speak for the first time. He acknowledges his debt and, out of gratitude, addresses Gianmatteo as a brother, telling him who he really is in order to prove his ability to turn him into a rich man. He tells him about his true nature, about his mission to earth, about his human wife, and about his new plan. He will soon possess a woman, and only Gianmatteo will be able to drive the complicit evil spirit out of her. In other words, they are going to stage an exorcism or conspire against the family of the possessed.²⁴ Hence, the peasant will receive a reward and Belfagor/Roderigo will be able to keep his word.

THE DEVIL'S FINAL TEMPTATION

§§16–17. The first case of possession takes place in Florence; the unfortunate girl is the married daughter of a noble man. She is almost a doppelgänger of Onesta. Is Roderigo trying to take revenge for the hardships endured while living with his spouse? Why then does he not directly possess his wife? In my opinion, we are not dealing with Roderigo's revenge on his wife, nor on wives as a whole.²⁵ Instead, I suggest that in the first two cases he is simply trying (successfully) to reward Gianmatteo; Roderigo knows how much a father (a husband) loves his daughter (a wife); he knows what one is willing to pay to save her soul; he knows how far love can drive a man. Therefore, he does not possess his wife because her family is very poor. Furthermore, what these

He is apparently a single man, that is, incapable of reproduction. We note that the missing element of the *oikos* is saucily substituted by a pile of manure, which, according to some interpretations of the alchemical processes, happens to be the symbol or the matter of the first stage of transmutation, i.e., generation. On this topic, see Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: Karger, 1982).

²⁴ Since his coming to earth, the Roderigo incident has been characterized by a descent. A most handsome, rich young man, whose virtues are humanity and liberality, gets married in Florence and feasts sumptuously; he ends up in a pile of manure, pursued like a criminal by nearly the whole city. As a spirit, starting from the lowest of the low, he will rise again, possessing first a girl from a noble Florentine family, then moving upwards to the daughter of Louis VII. The return from the country to civilization is at the same time a movement backwards in time. The whole affair moves from fifteenth-century Medicean Florence (the first exorcism refers to an actual case of possession in Florence in 1466: cf. Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 81–82, 124) to thirteenth-century Naples, and from there to twelfth-century France (cf. Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 124–28 on the fable's paradoxical and fantastical chronology; cf. also Matteo, "To Hell with Men and Meaning," 3). Moreover, the reference to a case of exorcism in fifteenth-century Florence is at odds with the alleged antiquity of the primary textual source. We might infer that historical truths are at the service of the narrator's nonhistorical intention.

²⁵ On this point cf. Matteo, "To Hell with Men and Meaning," 13.

first two instances of possession and exorcism show is that, against an evil spirit, all traditional means are helpless. In order to prove the authenticity of the possession, Roderigo has the girl speak Latin, dispute philosophical things, and uncover the sins of many. Latin and philosophy are not devilish per se; uncovering secret sins, on the contrary, is quite a feat. All those things taken together constitute a comical form of omniscience, that is, irrefutable evidence of some supernatural intervention. As agreed, Gianmatteo shows up, performs his exorcism, and is rewarded with enough money to buy a small farm. The outward aspect of the exorcism consists of religious ceremonies and other rites; the effectual truth is a conspiracy arranged by man and the devil. The bond between the two is the most basic form of justice, sustained by a sense of gratitude: the willingness to pay one's debts, even if it implies tricking others. Roderigo is glad, but not satisfied; the sum received by Gianmatteo does not make him a rich man. As he claims, he will possess the daughter of Charles I, king of Naples; after this second exorcism, they will part ways, for Roderigo will then consider his debt repaid.

§§18–19. After Gianmatteo successfully effects the second staged exorcism with the compliance of the evil spirit, he receives a large sum from King Charles; the devil's promise has been fulfilled. Afterwards, the devil addresses his companion, saying that he must stay contented with his newly acquired wealth and that he himself now feels completely enfranchised: if the peasant happens to come across Roderigo, he will hurt him. In fact, this threat seems utterly superfluous, firstly because Gianmatteo is courageous (no threat seems to scare him) and secondly because he is satisfied with his newly acquired fortune.²⁶ That this is the case is confirmed by the fact that the peasant returns to Florence in order to enjoy his wealth. He shows no intention of getting married, as he is perhaps put on guard by Roderigo's story. The spirited Gianmatteo is now well-off and self-sufficient. He does not even surmise that Roderigo may want to hurt him in the future. They part ways peacefully. Each is minding his own business. But this state of things is not meant to last, for the devil decides to possess King Louis's daughter. There is apparently no reason for this; the third possession is the most puzzling event in the whole story. The crucial question therefore is: Why does Roderigo decide to possess a third woman? His decision should not be explained away as plain devilish mischief. I also exclude that Roderigo's third possession

²⁶ We might surmise that Roderigo's threat is not superfluous if we imagine what Roderigo's opinion is of human beings in general: according to his experience so far, human beings are vain and greedy; therefore, wishing to be left alone, he may well imagine (wrongly, in this specific case) that Gianmatteo is not content with his newly acquired wealth and will pursue him for more.

must be explained by his hate or envy for mankind, for it would be too vague a motivation. An attentive critic suggested that Belfagor felt pleasure during the first two possessions,²⁷ but there is no textual support for such a statement. I explain Roderigo's decision as a consequence of what happened during the Roderigo-Onesta incident and the possession-exorcism farce; in this respect, the final sequence is quite revealing.

§§20–21. The news of the demonic possession of the king's daughter upsets Gianmatteo; what generates his distress is the authority of that king and Roderigo's last words. It has already dawned on him that Roderigo's initiative will be a source of trouble. In fact, as soon as the king learns that Gianmatteo is a successful exorcist (the only time in which we hear of *virtù*, it is in reference to Gianmatteo), he compels him to go to Paris. The bogus exorcist already knows that Roderigo will not comply this time, but the king does not know this and does not care: if Gianmatteo fails, he will be executed. The spirited Gianmatteo feels great pain (not fear), but nonetheless decides to face the devil. He addresses his former accomplice with humility, reminding him that he will show the greatest ingratitude if he decides to abandon the peasant in this time of need. The devil's rejoinder is brutal: he treats Gianmatteo as a brazen traitor and promises to have him hanged before long. But the most important of Roderigo's claims is the following: *I want to show you, and everybody else, that I have the power to take away as well as give, as it pleases me*. Roderigo reveals his mind. This third possession is instrumental to his own ambition, for he is dominated by an ancient, Luciferian temptation: the hubristic desire to become like the biblical God in the eyes of Gianmatteo and everybody else—a temptation which may have been rekindled recently, by Onesta's example of unbridled (and supposedly unpunished) *superbia*.²⁸

§§22–25. The central exorcism-related speech conveys the instructions given to the king by a resourceful Gianmatteo, who is resolved to try his luck. As the peasant and the devil once conspired together against husbands and fathers, now the peasant and a kingly father (perhaps a surrogate of God) conspire against the devil. Gianmatteo is a prudent conspirator, for he does not fully reveal his plan to his accomplice.²⁹ He brings Onesta's "semblance"

²⁷ See Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 87–88.

²⁸ Cf. Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 110n98. We may add, following a suggestion made by another critic, that the third exorcism could have been, at the same time, a premeditated trap for Gianmatteo, upon whom Roderigo would take his revenge for the salvific, yet humiliating, manure incident (Picone, "La Favola di Machiavelli," 187). For a different interpretation of Roderigo's motive for possessing three women, see also Picone, "La Favola di Machiavelli," 184.

²⁹ The plan will be manifest at the end, if the conspiracy is successful; cf. Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 101.

into play as he organizes in Notre Dame the most magnificent and solemn mass ever, attended by the whole French nobility, the clergy, and the royal court. The final touch, a noisy orchestra, gives Gianmatteo the opportunity to announce the coming of Onesta to Paris with the intention to pay visit to her husband Roderigo. The devil is so shocked that he is not even able to think; he leaves the girl's body at once and returns to hell. The closing of the fable reveals that Belfagor has finally returned to his original identity (we hear his name for the third time; on earth he was always called Roderigo); he will answer for his actions (we assume he will pay a price for his transgression) and report the truth regarding conjugal life, confirming what innumerable damned souls have already lamented. The spirited Gianmatteo is the real winner of the story: he is tremendously rich, has learned something of importance from Roderigo, and is honored in Florence. We apprehend that he returns home swiftly and joyfully. The narrator does not say that he will get married. He is self-sufficient and well-off. Gianmatteo outwitted the devil because he knew where to hit: Roderigo was still terrified by the idea of undergoing the marital yoke once again. He was so upset since the fake introduction of Onesta to Notre Dame was sufficiently persuasive and consistent with the woman's haughty character, that he could not even think for a moment.³⁰ Belfagor the spirit still identifies with Roderigo the husband and acknowledges the binding character of the marital vows. Human laws retain their full effectiveness, and Belfagor's only cunning is his transformation into an evil spirit. He does not seem capable of simple human cunning, that is, of imitating the fox. However stunning his former transformations (angel, devil, man, evil spirit)³¹ may appear to us, a spirited peasant is more resourceful.

THE HUMAN CONDITION AND THE ROLE OF CHANCE

In order to bring fully to light the *Favola's* teaching, it is necessary to rehash some points concerning the two main characters of the tale, Belfagor/

³⁰ For a comment on the theatricality of this final scene, see Filippo Grazzini, *Tre occasioni machiavelliane* (Viterbo: Sette città, 2012), 48–57.

³¹ Belfagor undergoes radical transformations in his life: from archangel to arch-devil, from arch-devil to young man, from young man to spirit. He never manages to transform into a woman. He can only possess women; he cannot become one. Even in the act of subjugating a woman by virtue of his supernatural faculties, he remains somewhat alien to her, a parasite. He does not experience the world from the point of view of women; he does not feel what women feel. He has experienced heaven from the point of view of an angel, hell from the point of view of a devil, and earth from the point of view of a man—not of a woman. This failure parallels the absence of women in Gianmatteo's life. But while the absence of "woman," in Gianmatteo's case, represents his self-sufficiency, in Belfagor's case it represents his inherent limit. Cf. Matteo, "To Hell with Men and Meaning," 13 for a different interpretation.

Roderigo and Gianmatteo. As we have seen, Roderigo progressively experiences different human passions which happen to overcome each other. At first, he is ruled by his attraction to Onesta's beauty, an attraction which soon becomes love. That love eventually brings about his economic breakdown. In parallel, his wife's unbearable conduct and the fear of human (and infernal) punishment push him to flee the city. Before the fear of punishment sets in, it is evident that Roderigo/Belfagor is subdued because of his affection, which is clearly not reciprocated by his wife. Proud and tyrannical as she is, Onesta is ruled by her desire to excel among all Florentine wives. Roderigo is merely the main instrument of Onesta's social ambition: his honor and splendor in fact enhance *her* honor and splendor. So far, the traditional misogynous reading of the fable would be confirmed. But, as a matter of fact, the view conveyed by the *Favola* is even bleaker. Ultimately, there is just a momentary distinction between "unwary men" and "malicious women." The *Favola*'s anthropological pessimism leaves almost no one untouched. For, if we look more closely, we see that, in truth, Roderigo (the husband) is subjugated by his wife's family, and ultimately by his wife's father (the father-in-law; note that in the case of Onesta, as in the case of the three possessed girls, we only hear about the father, not the mother). Contrary to what seems to be the manifest truth about marriage as told by the *Favola*, it is an old male who indirectly rules a younger male via a young female (as is confirmed by Roderigo financially supporting Onesta's brothers and sisters). Onesta's beauty is a bait set by a very poor patrician, Amerigo Donati, who needs fresh blood (money) to revive his family.³²

We might also assume that Onesta's father is very poor for the same reason which brought about Roderigo's economic breakdown: great and continuous spending. We see at work then a vicious circle, set in motion by man's sexual attraction for feminine beauty. Once this attraction gives way to love, the loved one becomes almost a tyrant and the lover becomes almost a servant, ready to endure all possible hardships, and commit all possible sins, in order to please his beloved. This domination, both in its direct (wife) and indirect (father-in-law) form, brings misery into a man's life on earth, and eventually condemns his soul to eternal damnation. But, as we have learned from the description of hell, it seems that eternal damnation is not as bad as the marital condition. (In fact, Roderigo's minions prefer the flames of hell

³² By possessing the daughters of three rich and powerful men, Belfagor shows his awareness of the fact that a woman can be not only an oppressor, but also another man's instrument of domination. He "appropriates" that instrument successfully. This also shows the great vulnerability to which even a powerful father is exposed.

to Onesta's dominion.) I suggest therefore the following solution to Pluto's initial dilemma: assuming that the sins committed by the husbands (and the fathers) earn them a righteous punishment, it is nonetheless true that a wife's dominion represents an unbearable hardship by itself. In some sense the absence of wives from hell appears to be almost a compensation, better, a consolation for the pains endured on earth. The best choice would be, therefore, to leave hell's system untouched and to forgo any reform. In any case, Pluto's reputation is safe. But still, this does not represent a solution to the problem of human misery. For hell remains a place of torment, however mild.

Gianmatteo's figure hints at a possible solution, for he appears to be alien to the vicious circle. Contrary to what some have maintained, this spirited peasant is not evil,³³ nor is he proud. Before meeting Belfagor, he was poor; he had to work for someone else. But he was already on his own; now, being rich, he is perfectly content.³⁴ As a landowner, he does not need to work for someone else anymore; from now on, the only thing he needs to do is defend his property. He is joyful because he does not want or need to transcend his condition. The only conceivably necessary change concerns wealth. He does not desire to lord it over his fellows or to excel among them. He does not wish to be like the biblical God. The spirited peasant appears to be free from the ill passions which rule Lucifer, Onesta, Belfagor, and the bulk of mankind. Pride, vanity, love, and fear are the human passions most vigorously present in the tale. Insofar as they encompass the main spheres of human life, namely, the private life and the life of the citizen, they can be aptly understood as a significant specimen of "all human passions"; perhaps the author means to say that all other passions depend, in some way, on those. But it is not wholly clear how Gianmatteo, who apparently has no education whatsoever, could escape the trap set by human passions. We might wonder whether he is affected by these passions at all, or if "life in the country" works like an antidote on him. As already mentioned, he seems to have been self-sufficient from the beginning, though he needed to work. He is quite content after the first exorcism, for it is Roderigo who deems it necessary to possess another girl in order to make his accomplice even richer. In the same vein, we may surmise that without a devil's temptation, he would not have had any occasion to escape poverty. Gianmatteo's encounter with the devil merely gives him the opportunity to become economically independent, not to become some good-for-nothing crackpot like Onesta's brothers. His intention afterwards

³³ Cf. Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 64–65, 127, 131, 132.

³⁴ Grazzini attributes to Gianmatteo a sense of measure. See *Machiavelli narratore*, 99.

is to enjoy his wealth peacefully. To Gianmatteo, wealth is a means to a life of rest, not a means of vanity or pride. If money, like power, “will show a man,” we are led to suspect that he will lead a life no different, for all practical purposes, from that of the holy man who “saw” the damned souls in hell denouncing their wives.

Gianmatteo, who, thanks to his spiritedness and his cunning, has become a well-off landowner, as well as an admired, successful exorcist, points to a very problematic, but successful, way to avoid the conjugal trap and therefore a life of misery. He is not a victim of passions like his fellow human beings; he is guided by his own interest without being greedy; he is capable of self-restraint. We wonder if these qualities can be learned, or if they are a gift of nature. We are not told how Gianmatteo became Gianmatteo; surely his condition does not depend on any kind of philosophy; we have indeed seen that the actual search for wisdom is totally absent from the *Favola* as a whole. We only witness the peasant's accidental encounter with the devil and his final triumph. A possible reason for this state of things might be the following: the *Favola* merely points at the conditions which must be fulfilled in order to avoid earthly misery and eternal damnation. Certainly, Gianmatteo is not afraid of anything (neither of the “city,” nor of the king or the devil himself), nor is he enthralled by a conjugal relationship. He leads an unpolitical life at the outskirts of the city and, being a bachelor, he is able to eschew the domination suffered by Roderigo/Belfagor and innumerable other husbands. Since we are not told if and how it is possible to imitate Gianmatteo's way of life, the teaching of the *Favola* appears to be bleaker than expected. This little tale's comical outward appearance hides a bitter substance. The way to avoid misery and damnation, as far as we can infer from the text, depends on the ability to avoid the marital trap. This ability, in turn, seems to depend on chance. Gianmatteo's features might be just natural gifts, not the results of education or learning, and therefore they would remain beyond our control. That this might be the dismal, ultimate teaching of the tale, is implied also by the significant role played by chance in the whole *Favola*. The crucial events of the story are due to chance: *fatal sorte* “gave” Pluto his dominion; *sorte* “elected” Belfagor as hell's envoy; Roderigo found Gianmatteo *a sorte*, that is, “by chance.” This *sorte* becomes someone's destiny (*fato*, hence *fatal sorte*) and admits only the dim hope of being able to seize the occasion, if and when it presents itself. Avoidance of misery, while not impossible, is an ungovernable matter of chance.

Review Essay

Stephen L. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018, 368 pp., \$65 (hardcover).

LLOYD ROBERTSON

robertson0425@gmail.com

I am not a scholar of the Bible, so I must apologize in advance to Stephen L. Cook, as well as to readers who are able to learn more from his erudite study than I can. My goal is to help readers of this journal understand what they can expect to find in Professor Cook's book, and how it relates to, or overlaps with, political philosophy.

It may be well to begin by putting Ezekiel into historical context. David died in 970 BC; Solomon in 931. Ezekiel was born about 622, and his years of biblical prophecy began about thirty years later, in 593. Jeremiah's prophecies date from an overlapping period beginning only a few years earlier (627–594); Isaiah's date from a hundred years earlier (742–701), but with what are held by scholars to be substantial passages from much later.¹ The kingdom of the Israelites, with a capital at Samaria, was destroyed in 722 by the neo-Assyrian empire, "the first real empire in history"; the kingdom of Judah, with a capital at Jerusalem, remained independent for about another hundred and fifty years. The Bible says that the first Temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon—probably in 966. This temple was sacked by the pharaoh

¹ Deutero-Isaiah or Second Isaiah (chaps. 40–55) is regarded as dating from the Babylonian exile (sixth century); Cook says Third Isaiah (56–66) is "almost certainly from the Persian-era restoration" in the latter half of the sixth century (539 being a key date), two hundred years after the early books of Isaiah.

of Egypt a few decades later, fully reconstructed by Jehoash, king of Judah, in 835, stripped again by the king of Assyria in about 700, and totally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586, perhaps seven years after Ezekiel's first prophecy. The first deportation of Judahites to Babylon took place in 597. There was a competition between Egypt and the Babylonian empire for control of Judah from 597 to 582; Ezekiel was among the Judahites who were exiled from their home in Judah to Babylon.²

Cook's book is the third and final volume in the series of Anchor Yale Bible commentaries on Ezekiel. The first two volumes were authored by Moshe Greenberg, a mentor of Cook's. Cook tells us that he differs from Greenberg first in the good fortune of being in a position to present "three-dimensional, virtual models of the utopian temple" in Ezekiel 40–48, but also in some matters of interpretation. Cook's identification of the authors—Ezekiel and his school, or a group of authors sharing a common purpose—guides him in his interpretation of the text.

Although Greenberg (and, indeed, premodern Jewish scholars) were familiar with Ezekiel's dependence on the Holiness Code in Leviticus, his commentaries do not reflect more recent understandings of an entire source running through the Pentateuch known as the "H" source, or what Israel Knohl calls "HS," the Holiness School. Neither does he elaborate on the common Zadokite authorship of HS and Ezekiel.... [Greenberg's friend Jacob Milgrom, in more recent work] lumps Zadokite and Aaronide priests together! It is in the opposite move of striving toward social-scientific precision in understanding the Israelite priesthood that the present commentary gains new traction in illuminating Ezekiel's prophecy. (xii)

Cook builds on findings or claims about "the two component strands of the priestly writings of the Pentateuch, HS and PT"; he wants to link these strands "respectively with the Zadokite circle and a differing, more generally Aaronide circle," the Zadokites being understood as "a dominating Aaronide family, an inner-Aaronide lineage" (16). "The dialog [for example, between Ezekiel 44 and Isaiah 55 and 66] is between two clerical factions, neither of which are Levites" (17).³ Cook says: "Ezekiel's written prophecy brims with

² On a point of terminology: insofar as the kingdom of Judah survived, while the kingdom of the Israelites did not, it is not correct to refer to the Judahites as Israelites; the term "Hebrews" is correct, reaching back to the time of Abraham and forward to the times when first Latin (from "Judeans," people from the province of Judea where the Temple was located), then languages including French and English, yielded the term "Jews." We will try to follow biblical usage for "the people of Israel," and "Jews" for the period from Roman times onward. "Hebrews" may be used to cover various different periods.

³ "HS shares the idea of two separate central clerical houses in Israel, both separate from the Levites.

sophisticated intertextual echoes of preceding scriptural material.” Ezekiel 38–48 “specifically draws on earlier prophetic literature and on priestly Holiness School (HS) Scriptures.” Examples of “inner-biblical interpretation” include comments on various passages in Isaiah.

Cook has no doubt that different passages were written or added at different times; some Gog and Magog passages in 38–39 “originate” at different times than other passages in Ezekiel. Does this mean that later passages are interpolations, or that they do not belong?

Tensions and seams within the text indicate that an original core authentic to Ezekiel and his earliest editors was later expanded by the Ezekiel school. . . . The growth, however, shows every sign of being “organic.” That is, it represents a deepening of motifs and themes native to Ezekiel and was carried out in a manner displaying a distinct family resemblance to other editorial work within the book. (8–9)

It is a false choice or dilemma, if we follow Cook’s approach, to think there was either one author working over a period of time, or multiple authors who may have had different agendas, and therefore produced a “pastiche.” Ezekiel 38–48, in particular, “is not an artificial and anthological in-grafting.” The best understanding of the text is that there is apparently not one author, but a group of authors, to some extent not actually meeting or directly collaborating, working on a common project together. The “pastiche” theory has been a distraction; without it, “we would hardly attribute the Gog oracles to anyone but Ezekiel and his disciples” (9). There are many textual references “back” to earlier passages in Ezekiel; there is the literary technique of “halving”; and there are familiar markers of style. Above all, perhaps, there is “clear evidence of Ezekiel’s priestly frame of mind, indeed of a Zadokite orientation.” Certain passages in Ezekiel draw directly from HS texts in Leviticus. Attempts to place all of Ezekiel 38–48 at some significantly later time must fail, as we can see from references “back” to key passages in Ezekiel that appear in Zechariah and Joel (9–10).

Even with new findings about the consistency of Ezekiel with other biblical texts, chapters 38–48 present difficulties. The notes on the dust jacket from Yale University Press describe these final sections of Ezekiel as “the

It understands the priests of both houses to descend from Aaron [brother of Moses], one set through Eleazar and the other through Ithamar. . . . HS places Ithamar in charge of Levites with lesser duties, while it has Eleazar direct the Levites responsible for the most important items of the tabernacle (Numbers 3–4). . . . The line of Eleazar and [his son] Phinehas produced Zadok, a chief priest of King David’s time and the eponymous ancestor of the Zadokites” (17). With some qualifications, Cook takes the term “Zadokite” to fit well the upper-echelon priests that HS wants to elevate.” See generally 16–18.

most challenging texts of scripture.” There are differences between Ezekiel 38–39, on one hand (with the “Gog and Magog” predictions of God destroying enemies of Israel, and giving the land of Israel to the Hebrews), and 40–48, on the other. To the former passages Cook applies the admittedly awkward term “proto-apocalyptic,” partly because of similarities between these passages and later passages in Daniel and Revelations. The genre here can also be described as “eschatological prophecy.” As to chapters 40–48:

The second section in chapters 40–48 is an archetypal vision of a temple-centered world. It squarely fits the technical genre known as utopian literature. Ezekiel and his inner circle, over time, composed texts in both genres. There is, in my view, no need to posit different authorial circles behind Ezekiel 38–39 and Ezekiel 40–48. (3–4)

The two groups of passages are complementary, as opposed to being so different as to indicate a splicing together of things that do not belong together. The Ezekiel 38–39 passages focus on time, especially the end times resembling the beginning time at Creation; the battle between order and chaos, culminating in the defeat of chaos, actually happens as a sequence of events. At Ezekiel 40–48, on the other hand, there is an emphasis on space, order, and geometry; “how things should be” in the material surroundings of God’s people, as a reflection of “how they should be” among the people themselves. The focus is more a matter of how one imagines oneself in the present than of what is likely to happen in the future (4–5). Cook elaborates his understanding of More’s *Utopia* in order to clarify what he means. Ezekiel’s ideal temple and land are not “finished” in the sense of supplying detailed plans that could actually be put into effect. Horizontal dimensions and barriers are described in detail, but not vertical ones. What is crucial “for now” is that movement of people, access to the divine, can be controlled while being shared. Leaving vertical dimensions and perspectives blank is a way of allowing for the intervention of what must be largely unknown; what exactly will God require? “The architectural zones of the utopia of chapters 40–48 await a filling in as God takes up bodily residence.” The utopia is also imperfect in important ways. There is still sin, the need to frighten would-be trespassers, and the need for atonement. The “new heart” that has been promised for Israel has not yet arrived in utopia. Many essential details for an actual city are missing; those that are present are fantastic, suggesting an ongoing need for miracles (5–12).⁴

⁴ English translations of 43:11 have tended to say that the House of Israel is ordered by God to “follow the entire plan” of the temple Ezekiel has seen (NRSV), or “carry it out” (NJB). Cook renders “‘They must come to terms with them,’ that is, with the temple’s design and regulations” (191–92).

The third difference Cook notes between Greenberg's work and his own is that Greenberg's commentaries "did not develop the significance" of "Ezekiel's anthropomorphic mode of speaking about God" in connection with "the anthropomorphic theology of HS...and the Zadokite idea of a terrestrial 'body' of God." "The present commentary works hard to connect these dots and in so doing pushes to clarify a great deal of Ezekiel's text" (xii). God's literal presence is a major theme both at the beginning and the end of the book of Ezekiel. The utopia is "God's garden of creation, containing both profound danger and intense blessing. Those who enter to be blessed must do so reverently, discerning god's bodily Presence" (12). Cook says: "Just as some core of the Gog text was an early part of Ezekiel, so some core of Ezekiel must have been part of the earliest outline of the book. Without this text, the book's central crisis of the absence of the divine Presence from God's temple is left unresolved."

The *kābôd* [or Presence] is central in the three main vision accounts of Ezekiel 1–3, 8–11, and 40–48....From chapter 11 on, the Presence has been anomalously absent from Israel and the land's central shrine. Here, the book raises a profound literary and theological tension, which begs for resolution. The Presence *must* once more indwell the temple and sanctify Israel....Since, within Ezekiel's book, the return of the Presence occurs only in chapters 40–48, at least a core of these chapters is integral to Ezekiel's thought. A vision of a new temple *belongs* in Ezekiel. (10–11)

The Presence for Ezekiel is more than the "radiance" or "splendor" which seems to be the understanding of *kābôd* in Isaiah, Habakkuk, and the Psalms; "a diffuse and undifferentiated sort of holiness would appear to lack transformative, sanctifying power....The incarnate God that Ezekiel envisions cannot be identified with this sort of aura" (11).⁵ The utopian vision of chapters 40–48 is needed not only to "wrap up the crisis of the *kābôd*'s absence," but to "resolve the promises of preceding oracles in the book." The "ideals" in question trace back to various Zadokite, HS texts earlier in the Bible. "If there was clear evidence of Ezekiel's priestly frame of mind, of his Zadokite orientation, in Ezekiel 38–39, this is even more the case in Ezekiel 40–48, which exhibits dependence on HS throughout" (11).

⁵ Cook cites Isa. 6:3, Hab. 3:3 and Ps. 57:11 as passages where *kābôd* means "radiance" or "splendor"; the KJV and NIV translate as "glory" in these books and in Ezekiel; NAS has "splendor" at Hab. 3:3. Passages outside Ezekiel saying God dwells or will dwell among his people are Exod. 25:8, 29:45, 46; Num. 5:3, 35:34. The KJV, NAS, and NIV also translate *kābôd* as "glory" at Exod. 33:17–23, where God explains to Moses that He will be very much present.

In the utopian temple described in the last passages of Ezekiel, God is not only present in the inner sanctum, but both holy and alive in such a way that his Presence cannot be contained. God does not simply make Israelites aware of His presence, so that when they are away from the inner sanctum they have a “potential” holiness “predicated on obedience to commandments.” Rather, in the Ezekielian view, “the *holiness* of the indwelling Presence actually extends beyond the sanctuary to affect Israel for the good.” The good news, one might say, is that Israelites can continue to gain in sanctity by virtue of direct spreading and intervention in their lives of the holy God; the very land of Israel is so to speak filled with God’s presence. Cook cites Knohl: “In PT holiness is ritual and restricted to the Temple and the priesthood. Although all Israelites are commanded to be ritually pure, their observance of purity does not endow them with the qualities of holiness [whereas in HS, holiness *is* the aspiration of all Israel].” The news that, while not exactly bad, requires caution, is that “the dazzling holiness of deity” must be respected; an improper approach to the real, living deity, reaching out throughout Israel, can be “lethal.” Precautions are needed so that the people can grow in sanctity “safely” (20–22).

In Ezekiel there is not only light and holiness and goodness, leading to salvation, but also something like the opposite: murk or filth, associated with sin, death, and disobedience. Impurity and desecration, like their opposites, have a “preternatural character”; “what drives God’s Presence from Israel is not mere human impropriety and immorality” (22–23). The “spatial polarity” between holy and unholy, pure and impure, is clear above all in the opposition between the sanctuary and every other space, including in the land of Israel. (“The territorial antithesis at play in Ezekiel is not an example of ethnic chauvinism.”)

Ritual impurities within Israel, such as corpse contagion, skin disease, and menstrual blood, oppose and impede the divine life emanating from God. God’s land is particularly defiled by *gillûlîm*, “idols.”... These *gillûlîm* crowd out the living God, are themselves devoid of life, and etymologically, bear associations of filth, waste, and degradation. Thus, even with regard to idols, Wenham...is correct that “the quintessence of uncleanness is death.” (23)

Somewhat paradoxically, bloodshed is an intense source of pollution, but of course sacrificial blood is essential to the rites that are performed in the sanctuary. Cook claims to be restoring some of the complexity to the biblical view of sacrificial blood. Such blood is not simply a “detergent” or decontaminating agent; it is at least as much about “restoring relationship with YHWH.” There is a battle of death with life, and “blood, as life” wins the battle. “The

sacrificial blood gains holiness from the altar...but at the same time it gains defilement from the offerer....It is understood to remove impurity or evil from the worshiper” (24).

Perhaps Cook’s most distinctive argument is that YHWH, according to Ezekiel and others in his school, can be understood in an anthropomorphic sense, and not only metaphorically (see 186ff., commenting on 43:1–12). YHWH is present in a material sense, in body, in the idealized temple.⁶ It may be a sign of how desperately human beings need salvation from the filth and degradation that constantly threaten us, owing (apparently) to our being mortal, that only the actual presence of God on earth among us can save us.

Ezekiel’s God is a starkly emotional deity (anthropopathism). God is intensively “patriotic” about the Judean homeland, which the Lord refers to with “hot jealousy” as “my land” (Ezek 36:5)... Does [Ezekiel’s] God have a *body*?... The Presence remains substantively and singularly interconnected with the shrine on an ongoing basis.... Settling within a unique dwelling, the divine *kābôd* commits itself to dwell... amid the tribes of Israel alone.... God has a “body”; it occupies one place at one time. (24–25)

God Himself seems to state very literally that he will be present in body—including his feet. “And [the voice] said to me: Human One, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell among the children of Israel continually” (182). On the other hand, by becoming present in a bodily sense, YHWH risks being infected in some of the ways to which human beings are subject.

Texts such as Ezek 43:9 directly attest to the tension between God’s residence on earth and Israel’s contact with pollution. The dreadful tension helps explain the detailed concern about the architectural elements of the utopian temple in Ezekiel 40–48. There is a windowless and sealed inner sanctum in the temple, for example, to safeguard the Presence from the threat of death. (24)

Of course, God remains a mystery, indeed unknowable despite some essential and tantalizing details. “In Ezekiel 40–48, God has not assumed a biological form, but rather, God here commits to a scandalously particular, tangible indwelling of terrestrial Israel.” God’s body is presented as material, but presumably not like “our bodies,” but of a “matter” that is “yet unheard of” (25).

⁶ Of course it seems necessary that God, “while remaining indivisibly one, is somehow able to occupy both heaven and earth”; for God a kind of bilocation must be possible, and indeed it must be that time is meaningful to us but not, or not in the same way, to God (189).

God is present in the temple, with His “holiness [radiating] out to the city,” but the sanctuary must be apart from the city.

If God were to directly contact the pilgrim city, it would cease to exist, since direct contact with the Holy is lethal....Here in a nutshell is the compelling paradox of Zadokite theology, of God touching yet not touching God’s creation. There must be a delicate balance between revelation and withdrawal, between immanence and transcendence. (206–7)

The material God belongs and resides, materially, in the same city as “Israel”—in His city as well as theirs—yet He remains mysterious.

We may think of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible as looking forward to a messiah in the sense of a military conqueror who will destroy the enemies of Israel and establish a line of kings.⁷ The kings may be in a Davidic line; more remarkably, the succession may begin with someone like Cyrus the Great of Persia.⁸ Cook presents Ezekiel as a corrective to such expectations. Here God is, so to speak, antimonarchy, opposed to the notion of Hebrews being ruled by kings, even their own kings. Here is God Himself again at Ezekiel 43:7–11 (Cook’s translation):

The House of Israel will not again defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their adulterous worship and by rites venerating their kings when they die. When they placed their threshold by my threshold, and their doorpost beside my doorpost, with only a wall between us, they defiled my holy name by their abominations that they committed. So I consumed them in my anger. Now, let them remove their adultery and their rites and pillars venerating their dead kings from me, and I will dwell in their midst continually. (182)

⁷ 1 Sam. 10:1–2; 1 Kings 1:39; Lev. 4:3; Exod. 40:9–11; Num. 6:15; Isa. 45:1. Wikipedia: “The literal translation of the Hebrew word *mashiach* (messiah) is ‘anointed,’ which refers to a ritual of consecrating someone or something by putting holy oil upon it. It is used throughout the Hebrew Bible in reference to a wide variety of individuals and objects; for example, kings, priests and prophets, the altar in the Temple, vessels, unleavened bread, and even a non-Jewish king (Cyrus the Great).” See 1 Kings 19:15–16. “In Jewish eschatology, the term came to refer to a future Jewish king from the Davidic line, who will be ‘anointed’ with holy anointing oil, to be king of God’s kingdom, and rule the Jewish people during the Messianic Age. In Judaism, the Messiah is not considered to be God or a pre-existent divine Son of God. He is considered to be a great political leader that has descended from King David. That is why he is referred to as Messiah ben David, which means ‘Messiah, son of David.’”

⁸ “The Persian emperor Cyrus is the only foreigner in the Bible to be identified as the messiah or anointed one of Yahweh, the Israelite God. Isaiah tells us that Yahweh spoke ‘to his messiah, to Cyrus, whom I [Yahweh] took by his right hand to subdue nations before him’ (Isa 45:1). The other people called *messiah* or *anointed one* in the Bible aren’t designated *Yahweh’s messiah*, as Cyrus is” (Lisbeth S. Fried, “Cyrus the Messiah,” *Bible Odyssey*, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/people/related-articles/cyrus-the-messiah>).

The specific design of the utopian temple is inseparable from God's plan to remain physically present in His land, among His people, and maintain their faith or purity in a way that kings have failed to do; and this in turn requires a complete overturning of the traditional ways of the Hebrew kings. Cook elaborates some themes here; first, the physical layout of the land in traditional, nonmonarchical and even antimonarchical terms.

Completely absent in Ezekiel 48 is any acceptance of the monarchic-era division of Israel into two separate kingdoms. Ezekiel's utopian allotment envisions the reunited kin of Israel organized genealogically as extended families, kin groups, and tribes. So too, there is nothing here of a central royal city of Zion engulfing the temple...or the monarchy's system of administrative districts.... As an additional move tempering the Judean monarchy, vv. 7–8 move the entire tribe of Judah north of the former location.... The new tribe-based, acephalous allocation of the land is "a deliberate attempt to recreate the archaic period in Israel's history." It wipes away all memory of royal chauvinism, of the monarchic state's blurring of tribal divisions and powers. Zechariah 12:7 will later echo the theme that Jerusalem and David's dynasty must never again overshadow the countryside. (288; cf. 278–79)

The city, Jerusalem, is not referred to by this name (which had come to be identified with "City of David") in Ezekiel; it is separate from the Temple, rather than surrounding and dominating it, and its rule is drastically diminished in comparison to its peak. Ezekiel, rather than looking forward to a Cyrus-type conqueror and political/military ruler, looks backward to a time when the tribes had considerable autonomy, and even some "kingly" powers, while necessary chores in utopia are carried out by a "chieftain" (229–30; cf. 189–90).⁹ "Ezekiel's vision specifically lacks a standard monarch and describes a massive temple built solely by God, who thereby claims sovereign cosmic rule" (113).

The physical layout is inextricably tied to God's presence, and the need to maintain a kind of community and purity.

Respect and empowerment do not easily flow down to the outer layers of society in a centralized monarchic state. Monarchic systems tend to

⁹ Elevated roles for a monarch, especially "temple builder," are repudiated, but the chieftain as the highest civil authority still has some significance. One "privileged zone of authority" for this person is the east gate tower, "a powerful zone of civil authority with traditional roots in old, village-era Israel"; lineage heads met and rendered judgment "in the gate." As Israeli society centralized, monarchs "appropriated jurisdiction at the gateway, co-opting its symbolism"; Ezekiel seeks to reverse this development, and ceding the gate to the chieftain as a "power location" "is a helpful corrective to the claim...that Ezekiel's *Nasi* [chieftain] is a weak, 'mock king'" (205).

contradict the idea of an entirely *hallowed land*, where the humanity and value of every sector, even those at the periphery, are upheld. They tend instead to divest the land of its sacral character, focusing on militarizing state capitals and fortifying royal cities. In Israel, monarchic power seems inevitably to have worked against the HS ideal of permanent land tenure for each family on its ancestral homestead. (229)

The ruler of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 is a prime instance of violent unchecked crown power in the Zadokites' view....Unsatisfied with Eden's natural bounty..., [a cherubic king] perverts paradise through *trade* . . . , which is here synonymous with extortion, the ruin of freeholders, and the decay of community....Monarchic power, vested in crown land, perverted the greater good of an entirely holy land, by dissolving the tenure of lineages on their homesteads....Because the kings evicted and scattered families, God scattered Israel among the nations.

Ezekiel's utopia seeks to undo and reverse the pre-exilic monarchy's rending apart of the communal solidarity of the HS covenant. For the Zadokites behind HS, Israel's traditional kinship bonds and practice of local land tenure formed crucial material supports of covenantal ethics. Such traditions protected and nurtured bonds of mutuality that joined Israelites together as interdependent vassals. (253)

Kings are seen to lead to corruption and decline for a community—perhaps precisely because of the great hopes that are placed with them. People might be tempted to abandon certain kinds of self-government in order to be (somewhat reliably) governed. There are also fears that any king, even a Hebrew one, will be subject to the temptations of all kings, and this might cause the nation and leaders of Israel to be led astray.

Cook touches on another political theme in Ezekiel's "utopia": what might be called the potential cosmopolitanism, or openness to non-Hebrew people, when Hebrews live in the proper relationship with God. We have already mentioned that Cook corrects the notion that Ezekiel and his school, or their "religion," are necessarily ethnocentric. (Sin is at least as much of a problem within Israel as outside it.) Cook corrects translations in order to clarify that when "outsiders" are banned from the inner sanctum of the utopian temple, the meaning is not "foreigners" or non-Hebrews, but everyone other than true Aaronide priests (with whom "the Zadokites self-identify"). The ones who need to be specifically excluded from the inner sanctum are the Levites, who are allowed to perform certain ritual tasks that do not ascend to the highest; from the point of view of the Aaronides they are "outsiders," lesser priests or acolytes—nonsacrificing as opposed to sacrificing priests (214–17). The mistranslation of "outsiders," especially in English translations, has left

the impression that all non-Hebrews are unwelcome anywhere in the temple, including in the outermost or so to speak most profane precincts. Cook says there is no support for this interpretation, and he points to various biblical texts indicating that non-Hebrews are welcome to take part in various ceremonies, and even to become priests. Only if they become priests, needless to say, can they lead the highest ceremonies, but it is striking that such an honor may be available to some of the *goyim* or gentiles (217–18).

The Zadokites, according to Lev 22:19 (HS), had no issue with resident aliens entering outer temple areas with offerings.¹⁰ Given the inclusiveness with which the utopian vision elsewhere treats foreigners, their exclusion from Israel's worship...in Ezekiel 44 seems most improbable. Specifically, Ezek 47:22–23 insists that Israel treat as native-born all “resident aliens who are living among you and who have had descendants born here.” (217)

Ezekiel seems to contemplate a kind of permanent or legal resident alien status, along with something like anchor babies, for non-Hebrews living in “Israel.” It probably goes without saying that non-Hebrews are welcome insofar as, and probably to the extent that, they accept the distinctive Hebrew ways of doing things. An Israel that is based on kinship and tradition, and something like common law based to a large extent on precedent, “free” from kings, may not be notably xenophobic or ethnically exclusive, but it would probably not be particularly cosmopolitan. Kings may contribute to a decline of ethics in one way; in another, cosmopolitanism might support a move to a lowest common denominator. Kings might even use cosmopolitanism or “diversity” as a tool to serve their own purposes, as Cyrus might seem to have done.

The profound difference between Israelite “kingship” and reliance on God that Cook uncovers in Ezekiel is one that Thomas Pangle and Timothy Burns have likewise highlighted in their brief introduction to Hebrew scripture. Their argument begins with the observation that there is no political philosophy in the Bible, but there is some substantial consideration of what might be called different political regimes. God of course is always “in charge,” but he allows and even approves human experiments—always somewhat grudgingly, in an acknowledgment that human sin requires what would otherwise be an unfortunate failure. The “political” orientation of the Hebrew Bible is never toward “achieving the best,” but rather “avoiding the worst”—and the worst comes to sight as the pharaonic despotism in Egypt,

¹⁰ Cook also includes references to Isa. 66:21 and Gen. 28:3 and 35:11.

with which the Hebrews of course eventually have direct experience. The choice of “the chosen people”—initially Abraham and his offspring—has political implications. The idea seems to be that human beings in general have been proved failures from the beginning. God will experiment with choosing one people, and subjecting them to both more difficult tests and more direct intervention to help them, in the hope that they can be an example for all of humanity.¹¹ To some extent “regimes” appear in chronological order. “First, and in an important sense, perduring, is patriarchy—epitomized above all in the story of Abraham. The monogamous family, headed by the father but with a place of high honor assigned to the mother, is a cornerstone of any and every society favored by the Bible.” Next comes the rule of emphatically divine law, the necessity for which reflects the almost fathomless evil of which human beings are capable. At the time of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, for example, God seems to acknowledge that there is not yet a law against murder; Cain might actually suffer from a kind of honest ignorance of the horror of what he has done.¹² The ultimate demonstration of the evils of lawlessness—of pure human arbitrariness when we live without law—is probably not this or that individual criminal or gang, but the pharaonic despotism in Egypt, which Joseph enables as, so to speak, the pharaoh’s most senior slave.¹³ The divine law which the Israelites are commanded to obey, delivered initially by Moses, is neither the result of, nor subject to the examination of, human reason. It commands obedience without any consistent test of reason, and in fact with no calculation of the benefits that might be enjoyed by those who follow the law. Human beings have demonstrated repeatedly that they will abuse freedom when it is granted. God wants the chosen people to choose between good and evil, and to choose what is good freely, but he now recognizes that enormous pressure must be exerted in order to achieve consensus and conformity; indeed the oppressive methods of Moses in transforming “a mass of demoralized slaves into a ‘kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Exod. 19:6)” bear some similarity to the methods of the pharaohs. The difference, of course, is that the Israelites will serve God as opposed to any merely human ambitions.¹⁴ God eventually makes “covenants” with the chosen people. “God, however mysterious He may be, is a moral ruler: He rules, not with a view to some contingent self-interest or need or whim, but in

¹¹ Thomas L. Pangle and Timothy W. Burns, *The Key Texts of Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 129–30.

¹² *Ibid.*, 121–22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 130–31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 131–32.

accordance with solemn, unfailing promises based on immutable principles of lawful justice.”¹⁵ He offers, and encourages, both purity and love among human beings.

Many details of the divine law—on matters economic and sexual, for example—become quite clear, and help to illuminate God’s intentions. On the other hand, just as it takes some time for law and the covenant(s) to “arrive,” so there is a considerable period when there seems to be little clarity as to “the organization of human rule or administration under God’s law.” “Instead of a governing assembly or an aristocracy or a monarchy, we are confronted with a number of appointed or anointed rulerships, whose lines of jurisdiction and authority overlap in what one is tempted to characterize as a maze.”¹⁶ Partly because of the external pressure of constant war with enemies, the “potential for turbulence” of these arrangements did not become clear during the “fourth regime,” during which Joshua carried out the conquest of the promised land. It was the following regime, the fifth, the rule of the Judges, which became somewhat chaotic and then gave way to the sixth.

The apparently obvious solution [to the near-anarchy] is the institution of a divinely anointed monarchy, the sixth and final form of biblical regime. Monarchy is repeatedly foreshadowed in the book of Judges, and earlier in the Deuteronomic prophecies of Moses himself (Deut. 17:14ff.). Yet the advent of monarchy is condemned by the prophet Samuel, apparently speaking for God as well as for himself (1 Sam. 8). Through this condemnation, Scripture compels us to wonder whether the Divinity does not look with considerable favor upon something like the regime and the world described in the book of Judges.¹⁷

There are powerful indications that God opposes any monarchical regime. Even if such a regime solves human problems, by this very fact it may encourage human pride. The failure of “politics” under Judges may have at least some tendency to keep reminding the chosen people of their need for God.

God, one is tempted to conclude, wants humans to remain unsettled, challenged by fearful enemies, by the threat of slavery, by the high incidence of crime. The Bible would appear to prefer a society under pressure, its members tested constantly in their faith and lawfulness, feeling acutely the need for Divine assistance, and experiencing such assistance in brief, shattering moments of salvation and exaltation.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 132–33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 134–35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 136–37.

¹⁸ Thomas L. Pangle, “The Hebrew Bible’s Challenge to Political Philosophy: Some Preliminary

The Ezekiel passages do not promise that God's people can achieve both freedom from monarchy and freedom from obvious evils such as slavery and crime; it suggests that holiness, involving constant and direct rather than sporadic contact with God, is by far the most important thing.

On the other hand, monarchy at its best achieves real human greatness, even if this is always in the shadow of a realization that this may all be contrary to God's plan.

Still, when all this has been said, it remains difficult to avoid the conclusion that monarchy at its best is depicted as the real peak of Israel's historical existence. For monarchy brings an unprecedented grandeur of biblical virtue, both intellectual and moral, even as it also brings, in the persons of the best as well as the worst kings, an enormity of biblical vice approaching at times the monstrosity of the Pharaoh. The peak that monarchy reaches in the Bible can be summed up in one name: David.¹⁹

It is part of the greatness of the Bible that it shows extremes—human peaks as well as failures and evils—and forces us to think about how to weigh the good with the bad. Without engaging in any of the discussion of the regime of the judges as opposed to various monarchies, we can suggest that with Ezekiel, the Bible, inspired by God, once again becomes antimonarchical as it had been in the years before there was a Hebrew monarchy. Given the ever-present and therefore predictable failures of human beings to live in righteousness, it is unlikely that any mere political regime—any human contrivance—can provide a definitive solution to the deepest or most decisive human problems. This helps us to understand why the Bible is wholly lacking in anything that might be called political philosophy, which generally seems to assume that human wisdom is adequate to solve human problems.²⁰

Reflections," in *Political Philosophy and the Human Soul: Essays in Memory of Allan Bloom*, ed. Michael Palmer and Thomas L. Pangle (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), 80.

¹⁹ Pangle and Burns, *Key Texts of Political Philosophy*, 136–37. Subsequent pages go into considerable detail about the lives of various kings, especially David.

²⁰ Of course exceptions spring to mind. Socrates says in the pages of Plato that he has been guided by a "daimonic voice," and he even claims that his characteristic activity of "political philosophy"—cross-examining those who claim to be wise about politics—was inspired by none other than the oracle at Delphi. Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* can both be said to begin with a hope that there is no need to seek guidance from Olympian gods, or from any gods who closely resemble those gods; by the end of these books there seems to be some reluctant concession to a religion that bears at least some resemblance to an old or known one. See *Republic* 575d. Plato's *Laws* begins with an emphatic reminder that the most widely praised Greek regimes are said to have been directly inspired by Zeus; there is a gradual development in favor of Socratic rationalism. There is a tendency for modern political philosophers to say political philosophy must draw support from biblical revelation as well as reason, and then to provide an "enlightened" understanding of scripture that tends, for

The Jews have lived within, and often had little control over, many different political arrangements. If we can depart from anything Ezekiel knew, there was a period from the time of Cyrus to 167 BC, almost four hundred years later, when Jews lacked political sovereignty, but had access to their temple, lived in a kind of diaspora in the Near East rather than primarily in proximity to the Temple, and were largely free to proselytize, something they were known for doing. Cook points out that some commentators have argued that as a prediction of the future of Israel, Ezekiel's utopia is a failure. This is true only if the vision is taken too literally. Cook quotes Stevenson:

Those who argue that the Book of Ezekiel had no effect in postexilic Israel, because the future temple did not get built according to this “plan,” have missed the fact that postexilic Israel was a society organized around a temple without a human king. . . . The radical change in social structure imagined by this vision [of Ezekiel] actually occurred. There was a new Israel, a new temple, and no king. (6)

Of course, there were many differences between the postexilic life of Israel and Ezekiel's utopia. Synagogues “attracted around them large numbers of semi-detached and uncircumcised, but extremely enthusiastic, non-Jewish ‘God-fearers.’” There was both peaceful accommodation between Jews and non-Jews and a diversity of Jewish practices. In 167 the Temple was desecrated on the orders of Antiochus III, who had become king of “the Syrian segment of Alexander's empire.” Within a few years Judas Maccabee led a successful rebellion, which led to a succession of increasingly worldly and probably impious Jewish kings. The Pharisees, Jewish teachers and leaders, ultimately asked the Romans to depose the corrupt royal family, and end the political independence of Israel.²¹ The accommodation with Rome did not last long.

The Jews have thought about, and experimented with, an amazing range of alternative “ways of life.” Perhaps their identity, somehow understood, and survival are the most consistent or predictable themes. All of this is to say that at any given point in Jewish history, there is more than one fork in the road, and divinely inspired prophecies provide clarity only in a certain way, or up to a point. There are utopian yet possibly realistic hopes that Israel will return from exile, reunited, with Jerusalem as the capital and the Temple

example, to undermine the belief in miracles.

²¹ Paul Kriwaczek, *In Search of Zarathustra: The First Prophet and the Ideas that Changed the World* (London: Phoenix Books, 2003), 155–60, explaining the circumstances that gave rise to the book of Daniel.

securely in place. In the meantime, perhaps a long time in human terms, there may be life in exile, keeping up faith and traditions, setting an example for the world, and hoping. It would not be surprising, on the whole, if there is a great deal of suffering and sadness in store. There is hope for utopia, but also resignation to exile. Professor Cook has done a great deal to remind us that according to Ezekiel, there may really be two stark choices: living in proximity to a temple in which God is literally present, his holiness radiating out into the community; or living at some further remove from God, even if there are many elements of a thriving Jewish community. In the former, utopian and perhaps impossible situation, one can expect “political” arrangements to be made around kinship or clan ties, with a great deal of informality or even somewhat ad hoc decision-making; in the latter situation, further from God, Jews may be forced to accommodate themselves to a variety of different arrangements. Political arrangements themselves can never be the most important thing; that thing would be God’s presence or absence, and the indications He has given as to what He wants from us.

Review Essay

Gregory Bruce Smith, *Political Philosophy and the Republican Future: Rediscovering Cicero*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018, 432 pp., \$55.00 (cloth).

Cicero's Republicanism Reconsidered

DAVID LEWIS SCHAEFER

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

As Gregory Bruce Smith points out at the outset of this erudite and important, if sometimes problematic, study, in contrast to the neglect he has suffered in recent times among students of philosophy and politics, the Roman statesman-philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero was “considered one of the philosophical greats throughout the Christian era and well into the modern era” and was studied by many or most American schoolchildren from early in our history until well into the twentieth century (4, 66). The recent neglect of Cicero’s writings is due, Smith observes, to the fact that “the Cicero who is offered up for present audiences is but a vague, and boring, facsimile of the original” (7). But a proper study of Cicero is particularly apropos for our time, given the parallels between the situation to which he was responding—the decay of the Roman republic, coupled with the decline of philosophy into competing abstract, apolitical sects (Stoics, Epicureans, Cynics, Academics, and so on)—and our own: the loss of thoughtful civic concern, alongside philosophy’s decay into unworldly abstraction and jargon or barely disguised partisanship (“feminist, Marxist, ... deconstructionist, libertarian, ... multiculturalist,” 289). While recognizing, as he undertook his philosophic corpus late in life, that “his Roman republic was already doomed,” Smith maintains, Cicero hoped by means of his writings to

“bequeath a republican possibility for untold future generations” (4–5). And Smith argues that since the republican tradition, from its origins in classical Greece, “has been intertwined with the tradition of political philosophy... the future of republicanism” remains “inextricably connected” with that of political philosophy (2).

Smith contends that certain alterations Cicero made to the teachings of his philosophic predecessors make them more directly applicable to modern republicanism, which despite its present crisis constitutes “the highest form” of that type of government to have yet arisen. First, he “tried to soften the moral stance” bequeathed by “Plato, Aristotle, and Stoicism” by moderating “its remaining pagan stress on pugnacious, self-centered, self-assertive ‘magnanimity.’”¹ In so doing, he became in a sense “the first Christian philosopher,” despite having died before Christ’s birth—hence the status he attained as “the preeminent philosopher of Christianity until Aquinas.”² Additionally, however, Cicero “open[ed] spaces for a greater respect for commerce and labor than we see in the Greeks and for the creation of a distinctive republican soul better suited to philosophical statesmanship and public deliberation than war and imperial conquest” (9–10).

Smith’s opening chapter provides background by distinguishing between the two great historical models of republicanism: the classical (Greek and Roman) version, which aimed at “political freedom as an end in itself” (15) and (in the Greek case) was characterized by homogeneity and public contempt for the pursuit of wealth (which generates competing interests), and the modern commercial republic, ultimately devoted to the pursuit of “tranquility and comfort” at the expense of “martial and religious severity and austerity” (26). Despite the Greeks’ sometime persecution of philosophy as threatening to piety and civic virtue, Smith maintains, the basis of their civilization in “public speech” as a concomitant of direct self-government made it “the prerequisite for the birth of philosophy” (17). By contrast, the tranquility promised by modern liberal philosophers might be “achieved despotically, technologically, and even pharmaceutically” rather than through

¹ Smith will later acknowledge that Aristotle had already “substantially softened the pugnacious, heroic conception of virtue depicted...in Homer,” but contends that Cicero extended this softening through his reconceptualization of magnanimity (189).

² The manner in which Cicero seems to anticipate, or prepare “Roman soil” for the acceptance of, the teachings of Christianity has long been noted, as observed by Walter Miller in the introduction to his translation of *De officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), xiv. (However, Miller also expresses the conventional scholarly view of Cicero as an unphilosophical “follower” and paraphraser of Greek thought, “superficial” and unclear [xiii–xiv].)

self-government (26). Whereas the American variant of modern republicanism originally retained elements of “Christian virtue” as well as “ancient public-spiritedness” and honor that tempered that danger, Smith warns against the threat of an “ironic republicanism” implicit in the writings of the Cambridge historians J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner, carried to a further extreme by political theorist Philip Pettit, that endeavors to deprive self-government of *both* commercial and religious supports, in favor of a “modern, self-legislating, theoretical self,” antagonistic towards all tradition as well as “populism,” that aims to stifle political debate—and hence philosophy itself—for the sake of rule by an “enlightened” bureaucratic elite (28–38).

In his second chapter, “Initial Reflections on Political Philosophy,” Smith distinguishes political philosophy proper, which is grounded “on the phenomena that show themselves publicly to all who share a public space,” from the “constructivist,” academic “political theory” of our time, which seeks to “construc[t] its own foundations *ex nihilo*,” or “pick[s] and choose[s]” among elements of the philosophic tradition in a manner designed to advance the exponent’s “will to power” rather than engage in genuine dialogue with opposing views—thereby “destroy[ing] the distinction between citizen and subject” (40, 63). Constructivism, an offshoot of historicism, attempts to ignore or suppress the fundamental human “longing to grasp being or nature” (44). By contrast, Smith represents political philosophy, “follow[ing] Cicero and Plato,” as an “architectonic first philosophy that starts from a ‘cave’ or a ‘public space’” from which it can never “completely emancipat[e] itself,” so that it remains connected to “its own tradition or the phenomena of life,” even as it aspires to transcend that tradition (47). Smith claims to follow Plato and Cicero in viewing philosophy thus understood as an enterprise of “caring,” rooted in our human and political situation, as distinguished from what he maintains is the Aristotelian conception of philosophy as merely “staring” (48).³

³ This account of Aristotle’s understanding of philosophy (reiterated at 132 as the notion “that the detached ‘contemplative’ life is superior to the public life, even for the philosopher”; also at 149) is open to question, inasmuch as it seems to take its bearings from a particular, arguably exoteric, presentation Aristotle offers (e.g., in *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.7, 10.7–8), as distinguished from consideration of what he actually *does* in his writings, particularly the *Ethics* and *Politics*. See Ronna Burger, *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), chap. 4; Mary P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle’s “Politics”* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992), 132–35. In fact, Aristotle’s remark in *Politics* 7.3 1325b15ff. identifying thinking as the highest sort of activity, including the thoughts of “master craftsmen” in the city (trans. Carnes Lord [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984]), closely approximates the account of thinking as activity that Smith will cite from Cicero’s *De officiis*.

Smith's third chapter provides a brief sketch of the political environment Cicero inhabited—the decaying Republic—and of the purpose of his philosophic writing. Following the failure of Cicero's endeavors to end Rome's civil wars and then to moderate Caesar's dictatorship, after the latter's assassination the now-unpopular lawyer-statesman spent the last two years of his life moving among his country homes out of self-protection, while composing most of his philosophic corpus. In Smith's account, in his writings "Cicero tried to recover what was best in the past, especially...Platonic thought correctly understood, but also the Roman past that he represented as more rational" than it really had been. Cicero often imitated Plato's practice of writing dialogues in which he avoided "speak[ing] in his own name," "hid[ing] his deepest understandings" behind his various characters' arguments. Cicero's guiding concern was to overcome the "clash of multiple sectarian school philosophies...that threatened to bring down public contempt on philosophy itself," instead offering "a unified vision" that preserved philosophy's architectonic status (68–69). Whereas his Greek predecessors had to employ rhetoric chiefly in order to persuade the multitude to tolerate the practice of philosophy, Cicero—writing in an environment in which philosophy (or pursuits going by that name) was more widely, though not quite securely, accepted—endeavored to transform political life to make it "amenable to philosophic statesmanship" (86).

Smith's next six chapters explore Cicero's teachings regarding, successively, the nature of philosophy, "cosmology and natural philosophy," "natural theology," ethics, rhetoric, and politics. Through a fresh examination of the *Tusculan Disputations*, Smith challenges the scholarly dismissal of Cicero as a merely derivative thinker, arguing that the Roman's "recovery" of Socratic/Platonic philosophy in that work was also intended as a "transformation" of the philosophic enterprise (94). Given the Romans' love of oratory—a byproduct of their system of self-government—Cicero undertook to "merge" philosophy with oratory so as to "publicly exal[t]" the former. He aimed to enable philosophy to appeal to "a larger republican citizenry rather than the smaller circle of the aristocratic few." If this project succeeded, Cicero might make politics itself "more philosophical" and less dominated by "warriors, the wealthy," or blind tradition. It entailed setting forth a positive teaching, as distinguished from the "negative dialectics" in which he held the Platonic Socrates to have engaged. Whereas Cicero, even while praising Socrates for having "brought philosophy down from the heavens" to address human and political questions, held his form of dialectics ultimately responsible for its subsequent decay into a variety of warring sects, his own teaching was

intended to generate “a philosophically informed republican statesmanship and statesmanlike philosophy”—even as it “open[ed] the door,” in Smith’s account, for “pre-Thomistic *philosophic* Christianity” (96–99, Smith’s emphasis).

In contrast not only to the apolitical “school philosophies” of his time but also to the doctrines of Martin Heidegger, Smith notes, Cicero devotes each of the five books of the *Disputations* chiefly to moral concerns, aiming “to demonstrate that it is necessary to enter philosophy primarily from ethical rather than...cosmological/ontological concerns.” While agreeing with Heidegger’s argument that reflection on death “forces us to be philosophic,” Cicero contends that the resultant “phenomenological” reflection leads us “not to ongoing anxiety but to an erotic desire to know the truth,” especially (as with Plato) to “wonder about the place of soul understood as mind in the larger whole” (102–5). In turn, this concern “leads philosophy unavoidably toward natural theology,” including the discovery of “a God who is pure soul/mind yet nonetheless...also cause and will,” confronting “the same mystery as scripture does.” In representing God as “mind, will, and first cause,” Smith observes, Cicero “side[s]” with the Platonic view that the cosmos “had a beginning,” contrary to Aristotle’s apparent judgment that it was eternal (109).⁴ Here, however, we are compelled to wonder on what ground Smith attributes to either Plato or Cicero theological views expressed by characters in their dialogues, particularly in view of his having cited Cicero’s practice (like that of Plato) of “hiding” his deepest beliefs from all but the most careful readers. Given the acknowledged primacy for Cicero of the political/moral over the “metaphysical,” is Cicero really asserting a theological truth here, rather than a morally salutary teaching? (This is not of course to assert the greater phenomenological validity of Heideggerian anxiety. But neither does Smith’s Cicero offer any refutation of the apparent Aristotelian cosmological view.)⁵

⁴ See, however, David Bolotin, *An Approach to Aristotle’s “Physics” with Particular Attention to His Mode of Writing* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 5, 19–24, 93, 101, 150 on the grounds for doubting that Aristotle seriously maintained the eternity of the visible world as a scientific truth, as opposed to a salutary or protective teaching.

⁵ At *Tusculan Disputations* 1.28.69 the chief speaker, “M.”—presumably representing (Marcus Tullius) Cicero, but not necessarily a direct spokesman for Cicero’s own beliefs—while arguing that the observation of the visible universe and the earth’s bounty compels the conclusion that “some being is over them,” leaves it open whether that being is an “author, if these things have had beginning, as Plato holds, or if they have always existed, as Aristotle thinks, some governor” (trans. J. E. King [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927]). (At the conclusion of Book 1, Marcus makes explicit the primarily moral rather than theoretical aim of his reflections, which are designed “to alleviate distresses, terrors, [and] lusts.”)

The same difficulty characterizes Smith's account of what he calls Cicero's "criticism of Plato" regarding the nature of the soul: whereas the Platonic soul encompassed such "irrational elements" as *thumos*, *eros*, and *epithumia*, Cicero in Smith's account "is more Christian" in denying the "dignity" of such "prerational states" while portraying "pure soul qua mind and will." Is the difference here more than a rhetorical one? How plausible is the Ciceronian representation of the soul as "striving to be more of a pure cause comparable...to the first cause" rather than (as in the Socratic metaphor of reason as "charioteer") aiming to guide or control our nonrational elements? Does denying *thumos* (spiritedness) "dignity" refute Socrates's portrayal of it (in Plato's *Republic*) as an empirical component of the soul? And if *eros* is the foundation of philosophy (although Smith will subsequently cite Cicero as "tak[ing] Plato to task" for holding this position [120]), how can it be dismissed as lacking dignity? In these regards, Smith appears to strain excessively to interpret Cicero as a "proto-Christian," even though Christian writers would indeed claim him as a precursor (110–11).

Smith does show a closer linkage between Cicero and Christianity in the second book of the *Tusculan Disputations* through his enunciation of a doctrine of "conscience," a concept essentially absent from Greek thought, as a reflection of his "internal approach to ethics," in contrast to Aristotle's emphasis on praise and blame as the means by which we acquire moral virtue. At the same time Smith emphasizes that while "reject[ing] the pagan pursuit of glory," Cicero tries to combine conscience with "the notion of pride and honor," which is not strictly harmonious with Christian doctrine (113). One wishes that Smith had endeavored to explain how Cicero reconciles his encouragement of pride with his praise of "that most unpagan of virtues, humility," in *De officiis* (205).⁶ Beyond this, as Smith attributes to the Roman a belief that "the basis of even honor and nobility must be *internal*" rather than based on others' praise—to the point of rejecting not only "the pagan pursuit of glory" but, "before the fact...the Lockean reliance on bourgeois reputation" (113, Smith's emphasis), we again wonder whether the *Tusculans* are not setting forth a certain "inspirational" moral ideal (just as the *Republic* offers an idealized account of Roman history), rather than an actual corrective to Aristotle's, let alone Locke's, teaching. (Of course neither Aristotle nor Locke would deny that an excellent human being will be guided by love of the good or noble rather than merely following popular opinion; but they would

⁶ Moreover, in *De officiis* 1.12.38, Cicero does not reject as impermissible the pursuit of wars "which have glory for their end," but holds only that they must be pursued "with less bitterness" than struggles for survival.

hold that such rational self-guidance must be generated at least initially by appeals to the young person's sense of shame. Can reason, as distinguished from revelation, demonstrate the presence in human nature of an inherent inclination to act morally?⁷

Repeatedly, in his summary of the moral teaching in the remainder of the *Tusculans*, Smith refers to what the “surface” of the book teaches (116–25), without clearly explaining whether that surface conceals a deeper teaching (as we might expect) that qualifies it. Certainly, the “surface” denial in Book 3 “that the wise man is susceptible to distress” and hence unhappiness (116) sounds like just the sort of conventional Stoic doctrine from which Smith previously noted Cicero distanced himself, and which he subsequently denies the Roman seriously maintained (120, 123). (Smith contends that Cicero's “seeming adoption of Stoic principles” was simply a means to gain “traction for a quiet critique of [an unnamed] Plato” for supposedly “seeing both virtue and philosophy as forms of ‘fiery longing’” [120].) And indeed, Smith disclaims “recommending” “at the moment” Cicero's “transformed notion of virtue,” which dictates that we “jettison” even “emotions like pity,” aiming only “to argue that some version of this noble basis of individual restraint... is now a republican necessity”—in contrast to the modern belief that chance can be overcome “through natural science and technology, or through a political science that eschews virtue” by instead “enthroning” such passions as “fear, ambition, and greed” (122–23). But Cicero was neither the first nor last philosophic thinker to teach the necessity of moral restraint. And—especially in view of Smith's own previous praise of modern commercial republicanism, despite its deficiencies—how is it beneficial to teach that, contrary to Aristotle and his followers, external goods (wealth, friends, family, reputation), let alone pity, lack all goodness (125)? (In contrast, Smith will cite “Cicero the character” in *De finibus* as taking the Stoics to task precisely for failing

⁷ Again, the passage Smith quotes from the *Tusculans* (2.26.64) to the effect that “there is no audience for virtue of higher authority than the approval of conscience” (Smith's emphasis) forms part of an extended moral exhortation by “M.” It does not actually demonstrate the discovery of a new faculty unknown to “the Greeks,” and specifically in contrast to “the Aristotle who lowered morality to a habitual status below knowledge and contemplation” (114). Is it even likely that Cicero, as a philosopher—as distinguished from his rhetorical spokesman—would have reversed this ranking? (See *De officiis*, 1.16.71, suggesting that “men of extraordinary genius who have devoted themselves to learning must be excused for not taking part in public affairs” [a passage to which Smith alludes at 191]. Admittedly, at 1.43.155 the writer judges “that the duties prescribed by justice must be given precedence over the pursuit of knowledge”; but as Smith acknowledges, Cicero also indicates that we may “satisfy our public duty with publicly disseminated books” [203]; and though Smith judges that Socrates, who didn't write, was therefore “not fully just” by Cicero's standard, Cicero elsewhere speaks of the Athenian's “great and superhuman virtues” [1.41.148].)

to acknowledge the goodness of external and bodily goods [148, 152]. One wishes that the author had provided clarification on this score. Assuming that the position seemingly taken in the *Tusculans* was merely rhetorical, what was its justification?)

In treating Cicero's account of natural philosophy or cosmology in the subsequent chapter, Smith reiterates that in contrast to his contemporaries, Cicero denied that it constituted "first philosophy," a status that he reserved for political philosophy, broadly understood. Indeed, Cicero wished to maintain the subordination of theology as well as cosmology to "architectonic political philosophy," which means understanding the whole of things in light of the human good. In this regard, Smith notes that while Cicero made "Epicurean cosmological materialism his chief opponent" because of its conduciveness to hedonism instead of the *honestum*, he "also stresses" the extent to which the Epicureans' Stoic opponents "are ultimately materialists" as well in sharing the belief "that the senses are the only source of knowledge" (128–29, 132, 140). Interestingly in this context, however, Smith also notes that Cicero's disparagement of poetry, in contrast with Plato, leaves him unable to explain how to craft "an architectonic, holistic whole of knowledge," which would seem (in the absence of perfect understanding of the whole) to require poetic, rather than merely oratorical, presentation (141–42).

Smith's sixth chapter takes up Cicero's "natural theology." Noting that Cicero "lived at the time of the breakdown of pagan polytheism," Smith argues that the Roman took advantage of that opportunity to "ope[n] a theological space that could be occupied after his death." Although he could not have known that the space would be filled by "philosophical Christianity," Smith remarks, "this is how one opens spaces without constructing them in an authoritarian fashion." Thanks to his opposition to superstition, polytheism, pantheism, and anthropomorphism as well as atheism, Cicero "became the most influential Christian philosopher until Aquinas," surpassing even Augustine (154–55).

In Cicero's theology, Smith remarks, "awe and wonder take priority over brooding about death and the afterlife." While he "no more intended any autonomy for natural theology than the moderns who attempted to emancipate both philosophy and secular government from theological domination," Cicero—in contrast to Greek and Roman practice—wished to subject both government and theology to the "supervision" of philosophy. However, Smith observes, "the Catholic Church...moved throughout the period from the collapse of the Roman Empire to the dawn of modernity to give theology

autonomy from philosophy, with an increasing desire for hegemony over the state” as well (156–57). (Smith does not explain how Cicero expected to maintain the sovereignty of philosophy over government and religion.)

“The modern republican tradition,” Smith observes, includes “two competing approaches to the relationship between religion and the state”: the American one, embodying “a secular state consciously built upon a religious society” and intended to secure religious liberty, and the French or Continental model of “an openly atheist state and society,” an approach that easily harmonizes with the intentions of such antirepublican thinkers as Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Cicero, he contends, can guide us in enabling reason to “supervene over both politics and theology” while “abolish[ing] neither” (157–58).

Smith portrays Cicero as seeking to replace “absurd traditional articles of faith” with a “rational faith,” which requires a divinity possessed of “an individual mind as active will (monotheism) that creates the cosmos and beneficially supports human existence,” something “very close to the scriptural account” (169). Since this conception is no less true of the Jewish than the Christian God, we are driven to wonder: Is the similarity purely coincidental? Smith does not speculate on that issue, but proceeds to maintain that because “the doctrine of the Trinity presents the divine as a *complex* one, both in the world and outside and prior to the world,” it “solves philosophical conundrums that no simple conception of the One can confront,” and thus “can claim to be a rational religion.” Given what many, including its own advocates, would regard as the incomprehensibility of this doctrine (*Credo quia absurdum*), the ground of that claim is not obvious. And when Smith adds, “and it is also the traditional religion of the republican West,” we suspect that the claim is simply part of his own project of using available materials to fortify self-government in the modern or postmodern world—in contrast to Hegel’s endeavor to obliterate transcendence, generating an “ultimate unity in a universal homogeneous state” that would be tyrannical rather than republican (172). Smith surely goes too far in trying to make Christianity alone serve that project, however, when he reads a passage in *De natura deorum* questioning the basis of divine love for human beings as “a foretelling of the Christian God of love...who replaces the angry God of the Old Testament who relies on fear” as did the pagan gods (175–76)—as if the God of the Hebrew Bible did not act out of love for humanity, or as if

Christian theology did not rely extensively on the fear of divine punishments on this earth as well as the hereafter.⁸

Smith concludes his chapter on Cicero's theology by observing that while Cicero refrains from propounding a specific monotheistic doctrine, given his "ticklish situation" in a society characterized by "irrational faith...he gives the signposts to a rational faith." He adds that in Cicero's view, "reason must supervene over faith without eliminating it," particularly in a republic, since atheism and republicanism are incompatible (185), for reasons Smith never fully elaborates (but see 322n15 and 397n51).

In his chapter on Cicero's ethical teaching as set forth in *De officiis*, Smith represents the Roman as offering a superior "response" to Machiavelli, and to the modern republican project derived from him, regarding the crucial question of "the best means to the conquest of chance" (188). In his initial treatment of the relation of Cicero's ethics to that of his philosophic predecessors Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, Smith blurs the issue by discussing the degree to which he is a "consequentialist" rather than a "deontologist"—terms (and a dichotomy) alien to their writings. And in reiterating the supposedly greater proximity of Cicero's teaching to that of Plato rather than Aristotle, Smith confusingly remarks that "Cicero stresses that real moral virtue is, following Socrates, a form of knowledge, not, as Aristotle would have it, based on habits that are a mean between two vices" (190): it is Aristotle, not Plato, who *invented* the term "moral virtue," which definitionally refers to characteristics born of habit; never, when propounding his paradoxical equation of virtue with knowledge, does Plato's Socrates add the qualifier "moral." However Cicero himself may have represented his relation to his two great predecessors, it is actually Aristotle rather than Plato who paved the way for Cicero's elevation of morality as a quasi-independent sphere of excellence—despite relegating it to "second-best" status in comparison with intellectual virtue.⁹ And Smith again exaggerates the gap between Cicero and Aristotle by emphasizing the Roman's determination "to disassociate wisdom from contemplative *theoria*, which implies a retreat from the *res publica*," a retreat

⁸ Contrast also Smith's claim at 356n11 that Christianity's basis in "articles of faith that need philosophic explanation...rather than on laws that need interpretation, as with Judaism and Islam," makes it "perfectly suited" to the American republic's "diversity of opinion," with Leo Strauss's observation that "the precarious status of philosophy in Judaism as well as in Islam," unlike its attempted incorporation into Christian theology, "guaranteed its private character and therewith its inner freedom from supervision" (*Persecution and the Art of Writing* [Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952], 21).

⁹ See note 7 above regarding Cicero's own hedging on the relative rank of moral and intellectual virtue.

he wrongly attributes to the Stagirite (191).¹⁰ (And can wisdom truly be severed from *theoria*, in the view of Aristotle any more than of Plato?)

Smith's endeavor to elevate Cicero over Aristotle continues in the sequel, where he asserts the existence of a "tension" between the Stagirite's "pantheon of virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*" and his preferred, or "best generally practicable," regime, polity, which "explicitly required only middling virtues." It is not obvious that there is any contradiction between endeavoring to portray the best possible human life and describing the qualities that it is reasonable to hope for in the general populace. Yet Cicero, in Smith's account, was "unwilling to accept" the "lowering of the sights" that Aristotle called for, instead "demand[ing] a republic with higher ethical aspirations than Aristotle's polity, to say nothing of the moderns and their own even more severe version of the 'lowering of the sights,' for which we are increasingly paying a no longer maintainable price in the loss of honorable behavior and civil discourse." What began as a criticism of Aristotle on questionably "idealistic" grounds thus passes through a blanket condemnation of modern political philosophy (despite Smith's previously having called modern republicanism, built on that philosophy, the highest form of such government yet attained), then culminates in a sweeping condemnation of "modern man" as absorbed by "the ravenous self-absorbed pursuit of unlimited wealth and power divorced from honor and duty as ends in themselves," which Smith attributes to our reliance on external restraints on conduct, in contrast to the "internal restraints" that Cicero espoused. However, Smith will contend that Cicero "opens the door to an ethics of duty and honor without being inimical to rights rationally conceived, or liberty and equality as they must exist in a republican context" (191–93).

As Smith notes, in the introduction to *De officiis (On Duties)*, written in the form of a letter to his wastrel son (then studying philosophy with a Peripatetic in Athens), Cicero stresses the need to combine philosophy with oratory, as the Greek philosophers and rhetoricians failed to do. Even while professing to resemble the Peripatetics in being a follower of Plato and Socrates, Smith

¹⁰ See note 3 above. In this connection, however, it is also curious to see Smith finding fault with Aristotle's "creation of individual areas of study that are removed from the public arena," including "physics and biology" (318n2, Smith's emphasis). Must philosophy, to be compatible with republicanism, focus *solely* on studies that relate to the public arena? And contrariwise, how can it possibly be maintained that Aristotle's studies of "ethics and politics" are removed from that arena (ibid.)? In addition, one wonders whether the Dream of Scipio with which *De republica* concludes, especially the disparagement of earthly as compared with heavenly things at 6.19ff., does not signify that Cicero too ultimately ranked *theoria* above prudence, even if he avoided elsewhere asserting this ranking.

observes, Cicero implicitly claims to be more comprehensive than they were in undertaking the necessary combination.¹¹ His aspiration, as Smith puts it, is “to force philosophy out into the *res publica*” (193–95).

De officiis is divided into three parts, Smith observes, respectively devoted to the themes of moral excellence (*honestum*), utility, and the relation between the two, culminating in the “surface” teaching that only those things conducive to moral excellence “are ultimately expedient...from the broadest perspective” (193). Again, *honestum* in Cicero’s view “can only be found in activity, albeit that includes the working of a mind that is never at rest,” as opposed to the “tranquility” pursued by both Stoics and Epicureans and also (Smith believes) “exemplified by Socrates’s repeated dramatic motionlessness while thinking” (197).¹²

One broad issue on which Smith distinguishes Cicero’s moral teaching from Aristotle’s is the question whether (moral) virtue is to be identified chiefly with the good of the individual who possesses or practices it (as with Aristotle’s liberality) or that of others who benefit from it (Cicero’s charity and kindness) (199). Smith particularly stresses the contrast between Cicero’s unambiguous praise of justice as the “crowning glory” of the virtues and Aristotle’s assignment of that status to magnanimity or “great-souledness” (197).¹³ Yet while Smith observes that greatness of soul “has come down in status” from Aristotle’s teaching to Cicero’s, he is compelled to admit that republics sometimes need individuals who belong, in Lincoln’s phrase, to the “tribe of the eagle and family of the lion,” if only to protect them against other such individuals. Somewhat obscurely, Smith explains that while for Cicero, true “fortitude must be linked to the public interest rather than immortal

¹¹ Although Smith makes a point of Cicero’s omitting the name of the founder of the Peripatetic school, Aristotle, from his reference to them (194), it should be noted that Cicero does name the Stagirite only two paragraphs later, expressing no less regret that Aristotle and the orator Isocrates “undervalued” one another’s occupations than that Plato and Demosthenes failed to combine forces (*De officiis* 1.1.4).

¹² Here again, Smith unfortunately caricatures a Greek philosopher—this time, Socrates—by drawing selectively on Plato’s dialogues to depict him as almost always being at rest (363n), so as to create a contrast with Cicero, despite just having observed that activity, for Cicero, *includes* the working of one’s mind. Can any reader of the dialogues conceive of Socrates’s mind as ever being inactive? (Smith stood on better ground in contrasting Cicero with the Stoics, Epicureans, and other sectarians like the Pyrrhonian skeptics.)

¹³ Aristotle’s account is actually more ambiguous than Smith acknowledges here, since he also represents justice (in its broader sense) as encompassing all other virtues (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1129b27–32), as Smith acknowledges elsewhere (364)— though he ultimately does come down on the side of magnanimity, in the sense that implicitly culminates in philosophy (Burger, *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates*, 84, 87, 95–96).

glory...one can substitute the longing for an immortally good reputation,” as in the case of Washington and Lincoln (198, 205). But since, as Smith later acknowledges, “spiritedness and magnanimity...are hardly in oversupply” at present, we may need “to err back in the direction of fostering them again,” reflecting the fact that “Cicero’s balance” is not fully “appropriate for our time” (394). This, at its core, was Machiavelli’s objection to the teaching of Christianity in his time, as well as that of “the writers” who fostered it. (Recall Machiavelli’s implied “correction” of Cicero’s teaching about the lion and the fox from *De officiis* in chapter 18 of *The Prince*—not that Italy suffered from any shortage of spirited men like Pope Julius in his era, but that the effect of the Christian teaching of humility and self-abnegation was to make the many the dupes of the few, such as that consummate fraudster Alexander VI or even worse, that practitioner of “holy cruelty,” Ferdinand of Spain. At what point in history did Cicero’s well-intentioned effort to tame Roman imperialism or tyrannical ambition ultimately come to generate more harm than good?)

Turning to economic matters, Smith cites Cicero’s view that although private property is not itself natural, it arises “from a natural necessity.” But precisely because of its unnaturalness, it must be “linked with penumbral virtues,” such as charity, to be legitimate. Cicero also opposes redistributive measures undertaken by government, since they are the root of the sort of despotic impulses that helped destroy the Roman republic. Additionally, Cicero enunciates a doctrine of just war according to which, even though most of Rome’s wealth had derived from previous acts of conquest, its defense is legitimate, although further “wars for conquest and aggrandizement” are unjust (201–2). (Machiavelli might of course insert a word here about victors’ justice.) But throughout Cicero’s works, Smith observes, “there is a turn from a focus on war” to one on commerce as “central to a republic.” However, in contrast to “most modern defenses of commerce,” Cicero maintains a distinction between “vulgar” and “liberal” modes of acquisition—the former including lending at interest (the very foundation of the modern economy) as well as such “illiberal” occupations as manual labor and “small shop keeping,” disparaged as lacking any “element of intelligence” and lacking the “leisure” that is “necessary for civic engagement and the exercise of the virtues.” While Smith grants that Cicero’s liberal/vulgar distinction would need to be “rethought” in our more egalitarian era—when we see in many more occupations “a significant element of intelligence and art,” while even “mechanical operations” often generate sufficient wealth to afford their practitioners with leisure—he argues that where Cicero “parts from the modern view, he should give us reason to rethink,” by considering how to use our

wealth to create “genuine liberality” for many—especially in “the coming postmodern world” (211–13, 366).

De officiis culminates (in Book 3) in what Smith terms “a genuine utilitarianism,” in which Cicero subtly qualifies the Stoic doctrine that the honorable and the useful can never conflict with “quiet doses” of the “realism” that Machiavelli would subsequently “buil[d] upon as his only foundation.” That is, while “there are almost no cases in which one must engage in vice to foster utility”—e.g., Romulus ostensibly “did not really have to kill his brother” to achieve his desired end, and one’s interests “can almost always be secured without harming others,” especially through “sharp’ business practices”—still there are exceptions, and one is not bound to keep promises made to “pirates” and other barbarians. But while Cicero avoids asserting a “pedantic, deontological universalism,” unlike Machiavelli “he will not undermine his main premise” by elaborating the “rare circumstances” that might justify deviating from the *honestum*. The conclusion with which Cicero leaves his readers (perhaps exemplifying his attempted unification of philosophy with rhetoric) is that “we primarily conquer chance through *honestum*” (220–22).

Smith resumes the theme of Cicero’s linkage between philosophy and oratory in the subsequent chapter, “Cicero on Oratory and the Language Arts,” which focuses on the dialogue *De oratore*. As Smith recounts, Cicero (or his character) blames the Greek philosophers, specifically Socrates, for “reduc[ing] oratory to sophistry in an attempt to define and defend philosophy as a primarily theoretical activity” (think of dialogues like the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* in which Socrates challenges leading teachers of rhetoric for lacking true knowledge).¹⁴ By contrast, for Cicero, “oratory—like philosophy and politics—is an arena of truth and of bringing truth ‘into the open’ in a public arena.” Even though Cicero recognizes that Plato, unlike his Socrates, added an element of *poiesis* to philosophy, he nonetheless “diminishes the importance of poetry” by comparison with oratory, since the former depends on a “genius” possessed by few, while the latter, being a “science,” can be “employed by more individuals,” making it “both more scientific and more

¹⁴ Of course any attempted distinction between Socrates and Plato is artificial, since our only direct sources for knowing “Socrates,” aside from Aristophanes’s *Clouds*, are the dialogues composed by Plato and Xenophon. Arguably, what the Platonic Socrates is seeking to achieve in his dialogues with the rhetoricians is precisely to win them over as allies of philosophy (see *Republic* 450a, 498d), a combination ultimately accomplished by Plato himself through his philosophic poetry (Devin Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato’s “Gorgias”* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 177–82). But consider as well Aristotle’s criticism of the Sophists, at the conclusion of his *Ethics* (1181a13–19), for having reduced political science to rhetoric.

democratic than genius.” In *De oratore* “Cicero tried to show that real oratory is a high form of statesmanship and that it needs the support of philosophy,” or that it *is* “philosophy as it turns to its public duties” (225–27). Smith adds that among the American Founders, the linkage between “truth and eloquence” was still appreciated, in contrast to the subsequent decline in appreciation of the inherent value of political life, as well as (for reasons he leaves obscure) in “our understanding of the nature of truth” (228).

De oratore, as Smith recounts, aims “to give back to rhetoric/oratory the status” it supposedly had “before Socrates ‘vanquished’ it in the name of dialectic, reducing it to sophistry.” With obvious allusions to several of Plato’s dialogues, *De oratore* offers “a transformed notion of Plato’s *politikos*” or statesman. This entails overcoming the “customary” Roman “prejudice against philosophy,” to which the past political heroes Antony and Crassus are depicted as having to accommodate themselves. Curiously, Cicero (or rather, his character) in Smith’s account attributes Socrates’s death to his having failed to learn “the lessons of ideal oratory”—despite the fact that he refused to read the defense speech prepared for him by the orator Lysias.¹⁵ At the same time, “we are led to the issue of whether Rome could have saved its republic with a high-level oratory that appealed to the mind” rather than “the passions” (232–34). (But how far was the rhetorical decay a cause rather than a result of the civic decay? Smith cites Crassus’s acknowledgment that his view of philosophy as an “architectonic” activity capable of being linked with oratory embodies “an ideal that...has never yet existed,” and suggests the kinship of that ideal with Socrates’s proposal of philosopher-kings in Plato’s *Republic* as the sole remedy for civic evils [238]. To what extent have Cicero’s expectations of a solution to the political problem moved beyond Plato’s?)

Smith concludes his chapter on *De oratore* with the interesting suggestion that Cicero’s view of philosophy’s need to go public, “eschew[ing] the ‘holy secrets’ of the nonpublic Epicureans,” anticipates Heidegger’s teaching “that truth must come into ‘unconcealment’” and “lie in open view.” Contrary to Heidegger, Cicero maintained that the revelation of truth “requires a republic and a philosophy that speaks in everyday speech.” Curiously, however, Smith’s Cicero blames Socrates, through his invention of dialectic,

¹⁵ As the preceding lines of this section of *De oratore* make clear, however (1.53.231–33), Cicero or his character understands that Socrates’s refusal to deliver Lysias’s speech, and indeed, his provocation of the Athenians to vote to execute him, were not the product of ignorance of the rhetorical art. Here, as elsewhere, one wishes that Smith had been more precise in distinguishing the views that Cicero places in the mouth of his characters from his deeper thoughts.

for having “sent philosophy off in a direction that eventually undermined everyday speech” (243).¹⁶

Smith begins his ninth chapter, “Cicero on Politics,” by remarking that Cicero imitated the “curriculum” of his time in treating political science as “a subset of ethics”—the opposite, I note, of the ranking that Aristotle gives them.¹⁷ In consequence, Smith notes, Cicero holds “that no amount of constitutional or legal tinkering” can replace “education and character formation in addressing the problems intrinsic to political life,” in contrast to “modern republican thinkers.”¹⁸ This belief “leads Cicero to conclude that a healthy republican regime requires an aristocracy,” albeit one “defined by virtue, not simply by birth, wealth, or military prowess” (245). Drawing chiefly on Scipio’s speech in *De republica*, Smith immediately alludes to “the textbook idea” for which Cicero (along with his predecessor Polybius) “is best known,” that of “balanced government”—one in which, “ideally,” the balancer “will be a philosopher/orator/statesman,” who will work his will above all through education (246–50). Smith distinguishes Cicero’s balanced regime from Aristotle’s “mixed” one, polity, on the ground that since the latter combines two defective regimes, oligarchy and democracy, it will always be “on the verge of civil war,” whereas “Cicero mixes principles like virtue and popular liberty along with executive energy, the latter of which Aristotle substantially ignores” (252).¹⁹ In contrast to Aristotle’s polity, Cicero’s best regime balances

¹⁶ Although Socrates is indeed identified as the ultimate source of the sects into which philosophy became divided by Cicero’s time, it is difficult to reconcile the negative opinion of him that Smith attributes to Cicero with remarks like the following (3.1.15): “there is not any of us, when he reads the admirably written dialogues of Plato, in almost all of which the character of Socrates is represented, who does not, though what is written of him is written in a divine spirit, conceive something still greater of him about whom it is written.”

¹⁷ See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.2, 10.9. For a critique of the contemporary subsumption of political science under ethics, which has generated the sort of abstract, dogmatic, and unpolitical theorizing exemplified by writers like John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Philip Pettit, see my “On Restoring the Primacy of Politics to Ethics,” *Intercollegiate Review* 44, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 42–47.

¹⁸ This sweeping judgment of “modern republican thinkers” is problematic, since although they typically relied *more* on institutional arrangements to channel self-interest in a salutary direction than their classical predecessors did, I can think of none of them (Locke? Montesquieu? Harrington? Rousseau?) who denied the importance of “education and character formation” as a foundation of republicanism as well. Although the authors of our Constitution made no direct provision for their perpetuation, this was not out of a lack of concern for them (as the writings and speeches of founders like Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Noah Webster, and various Antifederalists attest), but out of a belief that they were essentially a state and local function.

¹⁹ Note, however, that Aristotle stresses the need to generate a large middle class—admittedly a difficult enterprise in the circumstances of the Greek polis—to bind a polity together (*Politics* 4.11). Nor, of course, does he deny the importance of virtue or an element of popular liberty. On the reasons for the “absence” of the executive power in Aristotle’s mixed regime, see Harvey C. Mansfield, *Taming the*

“not economic classes” but the “executive energy” of monarchy and “the wisdom and virtue possible in a genuine, nonhereditary aristocracy”—along with, finally, “the republican liberty of all citizens to have access to the public space” (252). (However, in describing his favored mixed regime in *De republica* 1.30–35, Cicero’s spokesman Scipio more specifically seems to ordain that the people hold a share of political power, acknowledging the difficulty of perceiving true virtue, while in *De legibus* 3.6 the plebeians are specifically guaranteed the right to elect tribunes to defend their interests—thus incorporating an element of class balancing.)

Repeating an earlier contrast he had drawn between Cicero and Aristotle, Smith observes that Cicero’s model regime entails a “high” rather than merely “middling” understanding of republican virtue, in which respect, since “Aristotle is closer to the instincts of modern republicanism, . . . he is not the best antidote for its moral sicknesses,” in contrast to the elevation that Cicero offers to “our moral sights.” But how realistic is this remedy? How far did Cicero himself expect the model regime outlined by Scipio in *De republica* to be achieved in practice? And is political utopianism in any sense a cure for our current political and moral ills? (Along the same lines, how persuasive is Smith’s claim that Cicero’s supposed view that “love,” in such forms as “patriotism, friendship, and longing for personal admiration,” is “more powerful than the modern political psychology that descends from Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and even the somewhat more expansive teachings of Montesquieu, Hume, and Smith based on ‘sympathy’” [253]? And why would Cicero, like Machiavelli, have sought “greater executive energy and authority than Aristotle” did [253], if his goal were to *reduce* the dependence on fear as a means of enforcing the laws and reducing the factional strife which Scipio’s interlocutor describes as threatening the republic’s survival [1.19]?) At the end of this chapter, Smith will acknowledge that Cicero lacked “enough experience to reach a properly balanced conclusion” regarding the constitution of the executive, and will seem to credit the American Founders for improving on the Roman’s prescriptions in this regard, only to complain, curiously, that their system so “focused on avoiding majority tyranny” that it “made it difficult to get anything done”—as if American history exhibits an insufficient degree of legislative enactments or independent executive actions. He also accuses the Founders of “underestim[ing] that the greatest check on tyranny was an active, virtuous, properly involved citizenry”—ignoring the writings of Jefferson and various Federalists and Antifederalists on this

subject, and never making clear *where* he thinks the current threat of tyranny arises from. If, as various analysts maintain, our liberty is endangered today by an unconstitutionally expanded scope of federal and state legislation, an insufficiently accountable federal bureaucracy, and/or a judiciary or president unmoored from constitutional restraints, how would making it easier to get things “done” have mitigated the threat? And just what can we “learn from Cicero” about how to “inspiri[t]” our citizenry so as to make them more resistant to intrusions on their civic rights, or less preoccupied with private enjoyments and the expansion of their “entitlements” (268, 270)? Smith does not elaborate.

The remaining element of Cicero’s politics that Smith discusses is his treatment of property and commerce. Here Smith endeavors to situate Cicero’s outlook between that of ancient thinkers who scorned labor and the pursuit of wealth (although, as previously noted, this account of their thought overlooks the extent to which the philosophers had to outwardly accommodate the prejudices of their aristocratic readers) and that of moderns like Locke who espouse the unlimited pursuit of wealth, reducing the goal of politics largely to the efficient “administration of things” (Engels) and ignoring the question of the good. Here, however, Smith’s initial contrast between Cicero and Locke seriously distorts the latter’s teaching, by claiming that he grounded the legitimacy of property on its mode of acquisition rather than on “the *end* for which it is needed” (Smith’s emphasis). In fact, a careful reading of the chapter on property in Locke’s *Two Treatises* (II 5) will demonstrate that Locke ultimately grounds the right to unlimited acquisition not on the labor that would first enable inhabitants of the “State of Nature” to make something “theirs,” but rather on the fact that the opportunity for unlimited acquisition through peaceful means (which could include investment, or the labor of one’s employees, as well) ultimately raises everyone’s standard of living, by increasing the general stock of goods available (at a lower price) for all—along the way increasing opportunities for remunerative employment.²⁰ Since it is not true, contrary to Smith, that Locke “legitimizes property on the basis of its origin alone”—in fact he indicates his awareness, no less than Cicero or Machiavelli (whom Smith cites on this point), that *all* current landholdings probably derive from historical acts of unjust conquest²¹—it is wrong to infer that his account “opens the door to inflammatory discussions”

²⁰ See Stanley C. Brubaker, “Coming into One’s Own: John Locke’s Theory of Property, God, and Politics,” *Review of Politics* 74 (2012): 207–32; Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, II 5, sec. 43.

²¹ *Two Treatises* II 16, secs. 175–76, 191–92, 196.

on “reparations for peoples historically oppressed to be paid by the descendants” of their past oppressors (264–66). (Instead, it opens the door to the exercise of the right of resistance or revolution against any government that violates its subjects’ rights, regardless of its origin.)

The real, substantive issue that lies between Cicero and Locke, as Smith goes on to observe, is the question whether (as the Roman maintained) “limits are needed to the amount of private property one holds in order to avoid the luxury and decadence that destroys virtue” (266). In other words, does allowing the opportunity for, indeed encouraging, ordinary people to strive to maximize their wealth through labor, saving, and investment tend to divert them from the higher purposes of life—such as worshiping God, pursuing wisdom, or serving one’s country in both civil and military offices—in favor of the endless pursuit of baubles? There is much to be said on this question, both for and against. Any such discussion would need to take account, however, of the way that the free-enterprise economy originally shaped by thinkers like Locke, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith has vastly expanded the opportunities for learning, civic participation, and culture available to ordinary folk—along with improving everyone’s health, extending our lifespan, and diverting people from the factional strife over dividing a fixed economic “pie,” as well as from religious warfare, which characterized the system that preceded it.²² And Smith himself rejects the notion that “government should enforce limits” on wealth “and engage in redistribution schemes.” Instead, he proposes that such “limits should grow out of a proper understanding of choice-worthy ends and from the rationally informed preferences of individuals concerned with happiness and virtue in a society” that uses “such tools as shame” in order to support “virtue and liberty” (266).

In an effort to demonstrate Cicero’s contemporary relevance, Smith actually mixes two entirely different issues here. On one hand he reminds us of Cicero’s view (from *De officiis*) that one should avoid “wrongful gains,” which are based on deceit and misrepresentation, and even what he calls “sharp practices,” calling this a “foreign idea for us.” But what is “foreign” about it? Don’t the United States and other commercial republics possess and enforce all sorts of laws against fraud, designed to protect both consumers and honest businessmen from being cheated? (If anything, laws are too often enacted or

²² See the trilogy by economic historian Deirdre McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues*, *Bourgeois Dignity*, and *Bourgeois Equality*, published by University of Chicago Press in 2007, 2010, and 2016, respectively. Contrast Gregory Smith’s mistaken claim that Adam Smith and David Hume advocated “the pursuit of mindless luxury” (316).

administered to favor particular interest groups—antitrust legislation, high tariffs, occupational licensing regulations, minimum-wage laws, rent control, racial and gender-based “set-asides,” zoning laws—in the specious name of protecting against “unfair” practices, i.e., free competition.) On the other hand, Smith suggests the need for social sanctions to remind us “of the limits to the wealth one needs for excellent action and thought.” But who will identify and apply those limits? When Smith observes that “for Cicero...the amount [of property] we need is primarily limited by a ranking of the ends of our actions,” who is to do the ranking? Doesn’t the amount of wealth one needs to pursue worthy ends vary among individuals, depending on their goals and capacities, so that for every hedge-fund manager obsessed with increasing his holdings (but “harming” nobody but himself in the process), or every wastrel expending his inheritance sailing yachts in the Caribbean, there may be many more members of the top 0.1 percent devoting themselves to philanthropy—like Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and the Koch brothers?²³ (Consider the vast sums donated by the superrich to support medical research, museums, colleges, hospitals, orchestras, and tuition scholarships enabling underprivileged youth living to attend challenging private schools—freeing such activities from total dependence on allocations by government.) And at a less stratospheric economic level, isn’t the typical lawyer or executive, just like the typical salesman or blue-collar worker, driven above all by a not-ignoble desire to provide as well as he can for his family—while often taking time to serve his church and community? Although Smith disclaims wanting to encourage a “bureaucratic ethic of redistribution” which (as Cicero foresaw) would only unleash “new forms of despotism,” his caricature of the American economy can serve only to encourage it. Smith’s encouragement of public “shaming” of wealthy individuals for the sheer fact of being wealthy would promote the spread of envy and resentment that already poisons our politics.

This is not to defend the lamentable state of popular “culture” in America—countless hours wasted on social media or brainless television shows, for instance—but its crudity has little or no correlation with economic class, since rich and poor rarely show significant differences in artistic, musical, or literary taste. But much as a sober observer would wish, like Cicero, to

²³ See, on the impossibility of justifying fixed limits to wealth, given the varied uses (high and low) to which it may be put, Bertrand de Jouvenel’s *The Ethics of Redistribution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 23–48. Curiously, Smith maintains “that the generation of wealth is more valuable” than its mere possession, since “the former supports useful virtues,” while “the latter supports luxury and undisciplined behavior” (395). He offers no empirical support for this generalization, and the first judgment is seemingly contradicted by his assertion that wealth is commonly generated by “sharp” practices.

set “limits” to mindless acquisition and stultifying entertainment through “philosophical and ethical education, and codes of honor” (267), it is hard to see where such limits are likely to come from, given the increasing failure of American schools to offer the most basic civic education, and the ruin that has beset the realm of higher education thanks to the politicization of the social sciences and humanities. And what would Cicero say of the breakdown of the American family, encouraged by morally debilitating popular entertainment, growing welfare dependency, and the unfortunate emulation by youth of the “lifestyles” of thoroughly corrupt entertainers?²⁴ Yet none of these problems will be addressed by blaspheming the American people as “awash” in “unlimited greed,” or as misled by “preposterous myths like the invisible hand” (a metaphor of Adam Smith’s, designed to forestall foolish governmental attempts to allocate economic resources more efficiently than the market would do that our Mr. Smith regrettably misrepresents). (A serious attack on greed in present-day America would go after government policies that undermine America’s traditional moral culture by legalizing casinos, lotteries, and “recreational” drugs, fostering and catering to vices that cause the greatest harm among those most in need of acquiring the “bourgeois” virtues, all to the benefit of unscrupulous entrepreneurs and legislators eager to enhance tax revenues. But—aside from suggesting a constitutional amendment to outlaw lotteries, and wisely urging lawmakers to exhibit the “courage” necessary “to confront tort reform” [395]—Smith fails to make the necessary distinctions between blameworthy greed and legitimate acquisitiveness. See also note 23 above.)

Ascending from his unfortunate foray into political economy, Smith devotes his penultimate chapter to an insightful comparison between Cicero and Nietzsche, in which he argues persuasively that despite the “comprehensive and architectonic” view of philosophy that they share, “Nietzsche remains a modern constructivist who thinks he can will outcomes *ex nihilo*,” whereas

²⁴ In this connection we cannot avoid being struck by the oddity of Smith’s subsequent mockery of the concern of contemporary social conservatives with the restoration of “‘family values,’ which would be more persuasive if it could be articulated in substantive terms other than mere gay bashing” (301–2)—when even sensible homosexuals agree that single parenthood, along with the culture of divorce, is not the ideal way to bring up children. Apparently, as with his denunciation of Americans’ “greed,” Smith felt obliged to cover his left flank to compensate for his condemnations of postmodernism. But see, for instance, on the endeavor of evangelical church members to provide (largely unpaid) foster care services that supplement and improve upon those provided by state government, with particular focus on combating “the fragmentation of families”—precisely the sort of active citizenship Smith elsewhere professes to favor (314)—Naomi Schaefer Riley’s articles “Drawing a Larger Circle around Families,” *Philanthropy Magazine*, Summer 2017, and “The Challenge of Finding Homes for Rural America’s Foster Children,” *The Atlantic*, August 3, 2018.

“Cicero’s noble and measured rhetoric represents the more likely means to a solid republican future” (274–75). Unlike Nietzsche’s philosophers, who aim to remake human nature but then withdraw to an “Epicurean garden” while they “rule indirectly through new priests and aristocrats,” despising the “dirt” of politics, Cicero exhibits a respect for republican liberty, seeing it as the root of philosophy (as it was for Plato’s Socrates), and “an idealism of modest expectations” that is the antithesis of Nietzschean nihilism and authoritarian “great politics” (277, 281–83). It is both ironic and deeply troubling that Nietzsche, despite his contempt for popular self-government, is considered within the postmodern academy “one of the age’s greatest defenders of democratic outcomes” (275), while Cicero is dismissed as a fuddy-duddy.

Smith begins his concluding chapter “Political Philosophy and the Republican Future” by expressing concern that republican government, of which history offers relatively few examples until modern times (13), may not survive for another century, given the threatened status of our two “greatest legacies,...the intellectual openness of the tradition of political philosophy and the self-governing freedom of republican institutions.” The only alternative to “antirepublican” rule by “various technical and intellectual elites” will be “to foster fully functioning postmodern, republican citizens” whose characters have been shaped by “‘internal’ checks and philosophical bearings” partly Ciceronian in nature. Among the elements of the “rethinking” necessary to reopen the future are a “non-autonomous, non-ontological understanding of...modern science...consistent with” its original “self-understanding” (one wishes that Smith had provided some explanation here); appreciating the “unavoidability of religion and the potential possibilities of a rational religion”; a rethinking “of commercial republicanism and the virtues it requires so that we again see commerce as a means to republicanism, and not the other way around”; recognition of “the limits of reason and hence the unavoidable necessity for traditions”; and “understanding that true individualism” must be linked with virtue (285–87). As this list indicates, Smith maintains that a rethinking of our intellectual and moral “environment” is far more important than any institutional change (288). Reminding us of the contemporary fragmentation of “competing school philosophies” (Marxism, feminism, multiculturalism, conservatism, etc.) that characterizes our era as it did Cicero’s, and which has engendered a dismissal of philosophy as a serious undertaking (289), Smith makes the important point that a great impediment to the “integrative understanding” we require is the “prevalent dogma” emanating from Nietzsche and Heidegger regarding the supposed “uniformity of the Western tradition,” which is used as an

excuse for dismissing that tradition—since we already “kno[w] what all past authors share” (all being dead white males) and its wrongness. That dogma must be challenged by recognizing that the philosophic tradition’s origins were “phenomenological” rather than dogmatically “metaphysical,” and that “the Western tradition has been anything but unitary,” with the greatest authors being not only “‘untimely’ critics” rather than spokesmen for “their own time,” but participants “in a critical dialogue with other great authors” into which we can still enter (295–96) through thoughtful reading. In other words, the ultimate obstacle to our own intellectual liberation is the doctrine of historicism.

In the sequel Smith persuasively takes both the contemporary Left and Right to task for failing to develop a substantive understanding of republican freedom that is grounded in serious consideration of the nature of the human good, repudiating the “voluntarist” notion of the “self-legislating Ego” who creates his nature and his ends *ex nihilo*. Even the communitarians, who purport to overcome the limitations of traditionless individualism, treat one’s “identity” as a matter of arbitrary personal “choice” (296–306). (This form of identity politics has been pushed to an extreme by the transgender movement, which espouses a doctrine according to which the “self” is inherently separable from the body.) As Nietzsche foresaw, viewing life as rooted in groundless willing ultimately results not in the free pursuit of “meaning,” but rather in a battle to *impose* one’s “narrative” on others (306)—as is exhibited in the struggle among competing racial, ethnic, gender, and feminist groups currently tearing American political and academic life apart.

As a remedy for our current crisis, Smith prescribes a new republican “soulcraft,” inspired by Cicero, that would “weave together elements drawn from both ancient and modern republicanism and from past elements of the tradition” (308). Recognizing the weakening in our time of the “primary moral supports” on which the American Founders relied—“a decaying code of honor conjoined with Christian notions of humility and self-discipline, all embellished with a strong work ethic”—we cannot allow the inculcation of virtue to be relegated to a merely private concern.²⁵ However, Smith rightly warns that “turning moral pedagogy over to the modern state” would hardly do the trick, and instead asks only that government get “out of the business of

²⁵ Whether Americans or other modern democrats really stand in need of a greater dose of Christian humility, as opposed to a fortification of genuine pride, is doubtful, as Smith seemed to concede at 394; see Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.3.18, esp. 604.

negating the efforts of those who can inculcate virtue” in our youth (309–10). Here, one might have expected Smith to challenge the Supreme Court jurisprudence of the past seventy years that has struck down as unconstitutional practically all expressions of public support for religion in the public square (e.g., a display of the Ten Commandments in a courthouse!), along with all restrictions on the public display of pornography (instead, we have “drag queens” conducting “story hours” for preschoolers in public libraries nationwide); and to resist the political pressure to include radical sex-“education” programs in public school curricula (at shockingly early ages). Unfortunately, however, while dismissing (as previously noted) the efforts of the seriously religious to address the decline of stable heterosexual families, Smith offers another random denunciation of the “selfish[ness]” and “shameless[ness]” of our “brightest and best,” whom he blames for the “near meltdown of markets” (as if such meltdowns were unprecedented, and as if they exemplified our gravest moral problem) (393n37).²⁶

The remainder of Smith’s prescriptions for soulcraft include the plausible but obvious (“rethink the moral foundations for citizen liberty and the capacity for personal self-control and responsibility that are demanded by republicanism”; “consider how to maximize the number of individuals motivated by...internal checks on behavior” [309–10]); and the interesting but excessively general injunctions to foster “a conception of justice” whereby “individuals take it upon themselves...to protect the weak by defending their liberty and self-sufficiency, not by turning them into...bureaucratic pets” and to promote a “rational religion” (314–15; Smith offers little specificity on how to distinguish rational from irrational forms of religion). Others embody the same sort of unsupported policy generalizations—make “domestic” rather than “international engagement” “the primacy focus of our political life,” as if other nations and terrorist groups left this a matter of choice (314); “reward the slow, gradual, long-term accumulation of capital over the home run” (394; in an age of rapid technological innovation, is it wise to discourage entrepreneurs and investors—any more than we do baseball players—from swinging for the fences?)—that characterized Smith’s previous economic prescriptions.

Summing up: Gregory Smith has made an important contribution to our intellectual and (potentially) political life by demonstrating that Cicero

²⁶ Smith repeats his knock on the “brightest and best,” along with “our social, political, [and] educational elites,” at 312, remarking that we cannot “expect the most scrupulous attention to ethical behavior...for the public good” from them, but the ground of these populist, throwaway lines—which might have emanated from either Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders—remains obscure.

is a far more interesting thinker than academic pedants of the past century and more have made him out to be; by showing how Cicero constitutes a worthy role model for reconciling serious philosophic study with republican statesmanship; and by suggesting that the gap between classical and modern liberal political philosophy is less great than it is sometimes thought to be. He indicates how the study of Cicero can inspire a prudent moderation of the extremes to which Lockean individualism, taken alone, might lead us, as well as offering an attractive alternative to the exciting but dangerously antiliberal doctrines of Nietzsche, which have continued to infect our academic life in the guise of “liberation.”

The criticisms I have made of Smith’s book are secondary to the foregoing praise. I have questioned some of the distinctions he makes (on Cicero’s behalf) between the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, and have suggested that in his attempt to elevate Cicero’s support of republican statesmanship, he sometimes exaggerates the Roman’s differences from Aristotle regarding the relative merits of the contemplative and political lives, while downplaying the Stagirite’s respect for politics and morality. Finally, Smith would have done better to refrain from offering policy prescriptions and judgments that failed to embody genuine Ciceronian prudence.

Despite these reservations, I strongly commend *Political Philosophy and the Republican Future* to my academic colleagues, hoping that others will follow Smith’s lead in studying Cicero’s writings, and in reconsidering the link between substantive political philosophy, grounded in human nature, and the preservation of republican government—a link that, as Smith demonstrates, runs in both directions.

George Hawley, *The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 264 pp., \$39.42 (paper).

MATTHEW BERRY

BOSTON COLLEGE

berryme@bc.edu

Until the 2016 presidential election, most Americans had never heard of the so-called alt-right. The nebulous movement was then defined principally by what it opposed, and perhaps above all by its disgust with political correctness and with the perceived weakness of mainstream or “movement” conservatism. Self-professing members of the alt-right at that time held a variety of economic and political positions, from stringent libertarianism to right-wing statism, without necessarily adhering to the racial identity politics of the ethnonationalist part of the movement. When Paul Gottfried first coined the term “alternative right” in 2008, he meant to indicate something like this broad coalition of “post-paleo” critics of what he saw as the regnant neoconservatism of the Republican Party.

By 2017, this relatively broad coalition had fallen apart and the term “alt-right” came to be associated almost exclusively with the purveyors of more or less extreme versions of white identity politics. The principal cause of this change was the violent chaos of the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA. Prior to the rally, the alt-right’s political activity (if it can be called that) amounted to little more than engaging in internet trolling and offensive shock humor on social media platforms, chiefly Twitter. The political fallout from the rally, and especially from the high-profile killing of Heather Heyer by a self-described neo-Nazi, led to a split between the ethnonationalists and the rest of the antimainstream right, which has since come to be called the

“alt-lite.” Aside from this change in terminology, it seems that little else has really changed.

That same year, George Hawley published an excellent book on the alt-right. That book, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, was a thoughtful, timely, and well-researched profile of the movement; it contained interviews with self-described alt-right authors, a comparison of the alt-right to earlier right-wing criticisms of mainstream conservatism, and even an intellectual history explaining the movement’s theoretical antecedents, such as they are. But that book was published shortly after the Charlottesville rally and so was obviously unable to analyze the rally’s effect on the phenomenon he was attempting to understand. Hawley presents *The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know* as an attempt to remedy this deficiency, or to follow up the initial profile with an explanation of the changes to the movement post-Charlottesville. According to Hawley, those changes can be summarized as follows: whatever it may have been before Charlottesville, the alt-right has now revealed itself to be principally devoted to racial advocacy for white people, ranging from mere white identity politics to the establishment of a white ethno-state. The other elements of the movement have been purged or brought under the aegis of racial politics. Whereas in *Making Sense of the Alt-Right* Hawley insisted on the “genuinely new character” of the alt-right, in the sequel he seems to have revised that judgment, for the alt-right is now said to be practically indistinguishable from earlier instantiations of white nationalism in America.¹

Hawley writes *The Alt-Right* as a kind of short catechism or quick reference guide: while there are traditional chapter headings, the sections within the chapters all take the form of questions to be answered (“What Is This Book’s Purpose?,” “What Is the Alt-Right?,” “Is There a Connection between the Alt-Right and Russia?,” and so on). Hawley tries to keep the answers short—typically around five to six paragraphs—and, perhaps in part for this reason, the answers tend to be authoritative assertions, with comparatively little in the way of supporting evidence, in keeping with the generally popular character of the book. *The Alt-Right* does not presuppose that the reader is familiar with *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*; some of the book is dedicated to covering the same ground again, or to recapitulating the history of the alt-right in the light of recent developments. The chapters are organized both thematically and historically, with the earlier chapters devoted to the prehistory of the alt-right and

¹ The back of the book says this explicitly: “Although it presents itself as a new phenomenon, the Alt-Right is just the latest iteration of a longstanding radical right-wing political tradition.” However, this may have been the work of an editor or publisher and so I relegate this observation to a footnote.

to its ideological next of kin or near-competitors on the dissident right, and the later chapters devoted to the Trump presidency, the so-called alt-lite, and the potential future of the alt-right. On the whole, the book is informative and displays a great deal of familiarity with the subject matter—which, given the abrasive and shocking character of that matter, is a testament to the author’s commitment to understanding the phenomenon.²

However, the book is not perfect. In the first place, it is difficult to know its intended audience. The subtitle of course indicates that the audience is everyone, or that the book aims to enlighten the general populace. Some of the questions do seem to aim at a reader who is thoroughly innocent of any knowledge of American politics (“What Is Libertarianism?”; “What Is Conservatism?”) or of internet culture (“What is Twitter?”; “What is a Meme?”). At other times, though, it is not at all clear that the question posed would have occurred to such a reader (“What Is the Church of the Creator?”; “What Does ZOG mean?”). And there are questions that even members of the alt-right would never have thought to ask (as Hawley himself admits in the section titled “Who Was Francis Parker Yockey?”). The book thus seems to move between assuming total ignorance and assuming a great deal of familiarity with the subject matter. In general, the question-and-answer format of the book does a disservice to the scholarship contained therein. It breaks up the enlightening prehistory of the alt-right in an artificial way, and throughout the book it renders each section too independent from the surrounding sections. On more than one occasion the reader is left wondering why a certain question was raised, or how it arose from earlier considerations. At other times, the unspoken connections are clear only to a specialist—but then the specialist is unlikely to be satisfied by a few short paragraphs of authorial assertion.

There is also one nagging question that fails to get its own section: Why should I care about the alt-right? Why do I “need to know” any of this? According to Hawley, the alt-right is in free fall, without any significant power, money, or organization; on his telling, their brief prominence was due almost entirely to the fact that many self-professed members of the alt-right did not realize the seriousness of the racial commitments held by the movement’s ethnonationalist core. Once that seriousness became clear, the movement fractured and fell apart. Various tools of social coercion (such as

² If anything, Hawley is at times too generous to the supposed coherency of the alt-right. To take only one example, he asserts that the alt-right “rejects the now-dominant notion that race is a social construct rather than a legitimate biological category.” In fact, Richard Spencer, a leading figure in the alt-right, has asserted both that race is a “biological reality” *and* that all meaning and all categories, including race, are social constructs, in keeping with Spencer’s assertion that the alt-right is a child of postmodernity.

“no-platforming,” i.e., denying venues for alt-right speakers and ideas, and “doxing,” i.e., releasing private information such as home addresses and places of employment) have apparently been very successful at punishing adherents of the movement and Hawley indicates that the movement will, for the time being, only continue to weaken. On Hawley’s own telling, the alt-right appears to be little more than a historical footnote.

Nevertheless, the book is not intended to be of merely antiquarian interest; we should care about the alt-right, according to Hawley, because the far right in general is a perennial threat. He exhorts us not to become complacent in our opposition to the alt-right, despite its weakness. It will almost certainly return in some form, he tells us, and since that “next iteration” will “seek to do better next time,” we must watch and wait, we must read the signs and be vigilant in preventing its rise. As political scientists, then, it would seem that our most pressing and appropriate task would be to investigate the independent variable at work. Put differently, the most important practical question we need to ask about the alt-right is: Why does it exist? What causes surges in far-right sentiment? Why, for instance, did internet troll culture shift in character from the antireligious, broadly libertarian irreverence of, say, Beto O’Rourke’s Cult of the Dead Cow days in the 1980s and ’90s to the curious combination of neopaganism, Crusades apologism, pro-statism, and bloody-minded racism of the present day? Even if it is nothing more than the most recent iteration of American white nationalism, why has the resurgence occurred among nontraditional adherents—disproportionately among internet autodidacts and suburban college students—rather than the backwoods racists and socially isolated criminals of yesterday’s Aryan Nations? If we are to predict in order to fight, we must be able to answer these questions.

There is, of course, a danger in attempting to answer these questions, since every attempt to understand can be construed, especially by a hostile reader, as sympathizing or excusing. To the hostile reader, identifying the cause of an effect is tantamount to blaming the cause or exculpating the effect. We therefore become tempted to treat the evil as causeless, unintelligible, radical evil, or a breaking out of a Manichaeian kingdom of darkness, rather than confronting the possibility that the hateful effect arose from an intelligible cause. It is perhaps then understandable, if disappointing, that this all-important question receives almost no treatment in Hawley’s book. The various questions that approximate it either give in to this temptation or else avoid the question of causes altogether. The answer to “How Did the Alt-Right Begin?” is a purely descriptive, two-paragraph account of Gottfried’s

coining of the term and Richard Spencer's appropriation thereof. In "How Did the Alt-Right Revive?" we learn about the importance of Twitter's word count policy (the term "alt-right" is relatively short). In each case, the answer addresses only the use of the term, not the phenomenon to which it refers.

The closest Hawley comes is in answer to the question "What Events Led People to Join the Alt-Right?" Hawley begins his answer to this question with a disclaimer expressing skepticism about the "post hoc rationalizations" given by "radical ideologues" for their positions. He then explains that, while the media coverage of police shootings of unarmed African-Americans "galvanized advocates for minority communities," "some white Americans witnessed these events and reached a different conclusion"—namely, that the media is "biased and dishonest." Hawley explains that the "racist right" exploited the situation to spin events to its advantage. The true interpretation of events was obscured by fringe media outlets that somehow reached thousands of otherwise normal people. But this is to say that the evil effect preexisted the cause identified; the cause identified was not truly a cause: the racist right already existed and had a readership. In any case, the way in which a majority opinion about the news media (that it is biased and dishonest)³ led to identification with the alt-right is never made clear. The next two (very short) paragraphs come much closer to a clear and relatively unpolemical identification of cause and effect. Hawley notes that "the Alt-Right is reacting to the demographic changes occurring in the United States and other Western countries," and chiefly that "the United States is on track to become a nation with no clear racial majority in a few decades." This is, as far as I can tell, the only admission of a simple fact that, Hawley asserts, gives rise to "white anxieties," anxieties which can make one susceptible to alt-right arguments.

The alt-right is a vile and nihilistic movement; but, beyond intellectual probity, precisely the need to combat movements like the alt-right requires that we understand its true causes. Propaganda does not inscribe itself on a blank slate; it almost always exacerbates problems or divisions that already exist. The alt-right feeds on anxieties felt by people who are not themselves alt-right—what are those anxieties and why do people feel them? If the most important purpose of the book is to prevent the rise or return of the extreme right, this is the question it must answer. The United States is in much better shape in almost every conceivable way than Weimar Germany. Why then

³ Recent polling data from Gallup and Monmouth University indicates that 65–75 percent of the country believes that the media is biased and dishonest.

did we experience a spasm of apparent sympathy for the nihilistic far right? Or perhaps we experienced no such thing—according to Hawley, the “movement” crumbled within a few short years. Was this ever anything more than trolls finding the new and most effective way to outrage conventional sensibilities? *Is there a fertile soil in America for this kind of far-right politics or not?* These are the questions the book should answer in order to achieve its own stated purpose. Unfortunately, it does not.

Angelo Panebianco and Sergio Belardinelli, *All'alba di un mondo nuovo*.
Bologna: il Mulino, 2019, 132 pp., €20 (paper).

MARCO MENON

UNIVERSITY OF PISA

marco.menon@cfs.unipi.it

Il Mulino (Bologna) is one of the most distinguished academic publishers in Italy. In the last fifty years, it has become a reference point of the Italian intellectual and political debate. *All'alba di un mondo nuovo*, the latest contribution to the renowned il Mulino series *Voci* (voices) is meant as a forceful intervention in this debate: the title announces that we have arrived *At the Dawn of a New World*. The book presents two short essays on the crisis of Western civilization written, respectively, by Angelo Panebianco and Sergio Belardinelli, two professors at the University of Bologna. Panebianco is a secular political scientist whose research concentrates mainly on liberalism, elitism, and political realism, and Belardinelli is an eminent Catholic sociologist and one of the most important interpreters of the work of Niklas Luhmann. As we learn from the title and the preface (7–14) of the book, what worries Panebianco and Belardinelli is an impending global political change. The authors, notwithstanding their differences of belief, share a common politico-philosophical ground. The preface informs us that, on one hand, Belardinelli, a man of faith, “recognizes the necessity of the mutual autonomy between the religious sphere and the secular sphere”; and that, on the other hand, Panebianco, a nonbeliever, “deems it impossible to separate European identity from Christianity” (8). Belardinelli and Panebianco also see Western liberal civilization as “the most important ‘gift’ of modern Europe to the world”; in their opinion, this gift is the “accomplished result of the Christian tradition.... Liberal civilization was and could be born only in Europe, because of its Christian origins” (10). From a methodological point

of view, it is important to note that both authors adopt a realist approach (which they dub “liberal realism”), which has a moral and an interpretive implication. The moral implication is a sense of responsibility toward the “effectual truth,” for “only by looking at reality as it is...can we avoid an irresponsible escapism” (11–12). In this way, realism is a form of morality. As concerns the interpretive implication, they observe that only realism permits them to see the uglier aspects of humanity’s struggle for power. The differences between their analytical efforts are then due to the perspective from which they look at the crisis of the West.

Panebianco’s essay, “L’Europa sospesa tra Occidente e Oriente” (Europe suspended between the East and the West), focuses on the institutional and geopolitical issues underlying the present crisis of Western civilization. He addresses three principal points of interest: (i) relations between the United States and the European Union; (ii) the structural and political flaws of the European Union; (iii) the pressure exerted by Eastern countries from the outside, and by Islam from the inside. Following John Ikenberry, Panebianco maintains that the United States, by assuming the leadership of the free world, has created a “system based on consensually accepted rules, in which the hegemonic power has consented to its self-limitation in exchange for its partners’ recognition of that hegemony” (33). The problem is that, today, both pillars of this system, namely, NATO and the EU, are alarmingly wavering. The United States is progressively losing ground in the global scenario, and the EU is suffering a deep institutional and legitimacy crisis. While in past decades the process of European integration was guided by the elites, this process is today the subject of a heated political debate within every single European country. Panebianco identifies three main reasons for the mounting anti-European sentiment: the migration crisis; the sovereign-debt crisis; and the conflict between supranational and national institutions (44–47). He further highlights two structural flaws of the EU. First, “the process of [European] integration has...a symbiotic bond with the Atlantic community.” European integration was made possible by the fact that the United States had taken it upon itself to defend the West militarily while the European countries concentrated on their internal socioeconomic equilibrium: in a nutshell, “warfare to the United States, and welfare to the EU” (45). This “division of labor” has now two consequences: it “hinders an autonomous European policy of security” (46), and, by virtue of that dependence, the crisis of Atlantic relationships aggravates the internal European crisis. Second, “the traditional vagueness of the ultimate aim” (46) of European integration, while an advantage in the past, has now become a major difficulty.

Considering also the geopolitical bearings of the most important religious changes of our time—the new global strategy of the Catholic Church, and the presence of Islam within Europe—Panebianco foresees a progressive isolation of Europe, and a future scenario in which it risks becoming prey to external great powers: Russia, China, and the United States. Panebianco's concluding words are quite drastic: the future of the global order depends on the survival of Western civilization. His thesis is that “without the primacy of the West, no international order will be possible; that order would be replaced by a condition of endemic disorder and chaos” (65–66). By “order” Panebianco means “predictability” founded on “uninterrupted, intertwined chains of self-fulfilling prophecies” (67). This is the necessary condition for the possibility of a flourishing life. Panebianco holds that only the Western world has the cultural, political, and economic means to establish and maintain an order acceptable to the greatest part of mankind. Ultimately, it is necessary to reestablish the three pillars of such a liberal order: the “inter-Atlantic relationship,” “the process of European integration, although on new foundations,” and the balance between “the competence of the few, and the right of the many to have a say in public matters” (71–72).

In his essay “L'Europa e la Chiesa cattolica” (Europe and the Catholic Church), Belardinelli questions whether European civilization would be conceivable if alienated from its Christian roots, and whether the Catholic Church would be conceivable if detached from its European heritage. In his view, “the Catholic Church would not have reached its full maturity without the challenge posed by the European enlightenment”; the same applies to European civilization, “for it is quite hard for Europe to remain itself” if it severs its vital connection to the Christian tradition (85). In order to describe the current state of the relation between European civilization and the Catholic Church, Belardinelli recalls Leo Strauss's thesis that “Jerusalem” and “Athens” denote two mutually exclusive answers to the question concerning wisdom; every synthesis between the two would amount to the impoverishment of both. (Belardinelli draws mostly on *Reason and Revelation* [1948] and *The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy* [1954], which have recently been translated into Italian and to whose publication Belardinelli's essay is the first major reaction.) In Belardinelli's view, this radical antagonism is unconvincing. He maintains the possibility of being a citizen of both Jerusalem *and* Athens. In support of his view, Belardinelli refers to Joseph Ratzinger and his claim that Christianity advances the Greek enlightenment, since both denied pagan religion: Christianity “came into the world by proclaiming that the divine *logos*,” invoked by Socrates in Plato's

Phaedo, “entered History” as Jesus Christ (90). Notwithstanding the point of disagreement, Belardinelli appropriates another statement from Strauss, that the antagonism between Jerusalem and Athens is the secret of the vitality of the West. He maintains in fact that “what today matters more is not whether philosophy and revelation are compatible...but the crisis of both. We live in a world where every trace of Athens and Jerusalem is at risk of disappearing” (94). From this point on, Belardinelli concentrates almost exclusively on the role of the church, and his analysis amounts to a stern criticism of contemporary Catholicism’s geopolitical strategy. Belardinelli laments a significant impoverishment of prophecy. “The prophetic force of denunciation” of the church “weakens because it appears to be too close to the logic of the world... too political and insufficiently eschatological” (96). In this connection, the problem of the Catholic Church emerges clearly. By virtue of its focus on the peripheries of the developing world, the church “falls into a moralism...at the basis of which seems to stand the failure to distinguish between religion, morality, and politics.” In fact, Belardinelli considers the “distinction between religious, political, and moral law...a most important conquest, in contrast to the organicism ruling in both Athens and Jerusalem” (101–2). In this way, Belardinelli’s liberal soul comes to the fore. “The truth of God can no more be imposed against the will of the individuals; it must always respect the dignity and liberty of every human being. The truth cannot be imposed by force anymore; freedom is the only ‘way’ to establish it” (105). Belardinelli considers “the values and the political and institutional orders” that guarantee that freedom to be nonnegotiable (109). In conclusion, he points to the true task of the Catholic Church. In Belardinelli’s view, the proper function of religion is talking about God. Only by remaining faithful to its own specificity can the church hope to revitalize itself and, accordingly, European civilization.

From a global consideration of Panebianco’s and Belardinelli’s essays, the following picture emerges: the world order depends on the West, for no alternative at hand seems to be viable; in turn, the West rests on two pillars (NATO and the EU) which are suffering internal struggles. These struggles, as synthetically recounted above, are of various natures. Although the authors avoid any kind of reductionism unfaithful to the complexity of reality, they isolate a single most important achievement of Western civilization, namely, the division of politics, morality, religion and economy as *the* keystone of freedom. Indeed, the greatest dangers of the present come from the conflation of one with the others. In this connection, it seems apt to recall what Belardinelli identifies as “the catalyst of the main problems of our time” (108), namely, Islam, which fundamentally denies the separation of morality,

religion, and politics. The integration of Islamic European minorities must include a process of modernization, implying the progressive separation of these “social systems.” On this point, Belardinelli and Panebianco are in full agreement. One might though wonder if it is at all possible to speak of “Islam” in this way, as if it were a uniform phenomenon. Given that their overall tone is not alarmist, but earnestly worried, such a simplification of the many strands of Islam into one might be justified in light of the partially hortatory nature of the essays. In fact, they remain open to the possibility of a renewal of Western civilization. The solutions Panebianco and Belardinelli have to offer assume the form of a recovery of the liberal global order championed by the United States and the EU. What remains to be seen is whence the energy needed to operate this recovery may come. To this effect, the clear perception of a clash of civilizations might be of help.

Rémi Brague, *The Kingdom of Man: Genesis and Failure of the Modern Project*. Translated by Paul Seaton. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018, xv + 330 pp., \$40.00 (cloth).

WILL MORRISEY

HILLSDALE COLLEGE

wmorrisey@outlook.com

With what may have been a touch of irony, Leo Strauss called for scholars to work on “the history of ideas.” Rémi Brague has taken him up on that. And he does so in a ‘Straussian’ way, to the extent of carefully avoiding the mistake of conflating history with historicism. For example, instead of attributing what is perhaps the characteristic modern ambition to historical circumstances, he writes, “the intention to dominate nature preceded the birth of the technology that allowed its realization” (59).

With *The Kingdom of Man*, Brague completes a trilogy in which he presents a panoramic view of theological and philosophic thought, ‘ancient and modern,’ primarily but not exclusively ‘Western.’ Most such efforts are cringeworthy exercises, superficial and canting, but Brague has read not only widely but with care, profiting from work done by Strauss and his students while maintaining an independent view. He follows Strauss in distinguishing between classical and modern philosophy, but he is less Socratic than Strauss. That is, he does not write as if philosophy needs to begin with a consideration of politics, precisely for philosophic and indeed ‘epistemological’ reasons. As a result, he presents Bacon rather than Machiavelli as the principal philosophic founder of modernity—thinking of modernity primarily in terms of science, not ‘the state.’ He gives a nod to Machiavelli, and indeed to Ficino, but in passing; it is a matter of emphasis. Brague also differs from Eric Voegelin: he does not attempt to ‘do philosophy,’ to join the ranks of *the greats*;

partly for that reason, he invents no new words or phrases, keeping to the humbler path of scholarship.

Brague identifies the “project” as characteristic of modernity; modernity itself not only spawns “projects” but is one—an “essay” (as per Montaigne), an “attempt,” an “experiment.” “The rise to prominence of ‘project’ is connected with a displacement of emphasis from reason to imagination in the definition of man, henceforth understood as the living thing capable of conceiving possibilities” (2). The phrase “If you can dream it, you can do it” marks a fatuous turn, but it is illustrative in the way caricatures often are. To conceive of a project implies, first, “the idea of a new beginning which causes the forgetting of everything that preceded”; second, “the idea of the autonomy of the acting subject”; and, finally, “the idea of a supportive milieu that prolongs the action and ensures its successful completion” (3). (Readers of Machiavelli will recall his ideas of the founding, the prince, and the state.) The master-project consists of the conquest of nature (what is ‘below’ man) and emancipation from “everything that presents itself as above man” (4). Humanism in this sense “must then tend to become an atheism,” despite the frequent use of biblical images and phrases by its publicists.

A project differs from a task. Tasks begin when “I receive a mission to do something from an origin I cannot control, but must discover” (5), a mission that causes me to question my ability to perform it, requiring sacrifices of me, and which puts the responsibility for undertaking and completing the task squarely ‘on my shoulders.’ A biblical prophet, a ‘pagan’ hero: Moses and Hercules perform tasks, not projects. Man’s uniqueness is understood as his capacity for “commerce with the highest of the beings” (10), not as his capacity to invent new things for himself to do, then figure out ways to do them. The ‘tasked’ man or woman might be a messiah, might be divinized, might be a great ascetic. But the task will always be given, never self-assigned or spun out of one’s own imagination and desires. “It does not seem that the ancient civilizations conceived of a control of nature by human activity” (17). “For a Christian like Augustine, man is not lord of creation except to the extent that he is son of God” (22). And even the Bible regards this lordship as questionable, after Eden: the book of Ecclesiastes humbles its readers by telling them, “The advantage of man over the animal is nothing” (23), since men die as surely as animals do. Messianism is an assignment from God. Divinization, when it occurs, derives from God’s grace, not human ‘projection,’ a fact that leaves plenty of room for humility; and asceticism aims not at self-mastery so much as the “gift of the self in charity” (33)—that

is, partaking of the agapic love exhibited by God in assigning tasks. Among nonbiblical ‘ancients,’ self-mastery “does not imply domination over external nature” (34), constituting rather an attempt to make reason, the distinctive human characteristic *by nature*, rule the passions. For nonmodern thinkers, even *poesis* or making “has nothing to do with an idiosyncratic design” (34), having rather to do with *mimesis* or imitation. Artists do not create: “The idea of creative construction appeared with the modern age,” as seen even in such decidedly un-‘Romantic’ sorts as Hobbes, Kant, and Marx.

Here Brague does connect modernity with politics. “The modern project of a domination of nature presupposes a certain representation of nature and the place that one occupies in it, but also a specific model of what it is to dominate in general” (37), namely, the model of ‘the prince,’ the ‘one alone’ who not only rules but acts as ‘principal’ and as an embodied ‘principle,’ the authoritative source of that rule. “In other words, the rule of man over nature presupposes a theory of monarchy,” indeed, of “absolute monarchy,” of *sovereignty* (37). Brague identifies the thinker who took the step between the classical idea of art as making and the modern concept of art as creation as the Renaissance writer Cristoforo Landino, “inspired by his friend Marsilio Ficino” (40). For them, “the *poiein* of the poet is intermediary” between creation and making (40); art, for these neo-Platonists, takes a God-given form and forms matter in accordance with it. With that move, Renaissance thinkers moved closer to the ambition “to transform nature by work” (46); for Ficino, the artist becomes “the lord and teacher of matter,” although in so ruling and teaching it he is “awakening” and “serving” it (48). Following Strauss, Brague next identifies Machiavelli as the source of the claim that human action is “a mode of mastery, of ‘subjecting’ *fortuna*,” understood as everything that up to now has escaped “from the control of man.” “The idea of *fortuna* is perhaps the first representation of the *object* of mastery, even before it was called ‘nature.’” “*Fortuna* is the way things appear once they are seen in the optic of mastery” (49). Unlike Strauss, Brague does not associate this new ambition with Machiavelli’s conception of *lo stato*, the modern state.

Brague helpfully distinguishes the modern ambition from magic, which of course had been around for a long time. “The goal of theurgy...was not to act horizontally to change nature, but rather to establish a vertical link, by causing a superior being to descend into a statue or by elevating man” (54). Either way, the magus invokes a higher power, whether divine or natural, ‘calling upon’ it. He does not claim to possess this power, although he or others may suppose him to be possessed by it. “Francis Bacon rehabilitated

magic” (55) not as a method (quite sensibly judging it ineffective) but as a symbol of a worthy human ambition to control the nonhuman. Similarly, in the eyes of the moderns the alchemists had the right ambition but the wrong way to achieve it, whereas such Aristotelians as Avicenna and Averroes denied that art could or should rival nature. With modernity, “the idea of a rivalry with God...comes to light” (57), a rivalry properly criticized as Satanic by those who kept the Bible in mind.

Brague next turns to a step-by-step account of the “deployment” of modernity (61), the successive attempt to formulate and advance the project, culminating in the thought of Auguste Comte. Several elements went into this deployment, including nautical astronomy, the rediscovery of Gnosticism in the fifteenth century (with its claim that Creation was botched and in need of repair) and of Epicureanism (with its atomistic materialism), also in that century, and the Reformation’s emphasis on the ‘fallenness’ of nature. None of these events ‘caused’ the modern project, but together they “posed anew” the “question of man’s place among the creatures” (67). In Brague’s judgment, Francis Bacon was “the first, it seems, to have put forth the idea of a domination of man over nature” (68), reorienting philosophy away from contemplation, toward power—power understood not primarily as political rule guided by prudential reasoning but as “a hybrid union of production and action.” That is how, in Bacon’s words, men can “enlarg[e] the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible,” with the final goal being (Brague writes) to achieve “the maximal satisfaction of the unlimited desires of man” (70). To this a reader of Strauss would add that it was Machiavelli who wrote, “And truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire” (*The Prince* 3).

Descartes soon follows with the moral concept of “generosity,” by which he means “the mastery of the passions” *in the service of* such “empire” (72). The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a line of thinkers who followed in the Machiavellian-Baconian-Cartesian line, including such familiar names as Spinoza, Locke, and Voltaire. Locke’s labor theory of value, for example, rests on an epistemology wherein “the mind transforms the givens of sensation,” making them *useful*; “most deeply, Locke conceives of work as the self-creation of man” (97).

Brague identifies several “particularly spectacular scientific triumphs” that accelerated the modern project: the discovery of electricity and the means of controlling it; Lavoisier’s decomposition of air and water, which “gave the coup de grâce to the traditional notion of the four elements”; the invention

of hot-air balloons, giving men “a new perspective on the earth” (77). The combination of these demonstrations of the manipulability of nature with a quasi-divine view of earth accelerated the production of the “scientific utopias” of “modern times,” a genre inaugurated at the outset by Bacon himself (78). The idea of sustainable *progress* did not trail far behind; indeed, Hobbes already redefines happiness as a “dynamic” process, a “movement toward what is desired” rather than the achievement of a *telos* natural to man (80). The ‘historicist turn’ transformed this notion of progress into *progressivism* (a word “attested in English as early as 1848”), whereby progress “becomes the object of a belief,” a secular version of Providence (81). This led to a paradox, however. Providence, whether divine or human-historical, takes control of things out of human control: “the results can no longer be credited to man, dragged along as he is by a current that surpasses him and of which he is not the master” (81).

Anthropology replaces theology, as seen in Hume, who writes, “The science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences” (85). Added to progressivism, this results in the claim that “the human no longer designates what man is, but what he ought to be” (87). “Human dignity” (89)—a term now much bruted-about—comes to mean advancement toward that *historically* promised end. With goodness redefined, evil also needed reconception. Without original sin, and without Satan, thinkers look around for a “substitute devil” (90), finding him in Freemasons, Jews, Jesuits, eventually ‘reactionaries,’ ‘the bourgeoisie,’ and so on (and on). “The Cult of Humanity” arises, first in German Idealism, a new idealism of *realizable* ideas, but then in Comte’s Positivism (91). Although Nietzsche despised the likes of Comte, he too concurs in the fundamentals: the human subject confers ‘value,’ and is therefore “worth more than all the values that it will please him to pose” (100). “The very nature of virtue changed” (102). As early as Kant, “culture” replaced “nature” (103). “The classical idea of human dignity is transformed: it was located in the clarity of [man’s] intellect; now it is rethought on the basis of the idea of mastery” (105). In terms of practice, “action” now means “production as the transformation of nature,” seen in industrial technology (107). Reason becomes instrumental to instantiating the envisioned *realizable* ideal or scientific utopia. “In a phrase that would have seemed crazy to Aristotle,” Claude Bernard wrote, “*true science acts* and explains its action and its power” (109). True science gets results. It does not know the nature of things; it suffices for it to manipulate things effectively to achieve the desired purpose, namely, whatever is desired.

Such philosophers as Plato and Aristotle understood *autarkeia* or self-sufficiency as a life lived in terms of ‘unaided’ human reason, thought governed by the principle of self-contradiction which sought to discover the nature of things without the unquestioned acceptance of the ruling conventions of the city. To moderns, however, self-sufficiency means that “man must be the sole origin of man” (122). In the words of Ludwig Feuerbach, “The task of the modern period is the realization and humanization of God, the dissolution of theology into anthropology” (123). Whereas Aeschylus makes Prometheus the divine patron of blacksmiths and early Christian writers saw him as a figure of Christ, Diderot calls him the father of man himself, and Marx calls him the “first saint of the philosophical calendar” (131). In politics, this results in a push for understanding human beings as *autonomous*, as beings who give themselves all their laws—“an enterprise unthinkable except on the basis of a sensualist anthropology, Locke’s” (134). Brague incautiously associates this with both the American and the French Revolutions; while it is true that the great seal of the United States lauds a *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, that new order or regime still rules under the laws of nature and of nature’s God. As for the French revolutionaries, that depended on the one you asked and the moment you asked him.

In announcing the Religion of Humanity—its “new Supreme Being” being man as he creates himself—Comte “represents a sort of Catholicism without Christianity” (137). But really, on Brague’s own evidence, it is more than that, given that Catholicism (or at least Thomist Catholicism) without Christianity would be Aristotelianism, which moderns reject as firmly as they reject the God of the Bible.

But why stop at the conquest of nonhuman nature? Brague devotes his final chapters to the self-immolation of modern humanism, an immolation sparked by its own premises. It is not only that science severed from respect for the laws of nature and of nature’s God may ruin as much as, or more than, it builds—oppressing workers, whether under ‘capitalism’ or ‘socialism,’ polluting water and air, committing genocide, and at times seeming to threaten the survival of humanity itself—but that science so reconceived contradicts its own intention, undermining the dignity of man and often humiliating him in principle as well as in practice. It is enough to recall Sade, Darwin, and Freud, but Brague sees that Machiavelli has already replaced the man-god, Jesus, with the man-beast, Chiron the centaur. Man becomes the object of scientific domination, not only the agent. Jeremy Bentham memorably expressed this dimension of modernity in dismissing the Rights of

Man proclaimed by the French revolutionaries as nonsense upon stilts. As in Machiavelli, the princes of the new order take care (however inconsistently) to exempt themselves from such 'objectification.' As Brague understates the matter, "Man conceived as the result of the benevolence of a God who created him in his image and calls him into a free communion with him would ill suit the enterprise of a total remaking" (170). And if Hobbes's mighty Leviathan, the modern state, is an artificial man, why not remake each individual man? Such crude methods as eugenics, and such grand concepts as the Superman, have proved only preludes to proposals for "dissolving" man (as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss put it), a notion currently seen in plans for the rule of human beings by supercomputers. 'Trans-humanism,' indeed.

Brague ends with a statement of what he calls "the paradox of the good": "The modern project is perfectly fine when it comes to producing *goods*." However, "it seems to be incapable of explaining why it is *good* that there are human beings to enjoy the goods that are thus put at their disposal" (214). He aptly quotes a character in André Malraux's first novel, *The Temptation of the West*, published in 1926: In the West, "the absolute reality was God, then man; but *man is dead*, after God, and you anxiously seek someone to whom you could confide your strange heritage. Your little efforts at creating structures for moderate nihilisms, however, do not seem to me destined for a long existence" (171). The speaker is a young Chinese who nonetheless feels the same temptation in himself, China having been divided and conquered by the West in more ways than one.

A summary of Brague's argument shows why his book provokes and stimulates. It cannot do justice to the details he brings forth, statements not only by philosophers and theologians but by painters, composers and musicologists, polemicists, historians, scientists, physicians, and not a few quacks and cranks (well chosen for illustrative value). He fastidiously avoids treating these fauna equally, except in the sense that most of them are equally ardent proponents of the modern project. Finally, it should be remarked that with this translation Paul Seaton augments his ever-increasing reputation as one of the finest contemporary translators of French prose into English.

Delba P. Winthrop, *Aristotle: Democracy and Political Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018, xi + 288 pp., \$57.04 (hardcover).

MARY P. NICHOLS

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

Mary_Nichols@baylor.edu

Delba Winthrop's commentary on Book 3 of Aristotle's *Politics* is an original reading that has momentous implications for his work as a whole. The topics of Book 3 will be familiar to readers of Aristotle: what is the city, who is the citizen, how many regimes exist and what are their ends, and who ought to rule, the many or the few, the best man or the laws? Book 3 for this reason appears fundamentally political. Not for a moment does Winthrop deny this, but she also shows that Aristotle's discussion of these questions is at the same time a discussion of the most theoretical, indeed metaphysical, of topics—what is being, is there a whole or cosmos, what are its first principles or causes? Not only *can* the metaphysician learn from politics about his own search for being; he *must* learn from politics to advance his search for being. In Winthrop's words, "the philosopher learn[s] about wholes and being only from taking the political seriously" (7). Aristotle's political inquiry, his *Politics*, is *the way* he does metaphysics. Indeed, the theme of Book 3 of the *Politics*, in Winthrop's words, is that "in politics or in speaking about political things the first cause and substance of all things becomes manifest" (18). While Aristotle's *Politics* is as theoretical as any work of metaphysics could be, Winthrop argues, his metaphysical reflections that emerge from it make a case for political reform, specifically, for composing mixed regimes that allow nobility and freedom to reflect humanity's contribution to the whole. Her claim challenges previous readings not only of Aristotle's *Politics*, but also the very distinction between his theoretical and practical works.

Readers of Plato will be reminded of Socrates's account, in the *Phaedo*, of his own philosophic development— of his attempt to study nature and its failure to reveal any direction toward the good, his turn to an examination of speeches, and eventually his positing of the ideas as the necessary condition for speech and intelligibility (111, 117; *Phaedo* 96a–101e). Imitating what Socrates called his “second sailing,” Aristotle turns to politics and its speeches about the advantageous and the just, in order to understand nature itself, and follows Socrates's lead in correcting their philosophic predecessors. Winthrop's presentation of Aristotle's project in terms of an imitation of Socrates (see 155) should be kept in mind when she dwells on Aristotle's taking Platonism as one of the primary philosophic positions of the past in need of correction, in both its introduction of the ideas and its political recommendations.

Central to Book 3 of the *Politics* is the debate between the democrats and the oligarchs about who should rule in the city. The democratic appeal to equality, Winthrop argues, is supported by a philosophic argument—an identification of nature with bodies and a mathematical understanding that reduces objects to numbers in abstraction from “what” they are (e.g., 4, 82–83, 98–99, 178). Such an argument has democratic appeal, for it flatters the many by teaching that no one is more qualified to rule than another. The oligarchs, in contrast, appeal to inequality, to difference rather than sameness. The oligarchic argument for inequality also has a philosophic counterpart, the Platonic ideas or forms, which differentiate the beings in the world by classifying qualities rather than by counting and thus serve as a philosophic ground for the distinctions that justify the rule of the few over the many (e.g., 20–22, 109, 146).

The city cannot be constituted as a whole on the basis of either democratic or oligarchic principle alone. If the whole were composed of identical units, there would be “a multitude of things.” We could count them all, but “all” would not constitute a whole. If, on the other hand, the forms are separate from matter, as the Platonic forms are presented as being, there remains the need to explain their connection not only to one another but to the rest of nature. “Doing justice to the better and the many means not only finding a political order suitable for mixing those who are capable of nobility and those who are not, but also explaining the relation of forms like the Platonic forms, ‘the few good,’ to the rest of nature, which seems to be bodies” (146). The political problem is the cosmological problem. Aristotle's attempt to correct the political partisans is at the same time an attempt to correct the

philosophic ones, who must “refine [their] understanding of what nature is by taking man’s wholes as models of what nature might be” (143).

To the philosophers, Aristotle offers a more complete view of the whole by turning them toward political inquiry, where human assertiveness and freedom require a revision of their theories about nature, whether they appeal to bodies or to forms. It is in this sense that Aristotle attempts to turn potential philosophers to philosophy: teaching philosophers—at least those who make a plausible claim to being so—that they must turn to politics for progress in understanding the whole. To the political partisans, in turn, he offers a more complete view of the political whole in which they are vying for ascendance, one that can incorporate both equality and inequality in political life, one that flatters their claims only by elevating them toward virtue and nobility. Winthrop speaks of Aristotle’s “two educations,” one for philosophers and one for political men. Their parallel errors can be corrected by Aristotle’s “teaching about the human soul and about what one might surmise about politics and all things in light of that knowledge” (8).

In Aristotle’s analysis, as Winthrop points out, democrats want freedom more than equality, and freedom means not merely living as one sees fit but living a life befitting a free man rather than a slave (1–2, 157). Democrats might therefore be open to Aristotle’s teaching about virtue, for virtue is an overcoming of natural necessity, or a “striving to live according to human perfection,” a life of freedom rather than slavery (122–25). They must be taught, in Winthrop’s words, that the free man is the “virtuous man, or the noble man” (84). Oligarchs, for their part, want to justify their preeminence, their superiority. They believe, for example, that they deserve their wealth, which seems to have freed them from natural necessity. They confuse themselves with aristocrats, for they want to be recognized not simply for their wealth but for their achievement. But in Aristotle’s showing, virtue, not wealth, frees from necessity. They must be taught “what kind of wealth is worthy of being desired.” And when they are “taught about noble friendships that are possible for virtuous men,” they will also learn “how to live among democrats while maintaining [their] distinctiveness” (84). Aristotle’s appeal both to the democrats and the oligarchs culminates in his teaching about virtue, his teaching about soul.

Philosophic partisans, for their part, must understand that it is human virtue that can make the whole a whole, rather than “an all” with undifferentiated parts or a diversity with nothing in common. Human beings have souls, which cannot exist separate from body but which cannot be reduced to body. Without soul and the choices that proceed from it, we are simply bodies

to whose needs we cater, and/or minds that understand only necessary and unchanging things such as the forms (48). From body and mind come two sorts of slavery to nature, Winthrop explains, and neither, nor both together, can make a whole of human being (57; see also 63). Politics reveals the human soul at work in the world, the link between body and mind that neither materialists nor Platonists can provide.

Those who reduce being to body, as well as those who reduce being to form, by implication, lack knowledge of themselves, for neither offer views of nature that can account for themselves. Neither bodies nor forms speak. The “democratic” philosophers—and Winthrop counts Hobbes among them, not just Aristotle’s atomist predecessors—cannot explain how if nature were as they describe they could give their accounts of it (e.g., 5). The advocates of the forms, intelligible objects that can be known by mind, similarly, cannot explain their own desire to know them or to speak of them to others (see 99). Aristotle’s lesson for them is that of the words on the temple of Delphi, know yourself. Politics is his means. By showing them freedom, politics teaches them about a whole, which their own theories fail to do, for it is by asserting their freedom that human beings can rise above bodies to make claims for themselves and thereby learn from experience their own difference from the rest of nature, not only from body but also from intelligible and necessary forms. The human being is “unique among beings in combining physical and intelligent being in one being” (37), and therefore the only being that reflects this heterogeneity (i.e., matter or body and form) of the whole, but also the only being we know who can make his own being: “man’s capacities are given, but his being is the actuality of which he is the cause” (125, 65). Only through his freedom, his assertiveness, does the human being connect body to mind. In Winthrop’s words, “the twofold nature of man is connected in spiritedness, which is the *raison d’être* of politics” (158). Only by considering the human being who makes the city a whole can “we know what a whole might be like, and therefore whether nature can be understood as a whole, not an ‘all’” (125–26, 143).

Nothing better illustrates the complexity and depth of Winthrop’s work than the way in which she folds Aristotle’s treatment of men and women into her discussion. When she observes that for Aristotle human being “is comprised of both male and female being,” “two forms that human being in a body can assume” (49, 53), she again captures the difference between Aristotle and his philosophic predecessors, whether ancient materialists or Platonists, who reduce the differences between men and women either to their bodies

or to a form that applies to both alike. Although Winthrop does not stray to discuss the *Republic*, its “female drama” (451c) illustrates her point, when Socrates finds no practice that “belongs to a woman because she is a woman or to a man because he is a man” (455d–e). For Aristotle, although men and women share a common humanity, their tasks and their virtues differ (94), and by complementing each other suggest the possibility of a whole with dissimilar parts (53). Curiously, Winthrop entitles one of her chapter sections “From a Man’s Point of View,” while not providing a parallel section “From a Woman’s Point of View.” That she is by no means silencing women, however, is indicated by her observation that “women always have the last word,” which she makes in the course of writing “From a Man’s Point of View” (79).

It is not simply from a man’s point of view that Winthrop comments on Aristotle’s account of the tyrant Thrasyboulos, who sent his herald to another tyrant Periander, whose name she points out is literally “All-Around Man” (49), to ask him for advice about how to rule. Periander said nothing, but took the herald to a field, where he stripped away the tallest stalks of grain. Winthrop finds in Periander’s advice the virtues of “a good hermaphrodite,” for “he is as courageous as a man and as silent as a woman.” The silence to which Aristotle refers, however, is not one that fails to speak, for it speaks through deeds. As Aristotle recounts the story, when Thrasyboulos hears from his herald what Periander did, he proceeds “to make away with” or “destroy” the manly preeminent men in the city. Winthrop notices a difference, as “of course we must,” between Aristotle’s description of Periander’s “stripping away” or “abstracting” (*aphaireō*) the tallest grains and Thrasyboulos’s “making away with” (*anaireō*) the manly. The former uses “his marvelous virtue to philosophize”: he “abstracted” the tallest stalks like the philosopher who “stud[ies] the workings of nature by using the average case as a form.” The latter, however, “had asked about politics, not nature,” and understood Periander’s advice to be applicable to political beings. To notice the difference between Periander’s “philosophic” deed and Thrasyboulos’s destructive political one, however, is to notice the connection: Periander’s philosophizing teaches the political Thrasyboulos “to obliterate the manliness that incorrectly manifests itself in noble political deeds, or to teach the manly that the only noble deed is to philosophize” (151–52). It requires a woman, paradoxically, to speak up for manliness. The tyrants in the end are not “good hermaphrodites,” but “hermaphrodite tyrants” (cf. 152 with 151); their communication is wholly manly. They are both “all-around men.”

While the democrats and oligarchs approach each other in succumbing to the natural necessities of body, whether by finding strength in numbers or in an abundance of material goods, “the ‘tyranny’ of philosophy” has a similar effect on political nobility. By using the average case as a form, as Pericles did, and by accepting “the rule of natural philosophy,” as Thrasyboulos seems to have done, they do away with the preeminent, whether with regard to form or to political life, and “make nobility immanifest” (152). Aristotle’s “natural science,” in contrast, by “posit[ing] forms that are the best, not the average case” (155), preserves political nobility. In this way, Aristotle is like the women, who are benefited by “manly men of moral virtue,” who not only protect them but also give them “something to talk about” (73). Winthrop thus finds in Aristotle’s calling women “babblers” a reason for listening to them rather than silencing them. After all, Aristotle himself does not claim that a woman’s virtue is silence but rather “discretion” (49). It is a virtue that Winthrop attributes to the philosopher, who must be “cautious” as well as courageous “with respect to the public teaching of philosophy to political men” (116), although he, at least Aristotle, leaves nothing so obscure that we cannot find it (68).

Winthrop’s reflections on men and women, woven into her commentary when appropriate, therefore gather the core questions—equality and difference, the possibility of a heterogeneous whole, the necessity and limits of assertiveness for that whole, and even the manner of speaking and writing for conveying truth about that whole. The understanding of the whole that emerges from Winthrop’s commentary on Aristotle’s metaphysical politics is therefore a political metaphysics, an understanding of the cosmos as a sort of mixed regime, modeled on Aristotle’s political mixed regime (116). Both cosmological and political wholes mix nature or necessity and freedom, the homogeneity of body or the homogeneity imposed by the forms, with the heterogeneity that comes from human action that aims at the noble and the good. Winthrop’s statement about the mixed regime applies to the cosmos: “the mix is ultimately a mix of different first principles” (131).

Aristotle’s democracy is “the fundamentally democratic mixed regime” that he outlines (178) and that is elevated by freedom and moral and intellectual virtue. “The mixed regime is a mix of bodies with the boasts men make that they are more than bodies.” That is, the democratic mixed regime is “more than a democratic mix” precisely because it mixes *human beings* (131). This applies to the oligarchic mixed regime as well. Winthrop understands the different functions of governing—legislating and judging—as experiences

that preserve the mix. Legislating, which requires one “to reason in terms of general principles and to make wholes,” must mix “a bit of philosophic *eros*, a yearning to be one with the whole,” with spiritedness, recognition of distinction, and assertiveness (170). Judging, in contrast to legislating, requires examining particular cases that test the law by constituting exceptions or revealing omissions (180). Judging educates in drawing distinctions, just as legislating educates in forming wholes for oneself and for others. Winthrop’s formulation indicates that for Aristotle the human consists of both *eros* and spiritedness, something he could have learned from Plato, and perhaps indicates as well that the “Platonists” whom Aristotle treats as philosophic partisans do not include Plato himself. For Plato, the forms are not as primary as the soul that seeks to know the whole and yet resists any assimilation to the whole that makes knowing impossible. Winthrop’s Aristotle, insofar as his responses to advocates of forms and to democratic materialists both culminate in a teaching about the human soul (8), turns out to be a Platonist.

Winthrop also helps us to understand the difference between Aristotle’s democracy and a modern democracy: the former is necessarily a mixed regime, whereas modern democracy tries not to be one, at least in theory. From this perspective, modern democracy is open to Aristotle’s criticism of the democratic partisans, as is the science that supports it—the principle of body underlies its appeal to equality, and it thereby encourages slavishness. Just as modern natural science seeks to understand bodies in motion in order to control them “for the relief of man’s estate,” modern political science understands human passions and how to control them for the sake of peace and commodious living. Modern democracy may boast of being a “liberal democracy” when it understands itself to exist by the consent of the people in order to protect their individual rights, but we might say in light of Winthrop’s analysis that the democracy that it boasts of being is only a slavish one that uses the language of rights in the service of the passions, but that its boast to be “liberal” elevates it in the direction of freedom. Slaves do not boast of their freedom. Like the boasts of the political partisans Aristotle addresses, the claims of modern democracy call into question its own theoretical presuppositions. Whereas modern political science seeks to imitate natural science, Aristotle’s political science, Winthrop writes, is “the model for natural science” (178, 184). By looking to the mixture of necessity and freedom in the mixed regime, Aristotle might “refine [our] understanding of what nature is by taking man’s wholes as models of what nature might be” (143).

If Aristotle's political science is the model for natural science, however, what is the status of his more theoretical works? For example, if for Aristotle the only way to do metaphysics is through the sort of political inquiry Winthrop finds in the *Politics*, how are we supposed to understand Aristotle's *Metaphysics*? Winthrop argues that "the closest one can come to articulating being is to speak of man's virtues," through which we might "come to know what a whole that includes human being is" (53–54). Would not speeches like the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, then, be *the* way to learn about being? Moreover, if political science is the model for natural science, how are we supposed to understand Aristotle's *Physics*? Does not the very existence of the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics* refute Winthrop's thesis? For example, if the philosopher learns about wholes and being "only" from politics, why does he write a physics and metaphysics? Winthrop herself does not raise these questions, unless implicitly, for her thesis about Book 3 of the *Politics* begs us to do so. Perhaps her thesis is not refuted by the very existence of Aristotle's theoretical works, but rather gives us a new way of understanding those works. Far from being of higher philosophical stature than his so-called practical works, they would be informed by his political insights.

There are many ways of supporting this implication of Winthrop's work. Aristotle's *Physics*, for example, does not reduce nature to body, for natural beings have forms that differentiate them from other natural beings. And their forms, while they give structure and ends to the development of natural beings, do not exist outside of them but rule from within. Natural beings, in Aristotle's physics, have the principles of motion within themselves. As Winthrop says of the "self-conscious natural scientist," whom I assume we must distinguish from the modern one, he "consider[s] the natures, the 'whats' of the beings in order to judge the whole of being" (78; see also 155), for which "form is as much being and as necessary as substance" (159). He is like what Winthrop dubs an "ethical mathematician" (140), the philosopher who has been educated by Aristotle in the human things.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* too might be understood to be written by a political scientist, whose philosophizing about human beings has given him the principles for an investigation of being. The *Metaphysics* begins, for example, with the observation that "all human beings desire to know." That is, it begins with the human being as subject, not object, and with the human as distinct from the rest of nature. Not even the unmoved mover *desires* to know. It is not given to wonder (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1125a3–4), which Aristotle soon explains is the origin of philosophy (*Metaphysics* 982b12–13). For Aristotle

to begin with the human desire to know is to declare that his inquiry in his *Metaphysics* will not forget about its author, that any understanding of the whole that comes from his inquiry will never lose sight of the one who makes the inquiry, the one who gives the account. His *Metaphysics*, in other words, will not be vulnerable to his criticism of the partisans in the *Politics*, philosophic as well as political, that they forget about themselves (178).

The debate Aristotle sets up in Book A of the *Metaphysics*, between those who reduce the whole to bodies and those who introduce the forms, resembles the political debate between the democrats and the oligarchs. So too the *Metaphysics* itself moves from the question of being to the question of the cosmos, from ontology to cosmology, as if it were asking not only “what” things are, but how they are ordered into a whole. This move from ontology to cosmology mirrors the move in Book 3 of the *Politics* from the question of who is the citizen to the question of regimes, which order a city and thus determine citizenship: what they are, how many there are, how we should rank them, and whether one or more than one aims at a common good that is more than just the sum of its parts (see 27). And when Aristotle asks in the *Metaphysics* whether the whole contains the good within itself as the order that structures it or as something separate that in some way imparts order to the whole (1075a12–15), his question is analogous to one that he brings up in *Politics*, Book 3—whether the laws or the best man should rule in the city (167–78; also cf. 51 with 58). As in the *Politics*, so in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle indicates that the answer must involve both. Indeed, when Aristotle speaks of the god in the *Metaphysics* as an unmoved mover, which moves all things by being loved, he has recourse to an understanding of the human soul, for it is the human soul that, unlike the god, loves and thereby moves not only to its own perfection but also longs for a perfection outside or beyond itself. Human beings for Aristotle, unlike other natural beings, cannot be understood only by “what” they are in abstraction from what they can become, or from their moving themselves by loving another.

Readers of Winthrop must judge for themselves how far she would go in attributing to Aristotle an understanding of the goodness of the whole derived from his inquiry into the human or political things. She argues that Aristotle fails to find one ruler or one principle (*monarchia*, in Greek), either in the political or in the metaphysical sense, to be “a first cause and ruler of the whole” (148). As she writes, “if there were a king in nature, a form of forms, he would have a substance other than body, but Aristotle does not demonstrate the existence of this kind of being in nature” (176). The unmoved mover,

presumably, remains for her an open question or a statement of the problem rather than answer (see 188–89). Nature at its best allows us only a mixed regime of necessity and freedom. A mixed regime, however, Winthrop points out, is “a mixed blessing,” almost “as if the legislator of nature has made man and the whole imperfect for the sake of leaving man free to do the work of man, differentiating him from a beast.” In this way, Winthrop is able to see in “nature’s indifference” “nature’s goodness, which consists in leaving human beings free to be noble,” and even “requiring” that they assert their freedom (116–17). This is “the theodicy that makes the whole of being intelligible as a whole intended to make manifest man’s humanity” (116–17). As Winthrop says, “nature makes man’s freedom possible by permitting him the arts she was not generous enough to make unnecessary” (117).

Nature’s goodness for Aristotle therefore does not indicate any simple teleological view of the universe, with a teleological view of humanity forming a part. Rather, to achieve our natural end, we must exercise our freedom, “[our] capacity to be the cause of [our] own being insofar as [we] can choose [our] own end” (178). Human activity mixes itself with natural necessity, whether material determinism or authoritative forms, to make a whole rather than an “all” of countable bodies or a diversity of beings with irreducible identities. Winthrop’s account, however much it revises the traditional understanding of Aristotle’s teleology, preserves the goodness of nature and accords humanity a home in the universe, precisely because our home is one that we ourselves must and can make manifest by our activity. This accomplishment of human freedom is a sign of “natural or divine beneficence” (see 165). Thus “Aristotle can consistently speak” of a god who sanctions the punishments that rulers devise for those who disobey sound laws “without depriving man of his freedom or his responsibility for his virtue.” Aristotle gives us no reason, Winthrop writes, “to suppose that man is not the chief executive” (200). If the legislative work is especially appropriate to oligarchs, and that of judging to democrats, it seems that the executive work belongs to human beings as such.

Winthrop suggests that Aristotle has replaced the poets of his time, who lead human beings to believe that “man is at the mercy of capricious fates.” From their perspective, human assertiveness would appear as “*hybris* against the fates” and indicate his “estrangement from the whole” (163, 165). Human virtues, and human assertion of freedom in acting virtuously, would by this view contradict nature’s intention. Aristotle’s argument that nature is eternal, and that God is neither creator nor legislator, in contrast, allows human virtue.

By implication, human rule in cities “is unhindered by any cause greater than man.” “It would be better,” she observes, “to know that the god does not care about man than to suspect his intentions” (181–84). Aristotle’s philosophy, inimical to poetry’s depiction of divine and often tyrannical interventions in human affairs, would open space for a new kind of poetry, one that “makes manifest” rather than simply “makes” and that portrays human responsibility, and therefore human virtue and the possibilities of political self-rule (e.g., 61, 160, 181, and esp. 168). Aristotle’s *Poetics*, presumably, serves as a guide to this new kind of poetry.

Winthrop’s reflections on how Aristotle’s philosophy assaults the poetry of his time leads her to end her book on a grim note, questioning whether Christianity negates the possibility of natural or divine beneficence that allows human freedom. Christianity’s belief in a God who creates the world and who even enters that world by becoming man for the sake of human redemption presents a God more active and ruling than any god Aristotle suggests, however we understand his “unmoved” mover. In the face of Christianity’s omnipotent divinity, Winthrop questions whether there could be a “nature according to which man’s makings, including his political makings, were free, and by which he was befriended” (200). Although Winthrop does not elaborate, it is possible that an Augustinian distinction between the city of man and the city of God or a Thomistic introduction of hierarchical law in the place of Aristotelian political science might fuel her concern. To her criticism of Christianity, in the name of Aristotle, I would propose an alternative. Aristotle’s theodicy, in the very way that Winthrop formulates it, allows us to see in Christianity the same arrangement for the best—God after all gives human beings free will, without depriving them of it even when they fail to do what he commands. Because Christianity understands divine omnipotence in light of divine beneficence and love, there appears a rule of the whole imperfect enough to allow human freedom and perfect enough to expect that it be used well. Like Aristotle’s philosophy, Christian revelation, which makes manifest God’s love, is hostile to a poetry of oppressive fates, and might even illustrate the new kind of poetry for which Aristotle calls.

Regardless of whether one is persuaded by Winthrop’s work, it offers us an intellectual feast, including an appendix with her own translation of Book 3 of the *Politics*. Whether my reflections on this wonderful book do more than scratch its surface, they are meant to invite readers into Winthrop’s text, not only to delight in its interpretive gems but to consider its profound implications for how we understand our world.

Christopher Barker, *Educating Liberty: Democracy and Aristocracy in J. S. Mill's Political Thought*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018, viii + 267 pp., \$105 (cloth).

DAVID A. NORDQUEST

GANNON UNIVERSITY

NORDQUES001@gannon.edu

Professor Chris Barker's impressive new book on J. S. Mill has an appropriately ambiguous title: *Educating Liberty*. If "educating" is taken as a gerund, the title points to education acting on liberty to elevate it. Taken as a participial adjective, the "educating" is performed by rather than on liberty. The subtitle, *Democracy and Aristocracy in J. S. Mill's Political Thought*, suggests that Barker intends both meanings and views Mill as balancing the claims of equal freedom and wisdom. Barker presents Mill's search for this balance in five stimulating chapters: "The Aristocracy of Sex," "Industrial Aristocracy," "Expertocracy," "Mass and Elite Politics," and "Democratic Religion." As the chapter titles suggest, the emphasis falls somewhat more on the tutoring of liberty rather than by it, but Barker finds balance in each of these areas of Mill's thought.

Barker demonstrates a wide knowledge of Mill's works, of the secondary literature on Mill, and of political philosophy. He ranges widely in Mill's work because, he says, "I assume Mill wrote substantial and often even major works on a variety of topics for which he is often not properly credited" (203). Although presented as a review essay, "Auguste Comte and Positivism," for example, seems to Barker to be, in length and substance, a major work. He therefore gives it extended attention in assessing Mill's sociology of knowledge and his "religion of humanity." Barker also gives considerable attention to lesser-known works by Mill because he is particularly interested

in middle-level principles in Mill's thought. He emphasizes that even those who disagree on first principles may be able to agree on empirically established midlevel principles. In presenting Mill's more detailed views on a variety of still-living issues, Barker shows Mill's thought to have a surprising freshness and richness.

Barker's first chapter deals with Mill on the "aristocracy of sex," on liberty and equality in and beyond the household. Because arbitrary power diminishes both possessor and subject, Mill sought an end to women's legal, economic, and political disabilities. However, because his goal was to promote liberty, he sought reform not through "coercive laws or direct civic education by the state," but, as Barker says, by "changing the circumstances in which men and women associate together," thus facilitating "spontaneous changes" in their relations (12). That, of course, required the repeal of laws mandating inequality, such as *couverture* laws. Barker clarifies Mill's thought on such inequalities by placing it in the context of contemporary British law and practice. For example, he very effectively quotes Blackstone on *couverture*: "the husband and wife are one person in law," such that "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs everything" (21).

Although Mill sought an end to such subjection, he was not an ideologue about the relative roles of the sexes. His aim was true friendship between spouses and freely agreed-upon decision-making and division of labor. According to Barker, Mill regarded the household as "a school of liberty," teaching both parties that "performing one's social functions requires self-criticism, dependence, and even mutual subordination"—in Aristotle's terms, as teaching how to rule and be ruled (40). Mill thought each party would have his or her unique strengths and could teach the other. Thus, women "by nature and by nurture" are "better socialized in the arts of cooperation than men."

Barker contrasts Mill's account of marital friendship with Aristotle's in an extended and enlightening comparison. While Aristotle thought such friendship possible, he saw the household as an association of unequals. For this reason, he criticized "masterless" households as "democratic." Mill, however, favored domestic arrangements best suited for schooling spouses in liberty, arrangements not founded on power or dominance. Households should be free polities, with a politics of mutual persuasion or, in de Jouvain's terms, of the rallying of wills. However, Barker sees Mill and Aristotle agreed in finding a completely democratic household impossible, Aristotle

because of the supposed superiority of the male and Mill because authority would rotate, in Barker's words, "depending on the circumstances of the household and on the relative competence of the individual spouses" (42).

Here and elsewhere Barker demonstrates an extensive knowledge of feminist literature on Mill, on the household, and on the economy. He distinguishes various "waves" of feminism, with Mill seen as a founder of first-wave feminism. Barker's use of feminist writings is nonideological and very helpful in revealing what is distinctive about Mill's account of the household and the economy. It should also enhance the appeal of *Educating Liberty*. If not quite *Mill for the Millions*, the book is considerably more than just *Mill for the Millions*. It is Mill for feminists, social scientists and economists, democratic theorists, students of religion, and political philosophers, as well.

Barker's second chapter deals with Mill's political economy under the title "Industrial Aristocracy." He rejects the characterization of Mill as a laissez-faire economist, explaining that Mill's "commitment to intellectual and moral development" makes him "a social and political thinker first and a political economist second" (50). Critics of supposed inconsistencies in Mill's economic theory therefore miss the point. In Barker's words, "Mill's central preoccupation is the education of working men and women and the reformation of the characters and habits of the owners, managers and privileged classes who rely on unearned wealth" (51). The economic form he considered best suited to accomplish these educational tasks was small-scale cooperation. Although such associations would not necessarily make workers "more able to earn and spend," Barker thinks Mill's central concern was to allow workers "to improve their *moral* situation as agents capable of self-mastery," of achieving "mental independence," and of developing their moral and practical reason (71, 81, 83).

In a chapter on "expertocracy," Barker examines Mill's account of "the effects on liberal society of an ongoing revolution in social science" (82). In particular, he focuses on Comte's positivist sociology and his project of using it "to directly control moral and intellectual education" (84).

Barker views Comte, like Mill, as primarily an educator, "albeit with a rigorous and illiberal theory of how best to educate a scientific society." Barker contrasts Comte's approach with Mill's view that "scientific inquiry requires disorganized, experimental liberty" and he emphasizes Mill's prescience in seeing beyond the problems of democracy Tocqueville uncovered to the next great problem of "expertise suborning equality," a new elite threat

to democracy (86). In Barker's view, "Mill's criticisms of Comtian social control have not been sufficiently taken up by the scholarly tradition as a key contribution to the theory of educated liberalism" (108).

In the chapter "Mass and Elite Politics," Barker explains that "in Mill's neo-Aristotelian conception of the meaning of the political sphere, the political is the primary sphere of engagement, and politics offers 'the first step out of the narrow bounds of individual and family selfishness, the first opening in the contracted round of daily occupations'" (117). Mill's father and Bentham, however, accepted with complacency what they thought the entire classical and English-speaking liberal tradition taught—that people act solely or chiefly from self-interest. Although it is common to attribute Mill's divergence from this position to the influence of Tocqueville, Barker thinks that a more fundamental influence was Macaulay's famous review of James Mill's *Essay on Government*, which Mill had read ten years earlier. Macaulay argued that the desires prompting political participation are not limited to those for spoliation and oppression, but include, as well, "desires informed by concepts such as service and excellence, and shaped by feelings of sympathy and righteous indignation" (120). Barker quotes the *Autobiography* to show the lesson Mill drew: "my father's premises were really too narrow, and included but a small number of the general truths, on which, in politics, the important consequences depend" (120).

Because representatives of the majority might, nevertheless, be too self-interested in a narrow sense or too untutored to regard the wider or more permanent interests of the whole, Mill sought out ways of ensuring what Barker terms "the inclusion of higher grades of intellect in democratic government" (127). He found them in Hare's transferable vote, in plural voting, in nonsecret voting, in the prohibition of pledges, in commissions of experts to draft legislation, in indirect elections of presidents, and in various legislative arrangements, such as "the devolution of some responsibility to the local level, which is important in maintaining a participatory, engaged electorate" (128).

Barker's chapter on Mill's "democratic religion" presents his religion of humanity as the crowning element in his attempt to educate liberty. Thus, the *Three Essays on Religion* were Mill's response to liberal individualism and atomism: "his answer is to teach the equal but meritocratic social duties of Utilitarianism as the content of a civic religion, combined with *On Liberty's* doctrine of individualization in how views and opinions are held, and not to place religious belief in an uncriticizable and irrelevant private sphere" (162). Barker explains the elevating role of religion in this way: "Without religion,

Mill thinks, a market democracy cannot sustain the image and meaning of citizenship that is required to avoid mobocracy and shopocracy, that is, regimes that are driven by mere interests (selfishness)” (165).

There is much interesting detail in Barker’s account of Mill’s religious views. He surveys various critics, distinguishes Mill’s civic religion from Comte’s, weighs Mill’s criticisms of Christianity, assesses Mill’s idea of a finite God, and considers Mill’s views of toleration, as well as many related matters. He concludes the account by relating it to his general theory of Mill’s work: “I have argued that the best way of conceiving of educative power is as an internal balancing between vocally and passionately defended Utilitarianism and whatever existing customs and commitments one has” (192). He contends Mill’s religion of humanity would be liberal since taught and practiced “through images, by exhortation, and by example,” rather than by compulsion. The details of the account are much stronger than these concluding remarks.

In his final chapter, “Conclusion and Applications,” Barker examines theory and practice in Mill’s work and Mill’s incomplete account of the proper size of government. He tells us that Mill “claims (as libertarians do not) that more and less moral lives cannot be led without guidance, or what above he called ‘severe compression and repression,’ even if he thinks that the state is not the appropriate agent of constraint” (199). This may be generally true, but the use of the “severe compression and repression” phrase is misleading. The phrase is taken from a diary entry in which Mill criticizes Goethe and the Greeks for too symmetrical an ideal of life. Mill says of the Greeks that “the ideal of their philosophers, so far from being an ideal of equal and harmonious development, was generally one of severe compression and repression of the larger portion of human nature” (CW, 27:651–52). Rather than saying, as Barker suggests, that moral lives cannot be lived without “severe compression and repression,” Mill is more nearly saying that they cannot be lived with them, because they would suppress the “larger portion of human nature.”

Even if here, at least, Barker gets the balance in Mill between liberty and education slightly wrong, that does not affect the great value of *Educating Liberty*. It is an enlightening and thoughtful contribution to our understanding of Mill, and this review can only hint at the surprising richness of its content. Because of its insight, broad scope, and attention to often-neglected works, *Educating Liberty* is a worthy tool for widening our knowledge of Mill’s thought and its bearing on issues of democratic governance.

W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz, *Tractatus Politico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge, 2017, 172 pp., \$70 (cloth).

WENDELL O'BRIEN
MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY
w.obrien@moreheadstate.edu

In his *Tractatus*, W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz presents a vision of a happy society, the good state, the principles of good governance, the essence of politics, and humanity's high task. His main objective is "to demonstrate the necessity of, and provide a guide for, the redirection of humanity" (19).

Here are some highlights of the vision.

A happy society has seven basic characteristics: (1) there is cooperation among its citizens; (2) everyone is happy, but not at the expense of others; (3) citizens are virtuous, and leaders are wise; (4) there is a system of education in virtue and knowledge to which everyone has equal access; (5) there are good laws; (6) people have reliable political knowledge via an unbiased media; and (7) a continuity of generations exists, fostered by a common identity made possible by ancestral memory, a common language, and common traditions, customs, religions, and values.

"The state is a territorial political organization based on a society" (41). The *good* state's main purpose is "the cooperation, liberty, prosperity, and security of its citizens" (41), but its purposes include contribution to the common good of all humanity. In the good state, one finds division of labor, little bureaucracy, no poverty, and no excessively wealthy individuals. It is characterized by justice and freedom, including freedom of speech, limited only by what society considers vulgar and offensive. Citizens of the good state are patriotic and engage in public affairs. Among them there is *solidarity*,

cooperation aimed at achieving the same goals. When only some people are active while others remain passive, there is no solidarity. The culture of a good state is based on the native culture, the one that founded the state. This culture has a privileged and dominant position, but it is tolerant of other cultures. In a good state's society, there is a variety of social layers or classes. Classes, however, are not rigid, and membership in them is not hereditary. There is equal access to education, employment, public life, and such. People can compete for a better place in society and advance from a lower to a higher social class. At the top of the hierarchy sits an educated moral and intellectual elite. The good state upholds morality. It upholds religion as well, ensuring tolerance among different religions. It honors and maintains tradition, without *excessive* attachment to it, which would stifle creativity and bring cultural stagnation. The oldest and most universal element of tradition is the family. The proper family is composed of a man (the husband and father), a woman (the wife and mother), and their children—the purpose of their marriage—together with those to whom they are bound by kinship. The good state meddles as little as possible in the affairs of the family.

The state necessarily has authorities (the government, police, military, courts) to enable decision making and to use coercion as a means of control essential for cooperation. The three basic functions of the government are to balance the interests of groups within the state, to maintain law and order, and to defend the state against aggression. Government of a state concerns both internal affairs and relations with other states. Internally, the purpose of government is the good of its citizens. Externally, its purpose is to help build a strong international community. Those who govern should have an understanding of their time as well as an ability to predict and anticipate what is coming. One kind of correct political regime is *proper democracy*. Democracy is all about *freedom*, the autonomy of individuals, families, ethnic groups, religious groups, and others to shape their own lives. Proper democracy is not ensured by free elections and a multiplicity of political parties. It is ennobled democracy, “sophocracy,” in which wise and noble people have the top positions in state and society. There is some kind of *law* permitting only individuals who are noble, wise, moral, comprehensively educated, skilled in many things, considerably experienced in life, and appreciative of tradition to occupy political office.

The essence of politics, the art of governing, is the organization of society for cooperation and a good life. It is *not* the struggle to gain and maintain power.

We were not born on earth to seek only wealth and power, nor to consume and fight. “The purpose of the evolution of life is its fullness and perfection. Human evolution is a journey to ever greater freedom and to moral and intellectual perfection” (23). Our destiny is to perfect ourselves and carry on evolution.

Our present, postmodern age is one of hatred, turbulence, dissonance, revolutionary changes, severe conflicts, political instability, uncontrolled violence, irrationality, forgetfulness of who we really are, weakening of religion, erosion of morals, unbounded commercial zeal, search for profit everywhere, and threats to true freedom, the main ones being “the abuse of power and monopoly on the media, along with the lobbies of militarism, religious fanaticism, prostitution, perverted sex, and excessive wealth” (64). Current threats to the family are unprecedented. More and more the family is being subjected to state authority. The family is being redefined as a “partnership,” and there is a rise in “multisexuality.” These developments, if unchecked, will eventually lead to the collapse of the very institution of the family and to the self-destruction of our whole society. The West, ignoring or forgetting its tradition and religion, has allowed individuals the unrestricted pursuit of what they desire. Individuals not constrained by tradition and religion have returned to their primitive animality, driven by nothing but desire and impulse. “The current disharmony in the world is a serious threat to the continued existence of all humankind” (99). We need a way out.

The redirection of humanity is possible. Things constantly change, and they can change for the better. “A reversal occurs at deep night, when spirituality is in decline and when love seems to be almost completely overcome by strife (Empedocles)” (131). A new age is beginning, one that replaces modernity and postmodernity. It is the epoch of *evolutionity*, inspired by an organic and holistic worldview and emerging from new developments in science and from the idea of human evolution—the idea that human beings, though they cannot change their *nature*, can change their *character* and the kind of society they live in. What we will be like in the future depends on what we ourselves develop consciously and purposefully. To usher in the age of evolutionity, we must engage in self-reflection about who we are, what our goal is, what we want to pass on to future generations, and what our ultimate destiny is. To change things for the better, we need to start from the existing tradition and then add new elements to it. The redirection of humanity must involve a change in society and politics from competition to cooperation, the encouragement of moral and intellectual virtues, provision of the foundations of

happy societies, and the promotion of peace among states. “We need to go... away from domination, centralism, and uniformity to freedom, autonomy, and diversity” (17). “The repair of states and civilizations can be undertaken through the moral improvement of individuals and societies” (48). The first step is moral improvement based on the natural law of doing no harm to others. Religions play a positive role. They shape character, influence morals, build communities, create solidarity among their members, and focus minds on higher things than we find in the everyday world. Evolutionity does not undermine religions but tries to uncover the *spirituality* in them. In spirituality, the essence of religions, humanity can find a common ground. World peace should begin as peace among religions. Evolutionity brings with it a revitalization of our classical heritage and a return to classical rationality. The core of the classical-Christian civilization is the Classical Tradition. It bears affinities to the teachings of the greatest thinkers in China, India, and the Muslim world. “The Classical Tradition has transcended its classical-Christian origins and is the common heritage of all humanity” (39). We must develop *global* solidarity and fellow feeling, recognizing that all human beings share the same thing, life itself, and all have the same basic needs. Human beings and the whole world will be reborn through love, the essence of excellence.

Readers will have questions and concerns. Here are three of them. First, egalitarian ideals are so deeply ingrained in much of the West that many readers will think the *Tractatus* places too little emphasis on equality. Especially troubling may be the advocacy of a hierarchical society, one with a system of “higher” and “lower” classes, even if it is based on virtue and merit rather than heredity. Second, some readers may have reservations about a return to any type of traditional society. Modern ideals of inclusion—of women, non-Christians, nonwhites, non-Westerners, and, for some, even animals—are precious to many of us. Is there a traditional society that held those ideals? Third, readers may have worries about whether the state envisioned in the *Tractatus* provides a place, one no less privileged than any other, for certain kinds of individuals who ought to have it. Should there not be, not only tolerance, but full equality for, among others, the loner, the atheist, the member of the LGBTQ community, the religious fundamentalist, the vulgar person, the nonpatriot—even the amoralist and the immoralist, as long as they do not use violence and prevent others from the legitimate pursuit of their own ends?

The *Tractatus*, however, is full of many more sound ideas than questionable ones. Few readers will quibble with its emphasis on peace, love, freedom,

justice, nonviolence, moral improvement, religious tolerance, the increase of cooperation among people, and the elimination of exploitation, poverty, discrimination, terror, and enmity. If the book were widely read by people in positions of power, and if they embraced and followed its best teachings, we might find ourselves living in a better world and see an improvement in humanity itself. The problem is that some of our top leaders do not read books.

Jacob Howland, *Glaucon's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's "Republic."* Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2018, 300 pp., \$29.95 (paper).

ALEXANDER ORWIN

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

niwrol@gmail.com

In the final paragraph of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates declares that "a tale was saved and not lost." He adds, in the optative mood, that "it could save us too, if we were persuaded by it." Since neither Glaucon nor any of the other characters are allowed to respond, this ending is more ambiguous than it initially seems. Was Glaucon actually persuaded and saved? Jacob Howland's provocative new book *Glaucon's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's "Republic,"* takes up this perplexing question.

Howland's bold thesis centers around the novel historical claim, first advanced by the historian Mark Munn, that Glaucon died fighting alongside Critias, the notorious leader of the tyrannical Thirty who appears in several other Platonic dialogues. The historical evidence offered by Howland, as he himself acknowledges, is circumstantial at best (8). Neither Glaucon's puzzling absence from the *Apology*, nor his undoubted courage and ambition, nor the setting of the *Republic* at the place of the alleged battle, suffices to locate Glaucon anywhere near the scene of the crime in 403. One might expect that the demise of so famous a Platonic character under such sensational circumstances would have left some compelling historical trace, even in the fragmentary classical sources. Howland accounts for the "absence in the *Republic* [and presumably elsewhere] of direct evidence of Glaucon's involvement with the Thirty" by claiming that the Athenians were forced to swear an oath to forget about it, represented in the *Republic* by the river Lethe, whose name means "forgetful," at the end of the dialogue (244). Yet do

philosophers feel obliged to honor oaths of this sort, decades after the fact? Like so much in Howland's book, this remains an intriguing conjecture. Is there enough evidence attesting to Glaucon's untimely, dishonorable death to justify a reinterpretation of the entire *Republic* on its account? Or is a reinterpretation of the *Republic* and certain other dialogues necessary, in order to sustain a historical hypothesis for which the external evidence is so patchy? If this is the case, we need to examine Howland's novel exegesis of the *Republic*, as the strongest witness to his historical claim.

How thoroughly was Glaucon convinced by Socrates to abandon politics and turn to philosophy? Glaucon is usually viewed as a likable and willing interlocutor, albeit prone to fits of martial and erotic fervor. He is certainly not a philosopher of the rank of his brother Plato, but between that and seeking to become tyrant there may be other, milder human possibilities. In order to sustain his thesis, Howland needs to paint an unusually dark picture of Glaucon. A centerpiece of this effort is his constant praise of the True City, against which Glaucon so memorably rebels (56–62, 73, 78, 80, 133, 179, 191, 195, 197, 221, 234; see *Rep.* 372e6). Howland's glowing account of this city rests on his gloss on the Greek words *ousia*, which he takes to mean essence as well as wealth, and *sunousia*, which he takes to comprise all forms of living together, including poetry, music, and, if not philosophy, soundness of mind. By establishing that the True City contains the necessary ingredients for human flourishing, Howland is able to rebuke Glaucon's rejection of its goodness as a sign of his manly political excess, corrupted by the "inflated perspective" of Athenian custom (58–60; *Rep.* 372b8). While Howland's interpretation of the Greek words is semantically correct, it does not fit the description of what Glaucon calls the City of Sows (372d4), whose list of professions omits soldiers, poets, and philosophers, and whose meals consist mainly of bread and herbs (*Rep.* 369–73). It is hard to fault Glaucon for his attachment to the finer things in life, a quintessentially human passion which keeps the dialogue in motion. Yet Howland's observations contain more than a kernel of truth: Glaucon's visceral reaction against this frugal, peaceful city reveals a proud, erotic nature that might be difficult to moderate and control.

Howland continues to cast his critical eye on Glaucon by portraying the "blatant...excesses" of Book 5 concerning the material and sexual awards for the best warriors as primarily a test for him. Corrupted by a bad musical upbringing and the vices that follow from it (401b–402a), Glaucon fails this test, urging the establishment of the city despite its flagrant injustices (73–76). Howland is right to assert that this aspect of life in the city tends to

undermine, if not destroy, the rigorous education in self-restraint and stern laws regulating property and sex that appeared to characterize the city up to this point. But does Glaucon's attraction to prizes for valor make him badly educated and uncontrollably ambitious? Does Socrates mean to indicate the incurable nature of Glaucon in particular, or make the more general point that spirited human beings of his type cannot flourish in a society whose virtuous equality is so severe that even courage and accomplishment cannot be suitably honored and rewarded? Howland also ignores the possibility that the promise of sexual rewards to the best warriors might serve as a subterfuge for advancing the city's breeding program.

Lurking everywhere in Howland's reading of the *Republic* is the ominous shadow of Critias. Glaucon's notorious cousin is not so much as mentioned in the dialogue, but Socrates's jealous rivalry with him allegedly colors his entire approach (6, 8, 209–11). Unfortunately, only fragments of Critias's own writings survive. Howland adduces a passage from a lost play attributed to him, spoken by the accursed Sisyphus in a context than can never be recovered (87–88). Howland may more confidently rely on the Platonic dialogues in which Critias appears: the *Critias* and *Timaeus*, which are explicitly linked to the *Republic*, as well as the *Charmides*. Howland convincingly brings out Critias's preoccupation with technology, revealed in his portrayal of both Athens and Atlantis (103, 106). But there are also aspects of Critias's speech that impose limits on human art. The power and unity of Atlantis begin to wane as soon as its original "divine portion" dissipates: rather than seeking a human solution to this problem, Critias turns to Zeus, at which point his speech breaks off (*Critias* 121b–c). Critias also displays a keen interest in natural disasters, which destroyed Atlantis and have whittled away at Athens: in the face of such cosmic events, human art appears powerless (*Timaeus* 22c–d, 25c–d; *Critias* 111b). Howland's intricate interpretations of these passages do not adequately explain Critias's concern with nature's destructive power (106, 197–200). A comparison of Critias's Atlantis with its most obvious modern analogue, the *New Atlantis* of Francis Bacon, might illuminate some of the difficulties that Howland's focus on the link between Critias and technology so effectively raises.

Howland adds contemporary weight to his novel interpretation by borrowing the modern term "ideology" along with the various -isms that sprout from it (121, 129, 187). Beginning with a chapter titled "Channeling Critias," Howland develops the notion that Critias's ideas seep namelessly into the *Republic*, through the early speeches of Thrasymachus and Glaucon (13, 126).

“An intellectual bully, Thrasymachus would have been at home among the fist-pounding radical elites of the twentieth century, including theoreticians of communism and fascism” (128). Yet might there be a crucial difference between Thrasymachus’s artless defense of what any particular government does, and the sweeping theories of ideological totalitarianism? At the very least, Thrasymachus would have rejected the efforts of these ideologues to realize genuine justice on earth as destructive and foolish. We may wonder whether Hitler, Stalin, or any of their minions could have been so easily tamed by Socrates. Howland’s efforts to present the story of the Ring of Gyges as a sign of Glaucon’s incurable attraction to the injustice of Critias (141–47) overlook Glaucon’s stated purpose of forcing Socrates to defend justice more convincingly than he has so far against Thrasymachus’s arguments (357a–b).

Howland’s interpretation culminates in the claim that the Callipolis which Socrates constructs in the *Republic* represents a frightful ideological tyranny. The “fate of philosophy in Callipolis” is linked to the story of Arion, as recounted by Herodotus. Arion’s plunge into the sea in his beautiful clothes constitutes an image of the soiling of philosophy by the city, while Periander, for whom he works, embodies the tyrant (Howland 158–65, 213; cf. *Rep.* 336a). This story is invoked, according to Howland, by Socrates’s reference (at 453d) to a rescue by a dolphin, which cites no human being by name. Can we be sure that Socrates means to invoke Herodotus’s version of the story? Howland’s extensive use of it depends on a positive answer to this question.

Howland provides further evidence for the importance of Critias in carefully observing Socrates’s switch from *gnōsis* to *epistēmē* at 477b. He reads this as an attempt to appeal to Glaucon’s prejudice in favor of Critias’s view: “Like Critias, Glaucon embraces a phantasm of the philosopher as a scientific knower” (187, 205). Yet why should we regard *epistēmē*, which often refers to genuine knowledge, as a phantasm? Howland puts great weight on Socrates’s acknowledgment that he has gotten carried away in his angry defense of philosophy (213, 536c). He argues that this confession is not, as some might assume, gently ironic, but rather indicative of a serious blunder on Socrates’s part, provoked by a desire for “poetic revenge” against the never-mentioned Critias. “In constructing Callipolis, Socrates has come to resemble the very men he despises—mean, small-souled men who pollute Philosophia with their indecent association” (213–14). Missing from Howland’s account, however, is Socrates’s placement of this city in heaven at the end of Book 9. Glaucon’s agreement on the impossibly remote location of the city would

seem to indicate that he too has abandoned any effort to realize the tarnished city on earth.

In this fresh, audacious new book on the most famous Platonic dialogue, Howland has delivered a virtuoso performance. Not content to publish only one book on the *Republic*, titled the *Odyssey of Philosophy*, he has now revised his views. A knowledgeable, careful, and intense reader of Plato, Howland picks up on a wide range of subtleties and details. Informed by a lifetime of studying Greek thought, his command of both relatively obscure Greek sources, such as Xenophon's *Hellenica*, as well as the work of renowned poets such as Homer and Aeschylus, is evident throughout. The *Republic* is chock full of references to Greek myth, and hardly a single one seems to escape Howland. Even those who resist the book's central thesis will benefit greatly from its erudition in these regards. Yet Howland's thesis remains highly conjectural. Its greatest value, therefore, is to point to the ambiguity of the *Republic* itself. In cautioning against the hasty assumption that Glaucon, having been cured of political ambition by Socrates, lived out the rest of his life uneventfully, Howland raises a number of important questions. First, to what extent can or should the Platonic dialogues be situated firmly in history, so that their meaning is determined partly by the future fate of their characters? Second, how powerful is Socratic argument as an antidote against political ambition? Since it failed to temper the behavior of Alcibiades and Meno, we should not automatically suppose that it succeeded in reforming Glaucon. Third, is Socrates himself beyond such passions as envy and competitiveness, or is he in fact dominated by them? In this respect, Howland revives an argument against Socrates that was developed by Nietzsche over a century ago.

Geoffrey M. Vaughn, ed., *Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018, 360 pp., \$75.00 (hardback).

JOSHUA PARENS

UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

parens@udallas.edu

Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers does a fine job of setting out what Catholics have learned from Leo Strauss. It gives a valuable account of Strauss's intellectual affinities and disagreements with major Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century, including Heinrich Rommen, Yves Simon, Jacques Maritain, Charles McCoy, Benedict XVI, Ernest Fortin, and Alexandre Passerin d'Entrèves—including a fascinating history of Fr. Fortin's attempted engagement as a student of Strauss with a subsequent generation of the new natural law theorists: Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Russell Hittinger. It even includes some background on the change from Fr. McCoy's chapters on Augustine and Aquinas to those of Fr. Fortin in later editions of the Strauss-Cropsey *History of Political Philosophy*. There are many intelligent and engaging discussions of Strauss's thought and Catholic responses to it.

Many of the authors contained in these pages side with Strauss against "modernity," without engaging in a serious inquiry into the connection between Christianity and modernity in Strauss's thought. Only Ralph Hancock attends carefully to Strauss's views on the connection between Christianity and modernity (cf. Holloway's passing remark at 203)—and he does not attempt to side with Strauss against modernity so much as attempt to understand the connection Strauss sees, which makes his chapter one of the best in the book.

Having established their agreement with Strauss in his criticism of modernity, the authors, especially in the first half to two-thirds of the book,

proceed with a foray into Strauss's errors regarding Christianity. In effect, these are moments of defense of Christianity. Often this takes the form of a denial of Strauss's putative claim that a synthesis of reason and revelation, of Athens and Jerusalem, is impossible. One wonders whether something crucial is not being missed, namely, what Strauss means by questioning such syntheses (or "harmonizations," as he alternately puts it).¹ Does he mean that "Rome" has effected no combination of reason and revelation—such as reason in the service of faith or faith clearly set atop reason? Or does he mean that the tension between these two is so great that one must achieve a "position" of superiority in the end, despite appearances to the contrary? A review of the history of Christian theology may indicate that there have been battles within Christianity between reason and revelation—for example, in the dispute between the Thomistic tradition and the Scotist or at least Ockhamist tradition. Yet such disputes are never considered in this volume when Strauss is criticized for questioning the possibility of an enduring synthesis or harmonization.

Another area of disagreement with Strauss is over natural law. The key exception to this disagreement is the fine chapter by the editor of the collection, Geoffrey M. Vaughn, "Wisdom and Folly: Reconsidering Leo Strauss on Natural Law." Vaughn articulates quite well what are Strauss's criticisms of the natural law. Above all, it loses sight of the primacy of the best regime and even of regime as such—in the name, ironically, of law.²

Others in the volume who take issue with Strauss's critique of natural law consistently fail to consider the context of his critiques, namely, not just Thomas vis-à-vis Aristotle but also and perhaps especially Thomas vis-à-vis Machiavelli (NRH 156–64). This inattention is closely related to the already mentioned tendency to claim that we, Catholics, side with Strauss against modernity. It is here, in the rise of Machiavelli as a response or reaction to Thomas, that Strauss comes closest to indicating how Christianity may have led to modernity. No matter how much contemporary proponents of natural law may insist on the flexibility of the natural law and its embrace of prudence, they fail at their own peril to attend to Machiavelli's reasons for rejecting the natural law. His reasons are not wholly unrelated to the differences between

¹ Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return?," in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 104.

² Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 144. Hereafter "NRH."

classic natural right proper and Thomistic natural law. Strauss cannot side with Catholicism and natural law against modernity as profoundly as many of these authors insinuate because he gives subtle and not so subtle indications that he saw the Machiavellian turn toward the extreme situation, or the state of nature as the modern ground of contract theory, as a reaction to the natural law's attempts to overextend the claims of law beyond "what is for the most part" to a categorical judgment, as V. Bradley Lewis comes close to underlining (see 58–59 with 205).

Although Maimonides (28) and Alfarabi (282) are both touched on lightly (and in the latter case dismissively, apparently owing to the influence of Tanguay's particular reading of Alfarabi in the thought of Strauss), little or no effort is devoted to understanding what Strauss saw in them, as a way of trying to understand why he questions the Christian synthesis. More surprisingly, given the amount of attention devoted to the natural law, little attention is paid to *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, despite Fr. Fortin's observations about that work's importance in his own intellectual formation (124–25). Although I recollect some reference to the "law of reason" in this volume, amid all of these defenses of the natural law, no mind is paid to Strauss's most extended discussion of natural law and its parallels in the Jewish and Muslim traditions. In the "Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*" in *Persecution*, Strauss draws attention to the Jewish equivalent of the natural law tradition, namely, the "rational law" tradition of Saadya Gaon and *Kuzari* author Yehuda Halevi—not, *pace* David Novak, Maimonides—which Saadya and Halevi inherited from the Mu'tazilite theological tradition in Islam.

Regarding the importance and status of the theoretical or perhaps the metaphysical in Strauss's thought, the pieces by De Ligio and Stoner are quite profound and engaging. What exactly Stoner means by a nondogmatic metaphysics (284), however, is not as clear as it might be. Often the place of Plato in Strauss's thought is touched on, and the tendency among Catholic interpreters, for example McCoy, to read Plato as an ill-formed Aristotle is beautifully captured by V. Bradley Lewis, but too little effort is devoted in this volume to examining the link between Plato and the medieval Jewish and Islamic traditions, on one hand, and Aristotle and the medieval Christian tradition, on the other. Are these differences merely a matter of taste? Or do they reveal something essential about why Strauss upholds the philosophic way of life even in the face of the promise of Christianity? Frequently our authors look down on what they take to be the impoverished fideistic tendencies of Islam and Judaism (e.g., 39). Yet Strauss may prefer philosophy and

law to philosophy and faith because adherence to the law remembers politics, while faith can readily leave politics and thus much of life behind. It is the total character of the Law that interests Strauss vis-à-vis philosophy as a way of life. Though Christianity can fill an entire life, it cannot be a way of life in the sense that the polis was (99n19 and Hancock's chapter). Obviously, Christianity has found ways to vaunt its universalism over the particularism of both the polis and Judaism. Yet Strauss finds in divine law as a political law in Athens and Jerusalem a commonality that is missing between Athens and Rome. Though Athens and Rome may both seem to concern beliefs or opinions, that concern can sever the individual from political life. And what else was the starting point of Strauss's inquiries than the problem of tyranny, which would seem to be an inherent tendency of any regime in which individuals are severed from the polis? As Ralph Hancock shows so eloquently, Christianity's glorious harmonization of universal and particular transcends the limits of any mere polis. In doing so, it cannot but forget the best regime in favor of the natural law (cf. NRH 144).

Corine Pelluchon, *Nourishment: A Philosophy of the Political Body*. Translated by Justin E. H. Smith and revised by François Cambien and Corine Pelluchon. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 416 pp., \$79.30 (cloth), \$29.95 (paper).

JOHN RAY

XAVIER UNIVERSITY

rayj@xavier.edu

This brief comment on Corine Pelluchon's important new book on the social and political implications of eating needs a disclaimer. *Nourishment* is, to a large degree, an application of the insights of Levinas, and I am no Levinas scholar. As a nonphenomenologist, at first I thought Pelluchon was writing in code. I realized this reaction was unfair, since all books make assumptions about what readers are likely to know. In this case, if you are familiar with Levinas, you will have an easier time.

Nourishment might have been called *Taking Ecology Seriously*, for it proposes "a philosophy of existence that integrates what ecology teaches us about 'living from,' and...deduce[s] from this a political organization connected to the elaboration of a new social pact." Pelluchon argues that ecology as a field of study has not yielded the social and political results it promises. "Ecology has not succeeded in improving our relationship to others, to work, to our bodies, and to ourselves, since it remains external to our lives." Nor has it brought about a transformation of democracy: "it did not lead to revise the deliberative bodies to reinforce the participation of citizens, and to change the manner, the content and the argumentation of political programs." Pelluchon traces the limitations of ecology to the fact that it is cut off from the philosophy of existence. Neither the "philosophers of freedom" nor the "existential analytic developed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*" can correct this

deficiency (enter Levinas). The idea of the book is to “identify structures of existence, or existentials that translate the belonging of human beings to a reality which is both natural and cultural and from which they draw their nourishment.” A key point is thus that “the things from which I draw life are not given as objects or as utensils, even when I make use of them, but rather trace a horizon where utility and production are not primitive. This is why they are called ‘nourishment.’” Love and enjoyment are as much a part of nourishment as utility and labor (3–4).

The focus of the second part of *Nourishment* is constructive. Pelluchon proposes a new social contract in place of the old, morally bankrupt one. The new contract turns out to be grounded in a revision of Rawls’s original position that includes...the interests of animals! “We must also place behind the veil of ignorance our own belonging to the human species and our degree of rationality, which are among the non-deserved and arbitrary possessions that cannot justify that individuals who have them enjoy privileges” (238). This may sound goofy, but as an animal lover, I am persuaded by Pelluchon’s animal-inclusive version, even though it suffers from the same defects as the original original position, only more so. *Nourishment* concludes with a vision of a new cosmopolitanism (“beyond national borders”) that is, à la the requirements of phenomenology, not founded on any particular vision of the good.

Nourishment contains some of the most insightful and sensitive writing I have read on animals, both those we live with as pets and those raised for slaughter whose suffering we block from our consciousness. Pelluchon’s writing on empathy and responsibility for animals has an affecting depth much greater than the legalistic arguments generated by the “animal rights” literature, which has done little to protect animals from the vicious desires of human beings. Here is a passage:

When we consider the being of animals and the possibility of establishing communication with them, we place ourselves at the level of feeling, at which we encounter them as members of a moral community that merits our consideration. Not respecting their needs and their desire to live, preventing them from expressing the joy to exist, which is, as we have seen, originary, and which animals communicate as soon as they are in an appropriate environment, is to make the common world in which we encounter them into an alien world, where it is unlikely that we experience happiness. For animals are not other existences alongside our own: their existence is mingled with ours, whether we have forged bonds of affection with them, as for our pets, or whether we consider the attachment of farmers, in extensive farming, for the cows that they know and that they have seen being

born....[In factory farming] the living conditions of these animals do not permit them to communicate in any other way than in reacting by cries or by panicked movements....The cage, the darkness, the iron bars, and the overpopulation make up their surrounding world.... [Factory farmers] invent all sorts of strategies in order to not suffer (excessively) from the suffering of animals, but the majority of them remain haunted by traumatizing images as the employees of industrial slaughterhouses confess, which give them nightmares in which living animals are pursuing them. We are not able to mistreat sensitive beings without being profoundly harmed by what we do to them. (115–16)

The sweeping breadth of *Nourishment*, from its description of the “existentials” of the human condition to its proclamation of a new cosmopolitanism, does not for the most part allow room for detailed readings of philosophical texts or for detailed quantitative analyses; unfortunately, both deficiencies undermine to some extent the persuasiveness of the book as a whole. An example of the first is found in Pelluchon’s discussion of Locke as she examines insights from the major social contract theorists. As is well known, there has been much discussion of whether Locke was a concealed Hobbesian. Pelluchon writes as if it is obvious that Locke’s natural law prohibitions are real and should constrain the freedom of the state, a convenient reading of the text that supports her political outlook. She claims that, for Locke, “natural law, which requires us not to endanger the survival of the species, contains human greed within limits beyond which development is ecologically unsustainable and socially unfair.... The civil government must also respect and enforce a natural law that is a pre-political norm showing how ethics can limit politics.... Endangering the survival of the species makes the action illegitimate whether it be individual or collective” (217–18). To be persuasive, major conclusions require that textual evidence be presented.

Neither is there enough detail provided for conclusions drawn from quantitative data. Pelluchon notes “that one person out of eight is undernourished” owing to poverty (not shortages), “868 million people are suffering from hunger,” hunger and malnutrition “kill one child under ten years of age every five seconds.” These facts for Pelluchon “imply the denunciation of the international economic system and the rules of the global market” (156–57). Pelluchon does not see that the global market is amazing for *reducing* hunger (the rapid rise of a prosperous China should caution against the denunciation of global markets).

Nourishment is in the first place a lengthy philosophical essay on the implications of the corporeality of human and animal existence and in the second place an argument for radically evolutionary change in our political outlook. Pelluchon takes what she needs from the writings of great thinkers to advance an ordered vision, grounded in the point of view of Levinas, of what human life could and should be: everyone should live a life of joyful, constructive, responsible interactions with others (always on a full stomach). No hunger, no war. No tasteless nastiness, either. What is life without good taste? Pelluchon builds, step by step, a promising picture about how life could be better than it is if we just thought and felt differently about it. She taps into our desire for a better way of life. She is a scholar of superior intelligence and learning; she is also kind, open, and sensitive. She establishes a “we” with her readers, a community of concern for future generations, even while eschewing the possibility or even desirability of a shared moral horizon. Her caring includes the hungry, the poor, the sad and spiritually downtrodden, the mentally ill, and those who suffer from governmental injustice, and it includes animals, especially the caged and frightened ones that exist only to be unfairly killed and eaten by human beings. In our hearts we know that humanity can do better, that we should seek out a political vision that does more for people (and animals) than ‘human rights plus the welfare state’ can achieve. But what should it be?

To answer that question, *Nourishment* offers a new view of human existence with the intention of fostering a more just and more satisfying way of life for the people—and animals—of earth. The book conveys in up-to-date philosophical terms the profound dissatisfaction of progressive intellectuals with what the West has become, but also offers a revolutionary (or, more accurately, radically evolutionary) path to the future designed to end the unethical behavior of the developed democracies toward impoverished peoples, toward animals, toward their own vulnerable persons and groups, toward future generations, and toward the earth itself.

Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*. With a new preface and afterword. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019, xiii + 114 pp., \$100 (cloth), \$25 (paper).

DAVID LEWIS SCHAEFER

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

DSchaefer@holycross.edu

In this brief volume, based on lectures originally presented in 1992 and 1993, themselves incorporating previously published essays, but here amplified with a new preface and afterword, liberal political theorist and social critic Michael Walzer aims “to defend a certain kind of left politics, focused on equality at home and a liberal and constrained version of self-determination abroad” (ix). The original text grew out of Walzer’s longer, highly regarded treatises on domestic and international political morality, respectively, *Spheres of Justice* and *Just and Unjust Wars*. As explained in his original introduction, Walzer aimed to apply the argument of the earlier books in the “new political world” marked by “the collapse of the totalitarian [i.e., Communist] project” and the rise of “a pervasive, at least ostensible, commitment to democratic government and an equally pervasive, more actual commitment to cultural autonomy and national independence.” Pointing to the tension between the “near-universal ideology” of democracy and the “intense pursuit of the ‘politics of difference,’” Walzer wishes to endorse the latter while defending “a certain sort of [democratic or protodemocratic] universalism,” one that most importantly “prohibits the brutal repression of both minority and majority groups” (xi–xii). His use of the terms “thick” and “thin” refers to the distinction between discussing “our own history and culture” (thick) and conversing with foreign peoples, having different cultures, about the “thin and universalist morality” we (at least potentially) all share (xi–xiii).

Walzer's opening chapter, elaborating a theme from *Spheres of Justice*, describes the concept of "distributive justice" as a "maximalist" morality, in that it presupposes a broader vision of the *good* life that varies among societies.¹ For instance, Walzer perceptively observes, whereas in medieval Europe the care of souls was a "socialized" affair, in that the church, financed with public funds, was "organized to make repentance and salvation universally available," while the care of bodies, "commonly taken to be less real or less important" (since the extension of earthly life mattered infinitely less than the achievement of eternal life), "was left in private hands," so that those of high rank were more likely to receive it, our contemporary view of what is just is the opposite. That is, whereas in liberal societies, religion is normally a private affair, not receiving any direct governmental support or enforcement, practically nobody would deny that government has a duty to ensure that all citizens receive some basic level of medical care, to whatever extent resources permit. And yet, Walzer observes, standing outside the medieval perspective as we do, we are not in a position to judge its "distributive" policies in this regard to have been unjust (28–31). But his position is not simply relativistic: any system of "distributions," to be legitimate, must meet certain "minimalist" or universalistic criteria: for instance, murder (however defined) is always to be condemned, and the "thick" criteria of justice that regulate a particular society must more generally reflect a shared understanding among those governed by it that is not the result of radical (physical) coercion (26–27).

Further developing the thesis of *Spheres of Justice*, Walzer then enunciates a theory of "complex equality," according to which no one group of claimants "dominates the different distributive processes," but "different goods" are rather "distributed for different reasons among different groups of people." Walzer forthrightly rejects the notion of using the criterion of "simple" equality to govern "the full range of distributions," noting the contradictoriness of efforts "to enforce equality across the board," since its "enforcement would require a radical concentration, and therefore a radically unequal distribution of political power." More generally, however, "the theory of complex equality" exhibits "what is wrong with plutocracy, theocracy, meritocracy, gerontocracy, technocracy, and every other effort to make one good, and the qualities associated with its possession," dominant over all others. Walzer rejects the "totalizing" views of both those on the left who would subordinate all aspects of life to political direction, and those on the

¹ I note that this entails that contrary to John Rawls, the definition of the just is posterior, not prior, to the good.

(economically libertarian) right whose “market imperialism” reduces society to an “exchange system,” in which individuals’ efforts to maximize their utility should be unconstrained by “familial or communal, political or religious interference.” Both such outlooks embody “radically minimalist accounts of the human person,” rather than allow for the “pluralism of social goods and distributive principles and processes” that a fully human life requires (32–39).

While acknowledging the plausibility of much of Walzer’s argument in this chapter, the reviewer poses two questions about it: (1) Is there anyone on the economic “right” who holds that individuals aiming at economic gain should be discouraged from *taking into account* familial, communal, religious, or political considerations as well?² (2) Granted that living a full human life involves the pursuit and enjoyment of a plurality of goods, is it true that, as Walzer maintains, there is *no* “overall hierarchy” to be discerned among the goods we may choose to pursue (32)? (This is not an argument for authoritarian direction of people’s lives, but rather concerns the guidance we offer, especially to young people, about the relative value of different pursuits or goals—especially, in our situation, to those tempted by a life devoted to profit maximization [or even worse, today, video-gaming]. Walzer seems to punt on this issue, remarking simply that “when conflicts [among goods] arise, we will argue about priorities” [32].)

In his second chapter, “Maximalism and the Social Critic,” Walzer defends the principle that “maximalist” social criticism depends on “distributive standards [that] are internal to a culture,” rather than being universal and transcultural, against the charge that it “precludes serious or radical social criticism” (41). He observes that historically, effectual criticisms of regnant political and social systems—from feudal aristocracy to the sixteenth-century Catholic Church to European Communism—typically began with charges that the rulers were not living up to their own professed claims of benefiting their subjects and treating them justly, rather than with the espousal of comprehensive new theories of political legitimacy. (For instance, according to Adam Michnik, the program of the earliest Polish and Czech

² Even Gary Becker’s *Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), which Walzer cites as exemplifying “market imperialism” (35), is represented by its author as an explanation of, not a prescription for, human behavior. Although Becker might attempt to explain acts apparently guided by familial, communal, political, or religious concerns, tautologously, as forms of utility maximization, he does not advise *against* such behavior (nor would his positivistic approach allow for such advice). For the classic treatment of the proper use and limits of economics as a tool for assessing public policy, see Steven Rhoads, *The Economist’s View of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

dissidents whose protests ultimately brought down Communist rule “was a communist, even a Leninist, program that could not have been endorsed by their Western sympathizers” [46].) And given the absence, even today, of a “single, correct, maximalist ideology” that almost everyone can be persuaded to accept, the most effective mode of promoting social reform is likely to be that of “groups like Amnesty International,” which restrict themselves to protesting particular abuses rather than aiming “to impose a complete [new] set of moral principles” on the nations that perpetrate them (49).

As a matter of prudence, Walzer’s (Burkean) advice is undoubtedly sound under *most* circumstances. But granted that most reformist political transformations typically *begin* with “internal” or particularist forms of criticism, Walzer seems to downplay the crucial instances in which the assertion of new universalist principles, initially growing out of such concerns, wound up transforming the political outlook, and hence the institutions and way of life, of large numbers of people. (Consider the Protestant Reformation, to which Walzer alludes at 50–51; the liberal political doctrines enunciated most prominently by Locke and Montesquieu; and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s challenge not only to Marxism but to what he viewed as the excessive materialism that that doctrine shared with twentieth-century Western liberalism.)³ Were Walzer to deny the possibility of such transcultural, transhistorical criticism, or its sometime potentiality for inducing radical political change, he would be vulnerable to the charge of historicism or historical relativism, thereby undercutting even the “minimalist” transcultural criticism that he does explicitly uphold.

Walzer is properly critical of exponents of “maximalist morality” like Martin Luther, who were certain that what they espoused “was the one true morality”: Luther’s dogmatic “universalism,” which demanded that all others comply with his interpretation of Christianity, encouraged his “brutal and intolerant” behavior (50–51). Hence Walzer warns against the “heroic postures” of “philosophical and theological critics,” each of whom “hopes to be the last social critic” (because he will have laid out the principles of the

³ On the philosophic revolution that generated the modern liberal republic, see Paul Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). For Solzhenitsyn, see his 1978 Harvard commencement address, “A World Split Apart.” But neither Locke, Montesquieu, Solzhenitsyn, Aristotle, nor any serious political thinker would claim that his teaching would by itself settle “most of the distributive disputes that arise within a particular society and culture” (49), as opposed to allowing these issues to be resolved by the political process. This is because they were philosophers, not proponents of “maximalist ideology” (49)—a distinction that Walzer fails to make.

perfectly just society) (51). By contrast with such totalizing demands, Walzer espouses a form of “political virtue” that is “tempered by...apolitical virtue,” in such forms as “familial love, professional competence,” and the marketplace (56). In other words, while political legitimacy depends on “the consent of the governed,” a principle which, Walzer observes, “is much older than modern democracy” (53), it does not, indeed should not, entail that politics occupies the center, let alone the whole, of everyone’s life.

Unfortunately, following these sensible observations, Walzer illustrates the possibility of a “thick” critique of American political life by proposing to revise “the internal boundaries” of our society, “exposing” and attacking elements of hierarchy that look “like political power” even though they are “outside the recognized political sphere,” such as “the despotism of factory managers and corporate executives, the autocracy of university presidents, the patriarchal absolutism of male ‘heads of households,’ and so on,” all of which need to be “subjected to democratic rules” (57–58). Like others who make such arguments, Walzer disregards the fundamental distinction between political power, literally understood, and other forms of authority: in a free society, nobody is *forced* to work for a particular boss, teach or study at a particular university, or marry a particular person. Leaving aside the obvious need for criticism of (and legislation to prevent) domestic abuse, the attribution of “despotic” authority to corporate or academic executives seems an invitation to unwise and illiberal intrusion into the private sphere—contrary to Walzer’s earlier warning against attempting to impose “equality” on every aspect of life.

Walzer closes this chapter with a prudent account of how a “democratic idealis[t]” should react when he “sees tyrannical governments in other countries...and people marching” against their rulers to demand “not only ‘truth’ and ‘justice’ but also ‘democracy’”—as was the case with the Chinese protestors at Tiananmen Square in 1989. While supporting their cause on “minimalist” grounds, Walzer would have recognized the need for Chinese reformers to work out the specific meaning of democracy for themselves, in light of their country’s distinctive traditions (59–61). (This is not, I think, an approach that even ardent American advocates of “regime change” in Iraq would have disagreed with.)

Walzer’s fourth chapter is titled “Justice and Tribalism: Minimal Morality in International Politics.” Acknowledging the disinclination of the political Left to accept the persistence of particular national identities, Walzer responds that such “tribal” divisions—in contrast to the “internationalism” of the

Hapsburg and Romanov dynasties—are inevitable, once “the ‘people’” enter political life, “carrying with them their own languages, historical memories, customs, beliefs, and commitments.” Hence, while appreciating the difficulties of applying this principle, Walzer’s moral minimalism dictates acceptance of the (Wilsonian) doctrine of “self-determination” (64–67).

Walzer’s account of what this rule may entail in different circumstances is admirably nuanced. Recognizing the (still not fully resolved) problems resulting (for instance) from the breakup of the artificially created nation of Yugoslavia—the danger that Serbs consigned to inhabit a newly independent Croatia will “live in insecurity,” as would Albanians in Serbia (this was written before the war to secure autonomy for Kosovo)—Walzer rejects the “slippery slope” argument that allowing one self-identifying minority “tribe” to declare independence will inevitably lead to the oppression of smaller tribes within it.⁴ Instead, he considers a variety of possible solutions, depending on circumstances. In “the easiest case,” that of “captive, . . . recently and coercively incorporated nation[s]” such as the Baltic republics, the simple solution is to restore their independence. But even here, complications might arise, if, say, Russian immigrants had come to make up “a majority” (or, I add, even a large minority) of the population of Latvia, or if French colonists came to outnumber the Arabs and Berbers in Algeria. In such situations, either partition of the newly independent nation or “a regime of cultural autonomy instead of . . . political sovereignty” might be required, with a view to finding “the nearest possible arrangement to whatever was *ex ante* just,” while “taking into account” what justice now requires for immigrants, colonists, and their offspring—rather than single-mindedly focusing on trying to compensate for wrongs done in the past. This is even truer for “anciently incorporated nations” like the aboriginal peoples of North America or New Zealand, for whom restoration of anything like “their former independence” is impossible. While such peoples are entitled to “some degree of collective self-rule,” depending on “the residual strength of their own institutions” and “the character of their engagement in the common life of the larger society,” they “cannot claim any absolute protection” of their culture against erosion by the political, social, and economic pressures or temptations of modernity (69–72).⁵

⁴ This was one of Lincoln’s arguments aimed at deterring Southern “secession” from the Union: that it would in turn lead to secessions from the “new confederacy” by other “minorit[ies]” (First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861, in *Collected Works*, ed. Roy P. Basler [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953], 4:268–69). But Southern secession, unlike the breakup of Yugoslavia, was not based on historic ethnic or deeply rooted cultural differences among the states.

⁵ On the longstanding mismanagement of American Indian reservations by the federal government, see, however, Naomi Schaefer Riley, *The New Trail of Tears* (New York: Encounter Books, 2016).

Acknowledging that there is no guarantee that accommodating demands for national self-determination among peoples that *are* capable of self-government will not lead to oppression of minorities within their boundaries, Walzer expresses hope that given nations' increased "entangle[ment] with and dependen[ce] on one another" in comparison with the interwar years, international institutions like the EU, the World Bank, or the UN could effectively condition recognition of the new nations on proper treatment of their minorities. And he emphasizes that the elimination of tribalism, intertwined as it is with people's identities, is in any case impossible.⁶ However, "under conditions of security," individuals will tend to acquire "more complex identit[ies]," dividing rather than fortifying hostile passions (cf. *Federalist*, No. 10). But—in contrast to Alexandre Kojève's aspiration to achieve a "universal homogeneous state"—Walzer affirms that "our common humanity will never make us members of a single universal state," since "the crucial commonality of the human race is particularism" (78–83).⁷ (In other words, as Aristotle put it, man is by nature a political animal—although Aristotle does not identify the polis with the tribe or *ethnē* [*Politics* 1.2].)

Little need be said here of Walzer's fifth chapter, "The Divided Self," wherein he offers an account of the self, in lieu of "a theory of human nature," designed to be consistent with his principle of "complex equality" (xii–xiii). His political conclusion is simply that his (and others') "many-sided self... requires a thickly differentiated society in which to express my different capacities and talents, my different senses of who I am" (102–3). (In other words, like most of us, he would not be happy in ancient Sparta or medieval

⁶ One wishes that Walzer had applied his reflections on self-determination to the problem of the Kurds, probably the world's most important stateless people, still maintaining a distinct identity despite having arbitrarily been denied their promised nationhood in Britain's 1922 "settlement of the Middle Eastern question"; see David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), 560. For a more thorough treatment of the complexities involved in trying to apply the principle of political self-determination, see Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), chap. 17. Hazony cites Wilson's own statement of regret, in a 1919 meeting with advocates of Irish independence, over his suggestion at the Versailles peace conference that *all* peoples have a right to self-determination, owing to his ignorance of the number of "nationalities" that might come forth to claim that right, and the disappointed "hopes" it inevitably aroused among "many millions of people" (270).

⁷ Here Walzer's conclusion harmonizes with Pierre Manent's defense of the existence of sovereign nation-states against the overextension of international institutions such as the European Union: *Democracy without Nations? The Fate of Self-Government in Europe*, trans. Paul Seaton (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007), as well as with Hazony's defense of nationalism, properly understood, in *The Virtue of Nationalism*.

France.) He recognizes that such a society requires the protection “that sovereignty alone provides in the modern world,” albeit buttressed by such principles as “religious toleration, cultural autonomy, [and] individual rights” (103)—again apparently recognizing that human beings could not flourish in the sort of world-state to which many contemporary liberals aspire.

In his 2019 afterword, Walzer adds only that whereas *Thick and Thin* had originally been composed when “the Soviet Union was breaking up,” along with the former Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet satellites were enjoying their “very new independence,” making it “natural” for him “to take the arguments for self-determination” enunciated in chapter 4 “as a key example of moral minimalism,” he now, “tak[ing] in a broader swath of history,” regards “the rules of war” as best exemplifying minimal morality. While granting the difficulties that arise in translating such rules as noncombatant immunity into specifics, those rules are universally understandable because they derive from the elemental rights to life and self-defense. Hence, even when the “hard questions” that arise in applying them “are answered differently,” the answers themselves “come in a language that is culturally non-specific, translatable across all boundaries” (107).

While it is likely that the law of war as it has developed over time transcends cultural boundaries, and Walzer (who treats the subject at greater length in *Just and Unjust Wars*) acknowledges the self-interested motives that originally underlay such rules as not killing POWs (108; consider also the reasons for abandoning the use of poison gas), his endeavor to demonstrate the potential universality of such rules leads him to be far too generous, in his concluding pages, to some of their most egregious violators. He cites Mao Zedung’s “Eight Points for Attention”—a tactical guide for his “People’s Liberation Army” originally issued in 1942 and containing such precepts as “speak politely,” “pay fairly for everything you buy,” and “don’t mistreat captives”—as derivative “from Confucian ethics,” ignoring the future tyrant’s use of mass terror, torture, and dishonesty both en route to, and after his attainment of, power.⁸ While citing the criticism of the “minimalist rules of war...by national liberation militants who claim that the rules work to support the status quo,” and “defend terrorism” by saying “that they have to kill innocent people for the sake of a brighter tomorrow,” Walzer takes solace in the fact “that there are always some” militants who oppose terrorism as ultimately self-defeating. Finally, he cites the “maximalist” argument made by

⁸ See, for instance, the numerous entries under “torture and punishment methods” in the index to Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005).

Marxists like Leon Trotsky to the effect that terrorism “is an elitist activity,” as opposed to the “hard work of organizing and raising the consciousness of the working class or the nation” so as to inspire violent revolution. Walzer would like to believe that within the Marxists’ “thick critique of terrorism lies a recognition of the value of each member of ‘the people’” (108–9)—from the utterly ruthless and bloodthirsty Trotsky, no less.

Taken as a whole, *Thick and Thin* makes a valuable contribution to advancing moral debate that is realistic and tolerant rather than dogmatic and self-righteous. It is regrettable that Walzer sometimes falls victim to a curious partisanship that leads him to denounce Western factory managers as despots while suggesting a humanitarian side to murderous Marxists. But these occasional slips do not deprive the book of value for morally serious readers, whether liberal or conservative.

Sebastian Huhnholz, *Von Carl Schmitt zu Hannah Arendt? Heidelberger Entstehungsspuren und bundesrepublikanische Liberalisierungsschichten von Reinhart Kosellecks "Kritik und Krise."* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2019, 172 pp., € 39.90 (paperback).

Koselleck, Schmitt, and German Liberalization

GEORG SIMMERL

HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY, BERLIN

simmerlg@hu-berlin.de

In the intellectual history of the early Bundesrepublik, Reinhart Koselleck's dissertation *Kritik und Krise* has the status of an almost mythical object.¹ Conceived and written in the storied academic environment of Heidelberg University, the thesis, defended in 1954 and published in 1959, soon earned Koselleck both prestige and notoriety. This was due not only to the almost irresistible crisis narrative, with which the young philosopher-historian put eighteenth-century Enlightenment on trial for having established a hypocritical mode of critique that made modernity an eternal political crisis. The notoriety, in particular, stemmed from one of Koselleck's teachers outside Heidelberg University: Carl Schmitt, who was banned from official academic life for openly refusing denazification. Koselleck acknowledged his indebtedness to Schmitt in the preface to the published edition, in which he thanked him right after his supervisor (they had seen each other regularly since 1950 and had an intensive correspondence).

¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

The commonsensical strand in the reception of *Kritik und Krise*, as coined by Jürgen Habermas's review in 1961, relegated Koselleck to a mere mouthpiece of Schmitt.² Beginning with the preface to the second edition in 1969, Koselleck started a long array of apologies and rephrasings in response. But when *Kritik und Krise* was included in Suhrkamp's paperback series in 1973—a reason why it remains even today one of the most successful humanities dissertations on the German book market—with an anonymized citation of a review actually written by Schmitt on its back cover, a clandestine testimony was given to the fact that with the rise of Koselleck it was also Schmitt's thought that was coming to prominence at the heart of West German academia. Nonetheless, Koselleck continued to counter the onerous accusation of having initially been a pure Schmittian until late in his life. In interviews on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his dissertation, he recalled the diverse inspirations he had drawn on. One of his mentions was Hannah Arendt and her *Origins of Totalitarianism* (first German edition 1955), which he claimed to have benefited from when revising the manuscript for publication, and he even recalled having an exchange with her in Heidelberg in 1956.

As its subtitle suggests, the new book from Dr. Sebastian Huhnholz, a political scientist at University of Hannover, starts from a fine grasp of the analytical problems at stake here. To excavate submerged "traces" that the academic environment of 1950s Heidelberg left on *Kritik und Krise*, it sets out to ablate the "layers of liberalization" that enclose this book, since the self-interpretations Koselleck later gave of his thesis are deeply intertwined with the intellectual consolidation of the Bundesrepublik—and Arendt's supposed influence could be both, an actual trace or a retrospectively attached layer of liberalization. To argue that Koselleck, over the course of his acclaimed career, became a liberal scholar is not controversial. But Huhnholz is the first to fully take into consideration the possibility that his dissertation already pointed in this direction. Drawing on large parts of Koselleck's literary estate, he is able to provide an illuminating contextualization of the production of *Kritik und Krise* and its immediate reception.

What sets this study on the wrong track, however, is its guiding question: From Carl Schmitt to Hannah Arendt? Since Koselleck never claimed that Arendt's influence on the revised manuscript was profound, let alone

² Habermas deleted the final sentence of the review, which contained this claim, in subsequent essay collections that were published after he had completed his thematically similar *habilitation*, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which he drew both on Schmitt and Koselleck.

that it rivaled Carl Schmitt's, this choice has distorting effects. First and foremost, it pushes Huhnholz to constantly downplay the sway Schmitt held over the doctoral student Koselleck. He even goes so far as to call it "absurd" to approach *Kritik und Krise* primarily via Schmitt and claims (without any convincing evidence) that the thesis was largely conceived before they met (7–8). Huhnholz consequently succeeds in demarcating where Koselleck set himself apart from his mentor. But the author fails to adequately assess Koselleck's discipleship, even by his own standards—namely, a focus on what Koselleck likely had read while crafting his dissertation and how he read it (according to the inventory of his literary estate and the annotations that can be found in these books).

Huhnholz picks up the well-known claim that Koselleck drew mainly on Schmitt's study of Hobbes's *Leviathan* in arguing that the freedom of conscience the absolutist state granted was exploited by the Enlightenment's critical practices to finally bring this state down (the copy of Schmitt's study that Koselleck cited has, like many others, not been preserved in his literary estate). But Huhnholz transforms this into the rather controversial assertion that apart from the interpretation of Hobbes in its first chapter, Schmitt was of only marginal importance for the rest of Koselleck's dissertation. While this assessment morphs at times into the more far-reaching yet still understating judgment that the thesis was only Schmittian in methodological terms, Huhnholz's presentation of Koselleck's readings tends to obscure exactly this analytical Schmittianism.

For example, with regard to Schmitt's *Donoso Cortés in gesamt-europäischer Interpretation*, Huhnholz discusses an insignificant passage on page 75 to speculate about possible inspirations for Koselleck's understanding of the counterrevolution (which was not addressed in *Kritik und Krise*) and to substantiate his claim that Koselleck did not care for the political-theological arguments in these lines. What he leaves out, however, are two passages that Koselleck marked extensively in *Donoso* as well. One is Schmitt's introductory update of political theology to an analysis of myths directing the masses, myths that Schmitt in 1950 assumed to derive mostly from the philosophies of history that informed competing projects of political planning. (Such a combined critique of utopianism and planning also framed Koselleck's dissertation, but this is convincingly shown by Huhnholz to have been the standard procedure of members of a broader intellectual milieu centered in postwar Heidelberg.) More importantly, Huhnholz leaves unmentioned that Koselleck in 1950 also marked on page 100 of his copy of *Donoso* Schmitt's

stated conviction that the German intellectual history of the last two centuries had been fatefully connected to the words “critique” and “crisis,” that is, the very analytical scheme his dissertation would adopt (based on the complementary assumption that the eighteenth century did not yet understand the immanent relationship between critique and crisis and thus did not use “crisis” as a central concept). Koselleck later vaguely professed that its title derived from Schmitt’s advice to inquire into the use of concepts in concrete historical situations.

The methodological indebtedness of Koselleck’s dissertation to Schmitt does not stop here. In an endnote to the unpublished edition, he lauded Schmitt for having always spelled out the historical correspondence of ideational self-evidences and political structures, a methodological tenet further explicated in Schmitt’s *Political Theology*. While citing this book directly to attest to the intrusion of divine qualities into absolutist conceptions of sovereignty, Koselleck also systematically followed its methodology (the copy in Koselleck’s literary estate is not analyzed by Huhnholz). In the first chapter, Koselleck presented the absolutist state as a political organization that had the same structure as the then dominant mode of thinking (a secularizing separation of politics and morality) and thus had for its early contemporaries a situated self-evidence born of the pacification of the religious wars which subsequent, self-enlightening generations would no longer understand. Thus, they unleashed these wars again, at first as a war of opinions in the public sphere that led to the French Revolution. And it is to a polemical analysis of the polemic use of doctrines in these debates, as pioneered by the sociology of concepts also explicated in Schmitt’s *Political Theology*, that Koselleck largely devoted the two remaining chapters of his dissertation.

Perhaps Huhnholz did not detail this because he simply reduces the analytical interest of Schmitt’s political theology to secularized ideologies and argues, plausibly, that its main polemical effect was a Christianizing reenchantment of history which presumably Koselleck did not aspire to as he unambiguously affirmed the absolutist state as an agent of religious neutralization (9, 13n14, 35n1, 46–47, 130–31). Another reason might be Huhnholz’s contextualist approach, which leads him to largely refrain from any analysis of the primary text and to follow Koselleck’s later rephrasings of it instead—and this is where he also begins to miss the argumentative indebtedness of Koselleck’s dissertation to Schmitt. For example, Huhnholz echoes the later Koselleck’s claim that *Kritik und Krise* was about the incapacity of the utopian bourgeoisie to act politically (8, 78–79, 81, 82). In the text, however, Koselleck

mentioned only the bourgeoisie's powerlessness in the absolutist state, which caused the bourgeoisie to articulate a moralistic critique that Koselleck considered nonetheless a serious political act. The creeping destruction of the absolutist state by the Enlightenment's supposedly unpolitical critique was described by Koselleck as the effectuation of "indirect political forces," a phrase Schmitt used in his book on *Leviathan* that in any case does something rather different from lamenting the bourgeoisie's incapacity to act politically.

One specific instance of the at times unreliable claims of the later Koselleck, however, is investigated by this study at great length, namely, that he had profited from Arendt's thought when revising the manuscript. Its second-longest chapter tries unsuccessfully to ascertain when Koselleck could have met Arendt in Heidelberg around 1956. But in the analysis of the textual evidence of a possible influence of Arendt—which is one new footnote in *Kritik und Krise* compared to the unpublished version—it finally becomes clear what close reading can contribute to careful contextualization (120–27). Huhnholz shows that Koselleck, while thinning out the direct citations of Schmitt's works, filled in a footnote that had criticized Arendt's interpretation of Hobbes as the pioneer of the liberal bourgeoisie; Koselleck emphasized, over and against this interpretation, that Hobbes had not argued for the protection of private property and could not foresee what civil society would make out of the security his state granted. Since, as Huhnholz admits, this can still be considered a Schmittian line of argument, and since Huhnholz had shown before that it was very likely Schmitt himself who had drawn Koselleck's attention to Arendt's *Origins*, it stands to reason that her influence on the published dissertation was in a meaningful sense a retrospective projection and was in any case filtered by the PhD candidate's relation to Schmitt.

What becomes manifest in the triangle Schmitt-Koselleck-Arendt is the problem of German liberalization. Huhnholz portrays Arendt as a figure fulfilling the early Bundesrepublik's intellectual need for liberalization—which Koselleck all too understandably tried retrospectively to attach himself to—but at the same time, Huhnholz details the critique of liberalism she articulated in her *Origins* and finally identifies her as a republican political theorist. Huhnholz even registers intersections between Arendt's and Schmitt's thought, only to prematurely resolve them by grouping at least Schmitt's thought in a definitive camp. His thought interchangeably figures as "anti-liberal" (38), "right-wing extremist" (42n25), "inhumane" (69), and "anti-Semitic" (132), which might be true for his political sentiments (in the case of his anti-Semitism without a doubt) but circumvents more delicate

questions. Huhnholz touches on them when invoking Leo Strauss's initial criticism—that Schmitt's thinking, mostly as a result of his interpretation of Hobbes, was bound up in the aporias of liberalism—but he trivializes this criticism by claiming that Schmitt simply exploited these aporias for anti-liberal purposes (13, 61n17, 75, 79). This is all the more astonishing since Huhnholz repeatedly mentions different intellectual currents that drew on Schmitt's work to stabilize the early Bundesrepublik, into which the later Koselleck has been grouped by several other commentators—liberal conservatism and a liberalized Schmittianism. Some of his findings, most importantly Koselleck's unambiguous affirmation of the absolutist state as an agent of neutralization, could have plausibly shown that it was a protoliberal Schmittianism that developed in his dissertation. But in the end, Huhnholz is content with concluding that the early Koselleck slavishly followed neither the radical Schmitt nor the republican Arendt and that this could be considered a liberal approach anyway (142). Consequently, the question of how, exactly, the intellectual development of Schmitt's pupil Koselleck reflected the peculiar character of German liberalization remains unanswered.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Interpretation welcomes manuscripts in political philosophy broadly conceived. Submitted articles can be interpretations of treatises of political philosophy as well as literary works, theological works, and writings on jurisprudence that have an important bearing on political philosophy.

All submissions must be in Microsoft Word® and sent, as an email attachment, to interpretation@baylor.edu.

Submissions must be under 8,000 words, including notes and bibliographic references, and must be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 150 words. Because *Interpretation* is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal, all author identification and all references that would identify an author's own publications must be removed from the document. A separate title page, with the author's affiliation and contact information (including address, postal code, email address, and phone number) must be included with your MS.

Contributors should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition). *The Chicago Manual of Style* offers publications the choice between sentence-style capitalization in titles of books or articles and headline-style. *Interpretation* uses the headline style. Parenthetical references no longer use "p." or "pp." *Interpretation* has reverted to the traditional form of citation and no longer uses the author/date form. Please double space the entire text. Footnotes, rather than endnotes, are preferred.

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

The editors of *Interpretation* are committed to a timely appraisal of all manuscripts, and expect to be able to have a decision on submissions within four to six weeks.