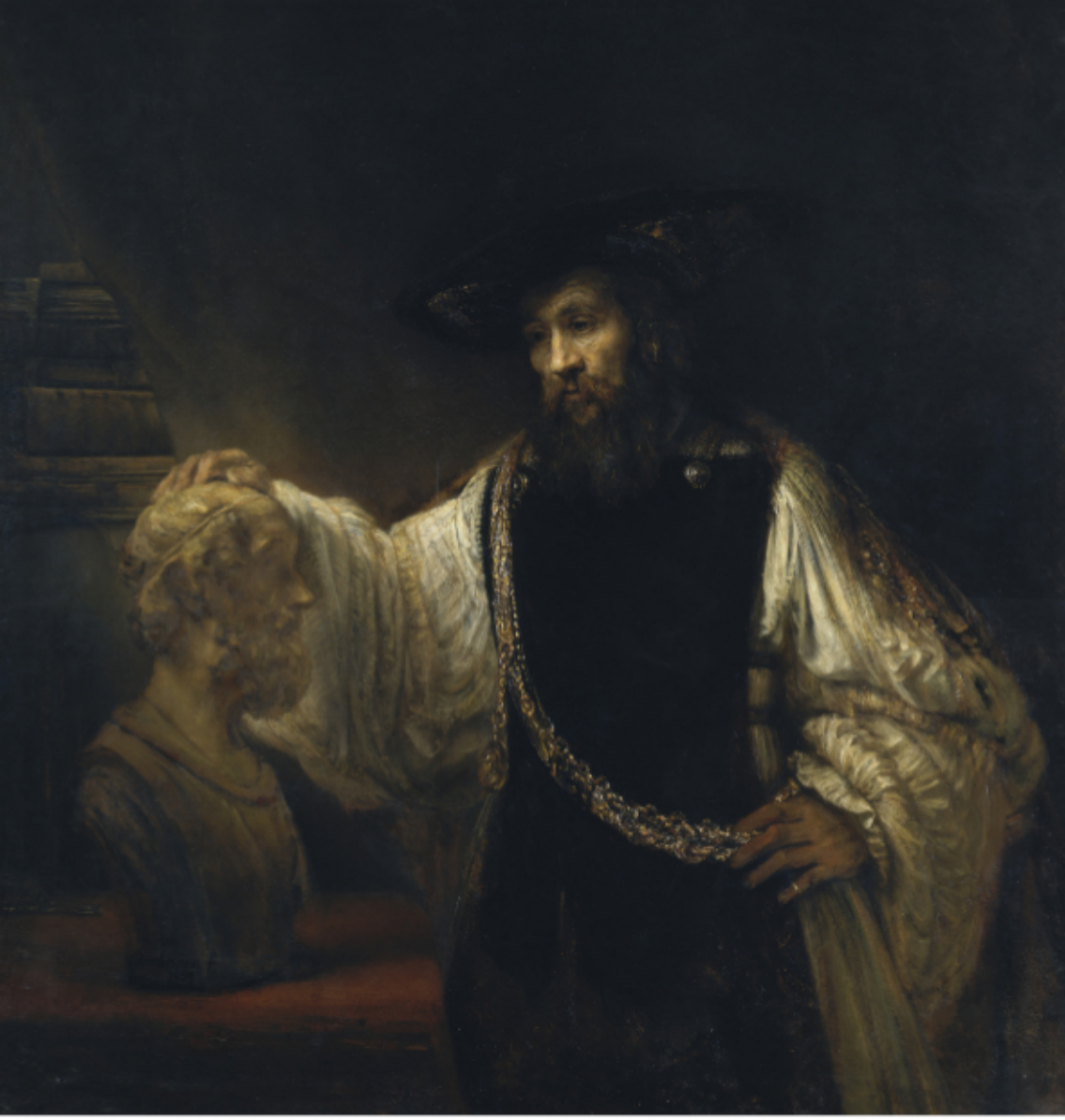

SOCRATES AND DIONYSUS

PHILOSOPHY AND ART IN DIALOGUE

Edited by Ann Ward

Socrates and Dionysus

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For Mark, *in loving memory*

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This volume has its origin in a workshop that I developed and organized for the 13th International Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas (ISSEI), *The Ethical Challenge of Multidisciplinarity: Reconciling 'The Three Narratives'—Art, Science and Philosophy*, held at the University of Cyprus in Nicosia, Cyprus, July 2-6, 2012. I wish to thank the University of Cyprus for organizing and convening the conference and the ISSEI for sponsoring it. I would also like to thank Ezra Talmor and Rachel Ben-David of the ISSEI for inviting me to develop and chair the workshop that has given this volume its name, and for allowing me to develop and chair several previous workshops. I am continually grateful for their professional generosity and personal consideration.

I wish to express my gratitude to the participants of the workshop and the contributors to this volume. It gave me great pleasure to read and learn from their work, and I thank them for making this volume possible. I want to acknowledge especially Robert Piercey and Anna Mudde. Not only did they contribute to both the workshop and the volume, but on very short notice agreed to co-chair the workshop in my absence due to a serious illness in my family. Robert and Anna are excellent colleagues from whom I draw both professional and personal inspiration. I have benefitted and hope to continue to benefit from their collegiality and friendship. I also wish to acknowledge Campion College at the University of Regina for awarding me two Campion College President's Research Awards. These awards provided generous financial support for my involvement in the 13th International Conference of the ISSEI and for preparation of the Index to this volume.

During the time I was developing the core concepts that have brought this collection of essays into being, my father, James Mark Allen, was gravely ill and had been suffering from sickness for quite some time. During the summer of 2012 as the workshop was taking place, he took a turn for the worse and, despite the dedicated care of my mother, finally succumbed after a long illness. The death of my father is a personal tragedy for both me and my family, and has opened up a longing in my soul that, although I am often distracted from it, seems always to be there and to which I always return. My father meant many things to me. Yet, if I could be brief, it is my father who taught me most of all love and loyalty

to family, even through hard times, integrity, even in the face of fearful corruption, and dedication to truth, even if it is painful. His example shows that the good can be hard and take a long time, even a lifetime, to make itself felt, but that such an understanding reveals an underlying hope in life rather than despair.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband and colleague Lee Ward, whose love and friendship has sustained and continues to sustain me emotionally and intellectually, and our daughter Mary. Mary, born just in time for her grandfather to know her and for her to see her grandfather, has brought a joy and depth to my life unknown to me before her birth.

Regina, March 2013
Ann Ward

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

ANN WARD

Friedrich Nietzsche argues that his work *The Birth of Tragedy* addresses what he identifies as 'the problem of science'. According to Nietzsche science conquers art, especially the tragic art of the Dionysian poet of ancient Greece. The Greek tragedian, Nietzsche claims, embraces life in all its pain by indulging in the '*craving for the ugly*'. Embodied by the satyr chorus as the physical image of Dionysus, the 'ugly' is understood to be the low, animal passions of human beings. Appealing to the natural, primeval self that is suppressed but not extinguished by the knowledge of culture, Dionysian tragedy gets us in touch with our bodies and their deepest longings. Strictly speaking, tragedy invites us to feel the presence of the god, not simply to see or hear him.

Tragedy, Nietzsche argues, is opposed and eventually destroyed by science. Associated with the 'Socratism' of the theoretical man, the response of science, or philosophy, to pain is quite different from the response of tragedy. Craving the 'beautiful' rather than the ugly, science and philosophy celebrate the human mind in particular and the mind or rationality of the universe more generally. Moreover, although Plato, according to Nietzsche, preserves the tragic art form in his dialogues, it is Euripides, another student of Socrates, who destroys the Dionysian entirely. Euripides, himself a tragedian, destroyed Greek tragedy by bringing the *demos* along with their everyday reality onto the stage. By doing so he brought the human individual, separated from their god, into view. Nietzsche argues that Euripides celebrated the unadorned individual because only the individual is intelligible or accessible to human reason; he insisted that art be comprehended by mind or that it be rationally understood. Euripides was possessed of such a rationalizing drive, Nietzsche claims, because his primary audience was Socrates. It is Socrates, therefore, who is the true opponent of Dionysus; Euripides is just his vehicle.

Following Nietzsche's bifurcation between philosophy and art, postmodern political philosopher Richard Rorty rejects the tendency of

philosophy to posit absolute, universal truths and turns to the concept of 'redescription' which he associates with the 'wisdom of the novel'. The novel is wise because it posits the relative truths and perspectives of the various individuals, societies and cultures that it represents. The novelist can give full hearing to all particular persons, actions and situations; they are neither right nor wrong but merely different. The novel as an art form can therefore include every possible perspective of every particular situation, event or person.

New interdisciplinary fields in politics, literature and film, have given rise to an expanding community of scholars who disagree with the approaches taken by Nietzsche and Rorty. These scholars are increasingly shedding light on the ways in which philosophy and art are friends rather than enemies. They seek to bridge the theoretical and ethical gaps between the world of 'fiction' and the world of 'fact', of art and science. Art enables us to confront the contingencies of life by answering the immediate question: what's happening and what is going to happen next. Science also attempts to answer this question. However, there appears to be a fundamental tension between the literary-artistic and scientific projects. Whereas the artist seeks to recreate human experience, thereby evoking basic ethical issues, the scientist seeks ethically neutral, evidence-based facts as the constituents of our knowledge of reality. Chapters in this volume will consider how artists, philosophers and film-makers have addressed and attempted to reconcile the artist's language of normativity and the scientist's language of facticity.

This volume builds upon recent scholarship on the relationship between philosophy and poetry, science and art, at the same time adding to it in significant ways. Martha Nussbaum conceives of Socrates and Plato as advocates of philosophy understood as rational self-inquiry and apprehension of universal, abstract truths. The narrative artist's literary form, in contrast, gives scope to the concrete particularity and complexity of human life, with special emphasis on the role of emotion in self-examination and ethical decision making. Nussbaum explores ancient tragedy in *Fragility of Goodness* (1986) and the modern novel in *Love's Knowledge* (1990), to illustrate what she regards as the alternative truths revealed by art. Although indebted to the works of Nussbaum in many ways, this volume will locate attention to emotional experience in philosophic inquiry within the Socratic-Platonic corpus itself, and view the Platonic dialogue as bridging rather than solidifying the divide between philosophy and art. It will also include chapters on the ancient authors Thucydides, Euripides, and Aristotle.

In *Political Emotions: Aristotle and the Symphony of Reason and Emotion* (2006), Marlene Sokolon also investigates the place of emotion in classical political philosophy. Aristotle, Sokolon argues, understands human beings as political animals not only because they possess reason but also because they experience emotions. Like rational inquiry human emotions are essentially political phenomena because they are judgments of and responses to the particulars of our sociopolitical environment. Sokolon denies, moreover, the strict dualism between body and soul and the rational and non-rational in Aristotle's political philosophy. For Aristotle, individual and political excellence requires not the suppression or obedience of emotion to reason, but rather the partnership or symphony of reason and emotion. Like Sokolon's work, the chapters in this volume will acknowledge the place of the emotional and the physical in both classical political philosophy and art. It will go beyond Sokolon's work, however, by focusing not simply on the role of emotion in Aristotle's philosophy but on the latter's reliance on poetry as well.

In the field of politics and literature, Catherine Zuckert, in *Natural Right and the American Imagination* (1990), argues that the major motif of the American novel—the hero's withdrawal from civil society to live in nature—is a reflection on the "state of nature" philosophy on which America was explicitly founded. Presenting not only a fictional rebellion against established laws and customs, this motif also considers new grounds on which a just community may be established. Moreover, Zuckert argues that in contemplating the natural foundations of political order, novelists are in fact exploring the central issue of political philosophy: the relation between nature and convention. In S*hakespeare's Political Wisdom* (2013), Timothy W. Burns, reading five of Shakespeare's plays—*Julius Caesar*, *MacBeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*—through the lens of political philosophy, argues that these plays provide serious reflection on moral and political questions, namely: Who should rule and what is justice? Tim Spiekerman, in *Shakespeare's Political Realism* (2001), provides fresh interpretations of Shakespeare's English history plays. He argues that through these plays Shakespeare teaches modern audiences about the essence of politics. Focusing on the relation between Shakespeare's poetry and Machiavelli's political philosophy, Spiekerman explores the conflict between ambition and justice in the plays, concluding that Shakespeare has an even more pessimistic view than Machiavelli of the limits of politics.

Although not exploring the political philosophy of the American novel, as Zuckert does, this volume will explore the novels of Simone De Beauvoir and Milan Kundera, and the philosophical foundations of

contemporary American film. It suggests that the best of modern American film reflects not on the liberal 'state of nature' theories of the Founders, but rather displays the destructive, yet life-affirming, creative impulse that Nietzsche maintained was present in the Dionysian wisdom of pain. Moreover, the volume considers the relation between the political philosophy of Machiavelli and the modern Italian film of DeSica rather than the plays of Shakespeare. Yet, it will conclude, much as Spiekerman does about Shakespeare, that DeSica's view of political possibilities is more pessimistic than Machiavelli's.

This volume takes a unique interdisciplinary approach with fourteen chapters from scholars in the fields of Philosophy, Political Science, Visual Arts and Languages. The contributors teach and research in Canada, the United States, Europe and Australia. Part one explores the relationship between philosophy, politics, poetry and poetic history in the ancient world. In chapter two Bernard Dobski gives careful attention to the broader architecture of Thucydides' *History* to reveal a dialectical movement from the tensions within political justice as the Greeks understood it, to a presentation of nature as a standard for morality and politics. But, Dobski argues, in Thucydides' hands nature as a standard by which one can judge politics and moral virtue must ultimately be exchanged in favour of a return to the standard of Greek—and especially Athenian—politics, albeit a return mediated by the foregoing reflections on the limits of political life and human nature. The necessity of this return to the conventions of Athenian politics is thus at once occasioned and conditioned by an awareness and acceptance of the fundamental limits to the moral and political categories that define human life, an awareness reflected in the puzzling conclusion to the History. According to Dobski, an ending that seems so problematic to so many scholars and readers of this epic appears less so when one refuses to impose on Thucydides a view of what his work is or should be. Attentive to the artistry of the *History*, Dobski enters into the dialogue to which the *History* beckons. By doing so, Dobski foregrounds the work's artistic aspects that remain under-theorized by contemporary scholarship on Thucydides.

Marlene Sokolon, in chapter three, argues that in the *Ion* Euripides reworks the story of Athenian founding by bringing together two competing myths of origin. The Athenians identified as Ionian and recognized Ion as the progenitor of the migrant Ionian people. Competing with this Ionian story, however, was a founding myth that recognized Athenian autochthony; the Athenians believed that they literally sprang from the earth itself. In synthesizing these myths, Euripides reveals how foundation stories reflect much more about the needs and desires of the

present, than provide an accurate record of the past. For our own present, his retelling remains useful as it simultaneously exposes the necessary role of foundation stories in crafting political identity, as well as the limitations of such stories to provide an unambiguous understanding of the political self. Sokolon argues that as Euripides locates the heart of foundation stories in the desire to be 'ruled by one's own', he reveals the political problem embedded in determining 'who is one's own'.

Patrick Cain and Mary Nichols, in chapter four, argue that Aristotle finds in Homer's account of Achilles a model for his own presentation of moral virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle, according to Cain and Nichols, agrees with Homer in his reservations about the self-sufficiency of nobility, even while placing moral virtue and nobility among the elements that constitute the human good. Moreover, like Homer, Aristotle finds a tension between nobility and friendship, while ultimately showing their dependence. Cain and Nichols argue further that Aristotle's *Ethics* builds on Homer's presentation of the beautiful, following his lead by using the 'falsehoods' characteristic of poetry to invoke the wonder that initiates philosophy. In doing so, Aristotle defends poetry against a philosophic critique. Cain and Nichol's exploration of the contribution that poetry makes to the pursuit of wisdom proceeds by examining several of Aristotle's frequent allusions to Homer, and especially to the events surrounding Hector's death at the hands of Achilles, in his discussions of courage, magnanimity and friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Part two explores how Enlightenment philosophers make use of artistic narrative to pose a scientific view of the world and the religious toleration to which it gives rise. In chapter five, Timothy W. Burns argues that in his poetic work *New Atlantis*, Francis Bacon provides a justification for his new scientific method. For Bacon, according to Burns, the old science understood nature as disclosing final causes or purposes. Directed explicitly against such teleological thinking that was resistant to human attempts to transform the given world so as to impose on it the fulfillment of human purposes, above all that of vastly improving humankind's physical condition, Bacon's new science needs to dispose of the wish that reality is at bottom governed by a benign divinity. Bacon's answer to this need, Burns argues, lies in his hopes for the practical success and popular impact of the new science. Through what has come to be called 'technology', the new science will correct nature's stingy accommodation of human needs. As humankind progresses steadily away from its naturally vulnerable situation, the consequence will be that all of humanity will increasingly be ready to admit that our natural situation is not purposefully ordered. People will be less prone to hope for a divine

purpose in, and a possible divine redemption from, humankind's natural misery. The mastery over nature to relieve the human estate will lead eventually to the disappearance of the misdirected hopes for a world intrinsically ordered by a beneficent but mysterious divinity. Burns argues that it is in the *New Atlantis* that Bacon paints most vividly this vision of a scientifically and technologically satisfied humanity.

Lee Ward, in chapter six, focuses on a less well documented aspect of Rousseau's contribution to the political and psychological features of modern democracy; the democratic character of his views of natural theology as they are expressed in his narrative 'The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar' contained in his masterpiece *Emile*. The Savoyard Vicar's profession, according to Ward, offers Rousseau's fullest reflections upon natural theology and the moral implications flowing from his foundational premise of the natural goodness of human nature. Ward argues that the Vicar presents a moral vision that rejects both scientific materialism and dogmatic orthodoxy, while providing metaphysical support for an egalitarian and tolerant democratic political order. Moreover, according to Ward, the Savoyard Vicar offers a particularly powerful demonstration of Rousseau's use of the literary form. In the context of the larger work the *Emile*, the Vicar is not only the proponent of a particular philosophical position but a character whose life plays a role within the larger narrative about the natural education of Emile. As such the Vicar emerges as a kind of democratic hero, whose narrative illustrates a literary form that Rousseau intends will replace the traditional textual authority of scripture and philosophical treatises. For Ward, the narrative form of the Vicar's speech causes the reader to reflect upon both the democratic character of modernity and the meaning of a text.

Art and its role in expressing the human condition in the thought of late modern and contemporary philosophers is the topic investigated in part three. In chapter seven, I explore Nietzsche's understanding of the unique materialism of Dionysian tragedy by considering his reflections on the origins of tragedy in the tragic chorus. I then turn to the Dionysian confrontation with science or the mind of philosophy. Nietzsche claims that the Greek tragedian embraces life in all its pain by indulging in the '*craving for the ugly*'. Embodied by the satyr chorus as the physical image of Dionysus, the 'ugly' is understood to be the animal passions of human beings. Appealing to the natural, primeval self that is suppressed but not extinguished by the knowledge of culture, Dionysian tragedy gets us in touch with our bodies and its deepest longings. Nietzsche, I argue, claims that tragedy is opposed and eventually destroyed by science. Associated with the 'Socratism' of the theoretical man, science, or philosophy,

craving the 'beautiful' rather than the ugly, celebrates the human mind and the rationality of the universe. Although Plato preserves the tragic art form in his dialogues, it is Euripides, according to Nietzsche, who destroys the Dionysian entirely. Euripides destroyed Greek tragedy by bringing the *demos* along with their everyday reality onto the stage. By doing so he brought the human individual separated from their god into view. Nietzsche suggests that Euripides celebrated the unadorned individual because only the individual is intelligible or accessible to reason; he wanted art to be comprehended by mind or rationally understood. Euripides was possessed of such a rationalizing drive, Nietzsche claims, because his primary audience was Socrates. It is Socrates, therefore, who is the true opponent of Dionysus.

Anne-Marie Schultz, in chapter eight, argues that Nietzsche's primary charge against Socrates is that he abandons the Dionysian elements of experience in favour of the Apollonian. Like many scholars, Schultz argues that Nietzsche mischaracterizes Plato's presentation of Socrates. However, to make this case Schultz focuses on a different aspect of the Platonic portrait of Socrates. She explores three autobiographical narratives that Plato's Socrates tells: his account of his testing of the Delphic oracle in the *Apology*, his report of his lessons of love from Diotima in the *Symposium*, and his description of his turn from naturalistic philosophy to his own method of inquiry in the *Phaedo*. These autobiographical narratives illustrate a profound sensitivity to the role of emotional experience in philosophical inquiry. In Nietzsche's terms, Schultz argues that they offer a synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian modes of existence because, alongside dependence on the experience of Dionysian ex-stasis, they uphold the importance of rational inquiry. As such, these three narratives, according to Schultz, provide a therapeutic model of self-knowledge as self-care that Nietzsche himself imitates in his own autobiography *Ecce Homo*.

In chapter nine, Susan Gottlöber brings together phenomenologist Max Scheler's remarks on art and the artist to investigate their role in his overall personalist value theory. Gottlöber argues that for Scheler the work of art, phenomenologically speaking, contains something of the spiritual and individual essence of the artist, which means, practically speaking, the person. The person, however, stands at the heart of his own value cosmos and is at the same time part of the whole value universe of the time that can speak to us through history. Thus, according to Gottlöber, when we value certain aesthetic aspects in a piece of art, these values appear not simply for us but we also understand the other person, people, and time period better who valued them as well. Through valuing, which is a

loving, affirmative act, we can get to know the person in the way they reveal themselves to us in their acts of preferring some values over others. In this way, art contributes to Scheler's personalist value ethics.

Robert Piercey, in chapter 10, explores what Paul Ricoeur can contribute to the rethinking of the boundaries between art, science, and philosophy. Piercey first explicates Ricoeur's view of natural science against the backdrop of an influential criticism advanced by Brian Leiter. Piercey defends Ricoeur and shows that he sees science as a thoroughly creative and interpretive enterprise that has much in common with artistic production. This view of science is not only less naïve than Leiter claims; it shares quite a bit with the pluralistic, hermeneutically sophisticated philosophy of science now ascendant in the academy. Piercey then argues that Ricoeur does not merely claim that scientific explanation resembles artistic creation in key respects, but rather that his position is more subtle: while there is indeed a sense in which science is artistic, there is also a sense in which art is scientific. The relation between art and science in Ricoeur's thought takes the form of an antinomy. Art conditions science, but at the same time science conditions art. Piercey concludes by maintaining that while Ricouer thinks art and science are dialectically interrelated, this dialectic does not require the two to be on an equal footing. Drawing on work by Boyd Blundell, Piercey argues that Ricouer sees the dialectic between art and science as asymmetrical. It is a genuine interrelation, but an interrelation in which one pole is more fundamental than the other.

Doing philosophy through literature and the cinematic experience are the themes of part four. In chapter 11 Anna Mudde explores the ways that Beauvoir's description of philosophical novels reveals her understanding of consciousness as a particular sort of 'ambiguity': that which not only gives the world meaning, but which also, necessarily, finds meaning in the world through the values, ideas, and objects given to it by others. It is through the philosophical (metaphysical) novel, Mudde argues, that Beauvoir finds a medium for the philosophical communication of ambiguity, or, that is, a medium for writing human being. More specifically, Mudde considers the metaphysical stance Beauvoir is able to describe because of her commitment to philosophical literature. In writing and reading fiction, what is manifest is both found and given, discovered and created; and the metaphysics of the novel offers a way to read philosophy as poetry in the sense of bringing-forth or revealing worldly meaning, in ways that are ambiguously particular and universal.

Paul Howard, in chapter 12, seeks to understand the challenge to liberalism from within European civilization by turning to dissident

writers and philosophers who lived under Communism. Although less prominently associated with dissident writing than Vaclav Havel or Jan Patocka, Howard argues that Milan Kundera's works deserve serious consideration within the cannon of dissident literature and by political theorists trying to understand the modern attraction of totalitarian regimes. According to Howard, Kundera's novels allow us to understand that the appeal of salvific politics for modern human beings is rooted in their erotic nature—the desire for self-completion, self-mastery, and recognition. Focussing in particular on the novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Howard argues that Kundera reflects on two different types of forgetting. One is the inability of the human mind to recall the past in all its complexity, and thus life recedes from us even as we experience it. The second type of forgetting is not a failure of memory but the conscious act of setting horizons of meaning, which Kundera depicts as a reflection of the inherent human drive for autonomy and self-mastery. Howard argues that Kundera, through the central character of Mirek, shows how the attempt to rewrite history into a closed horizon or linear narrative reflects our desire to control our own personal narratives. The most powerful attraction of any salvific ideology, such as Communism, is that it feeds the need of the self for meaning in the world, as its adherents are lionized as the vanguard of the utopia.

In chapter 13, Andrea Ciliotta-Rubery and Paul T. Rubery investigate the political realism of Niccolo Machiavelli and the later cinematic 'neo-realism' of Vittorio DeSica. Undertaking a close analysis of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, Rubery and Rubery focus on the philosopher's and the film maker's differing presentations of central characters and the consequently diverse political solutions they might suggest to the brutal inequities of our world that result from the misrule of political leaders and imperial aggression. Rubery and Rubery find that salient character features that emerge are the relationship between the subject and traditional concepts of moral order, the notion of heroism and heroics on a personal and societal scale, and the subject's participation in time as concerned with the interaction of the past, present and future. In *The Prince*, according to Rubery and Rubery, Machiavelli offers his readers Cesare Borgia, an imperfect yet noteworthy near prototype for his ideal 'new founder', and Agathocles the Sicilian, the criminal prince of Syracuse. De Sica, Rubery and Rubery suggest, seems to imply that in the post-WWII world there is no longer a place for traditional heroics in Italian culture. Moreover, figures in De Sica's work firmly exist in the now while standing in more complicated relationships to present, past, and future. Despite this contrast, Rubery and Rubery maintain that heroism is

at the heart of the prescription for both, even if the idea of heroics will manifest differently in each and cause diverse reactions amongst audiences.

Andreas Wansbrough, in chapter 14, explores the ways in which Nietzsche's conception of the tragedian can enrich our understanding of tragic artists portrayed in cinema. According to Wansbrough, Nietzsche's philosophy is concerned with how we can affirm life given the existence of suffering and death, 'the ugly and the disharmonic'. In the absence of the Christian religion and the failure of supposed objective world-views, Nietzsche turns to the hope for a fusion of art and life in which life can be experienced and perceived in an affirmative way. One image he uses to suggest the potential for this integration of art and life is the tragedian or 'tragic artist', who becomes a substitute for God. Nietzsche asserts that the tragic artist, through tragedy, is able to present us with a sense of terror and suffering that is at once justified through, and overcome by, joyful creation. By examining Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, Oliver Stone's *The Doors* and Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan*, Wansbrough shows that cinema portrays artists who embrace suffering in order to transform their lives into art. Cinematic techniques are also used to further identification between the audience and the tragic artist in a way that allows us to experience the tragic artist's triumph. Wansbrough seeks to provide an understanding of Nietzsche's conception of the artist as a type of god in a way that will also further insights into the tragic artist on screen.

The chapters in this volume seek to engage and recast the boundaries between poetry and philosophy, art, science, and film. Part one explores how artistic history and tragedy in the ancient world engages with political and philosophic questions, and how the philosophy of Aristotle draws from the poetry of Homer to understand the life of moral virtue. In the second part we learn how early modern and Enlightenment thinkers use literary narrative to promote the causes of scientific progress and religious toleration. Part three investigates the role of art and the artist in expressing the human condition in post-modern analyses of ancient tragedy and philosophy, and in Max Scheler's phenomenological anthropology. It also considers the dialectical relation between art and science in the philosophy of Paul Ricouer. The volume concludes by reflecting on how doing philosophy has evolved in contemporary times into writing literature and making film. Chapters in part four explore Beauvoir's understanding of the philosophical novel and the political theory expressed in the novels of Kundera. They also consider how the philosophies of Machiavelli and Nietzsche are adopted by and transformed through modern film. The volume thus seeks to mediate between the world of 'fiction' and the world

of ‘fact’; between the artist’s ethically grounded recreation of human experience and the philosophic-scientific reconstruction of our knowledge of reality.

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PART ONE:

HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS AND POETRY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

CHAPTER TWO

THE INCOMPLETE WHOLE: THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THUCYDIDES' HISTORY

BERNARD J. DOBSKI

The History of Thucydides concludes in the middle of a sentence about the 21st year of a war that spanned 27 years. We can resist the temptation to conclude that Thucydides' work is unfinished not only because our author informs us that he lived several years after the war ended (V.26, II.65.12, I.1)[*], but because the structural outline of his work shows why its abrupt and apparently incomplete conclusion is necessary. Careful attention to the broader architecture of Thucydides' work reveals a dialectical movement from the tensions within political justice as the Greeks understood it to a presentation of nature as a standard for morality and politics. But in Thucydides' hands, nature as a standard by which one can judge politics and moral virtue must ultimately be exchanged in favour of a return to the standard of Greek—and especially Athenian—politics albeit a return mediated by the foregoing reflections on the limits to political life and human nature. The necessity of this return to the conventions of Athenian politics is thus at once occasioned *and* conditioned by an awareness and acceptance of the fundamental limits (intelligible and otherwise) to the moral and political categories that define human life, an awareness reflected in the puzzling conclusion of the History.

An ending that seems so problematic to so many scholars and readers of this epic appears less so when one refuses to impose on Thucydides a view of what his work is or should be. For those who insist on calling his work a "history" would do well to observe that his work has no official title, that the Greek word for history *never once* shows up in the work, and that the classical definition of history from which our modern conception

[*] Thucydides' work has no official title. I follow convention by referring to it as the History. All references to Thucydides' History are in standard book, chapter, and, where relevant, sentence, form. Translations are mine and based on the Jones and Powell Oxford Classical Text.

derives appears first in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which is to say some two generations after Thucydides wrote. We must therefore relax our expectations that his work should cover the full 27 year war and all that happened in it. If we instead approach the History more naively, allowing ourselves to wonder why Thucydides includes and omits what he does – that is, if we are attentive to the *artistry* of the History, then we can enter into that dialogue to which his History constantly beckons us. Attention to the artistic elements at work in the History is hardly ground-breaking. This path to the political wisdom of the History has already been charted by its best readers (Hobbes 1989, 577; Rousseau 1979, 239; Nietzsche 1977, 559-59). By following in their footsteps, I merely hope to foreground elements of the work's artistic polish that all too often remain under-theorized by contemporary scholarship on Thucydides.

The End and Beginning of the History

In the last sentence of the book, Thucydides reports that the Persian satrap Tissaphernes "went to Ephesus and offered sacrifice to Artemis" (VIII.109). This final sentence, whose concluding word is "Artemis," recalls the first words of the History which are "Thucydides an Athenian." If we take seriously Thucydides' artistry in composing the History in the way that he does, then we are entitled to wonder what he intends his readers to think by opening his work with his own name, the name of an Athenian male, and by concluding it with the name of a goddess, the twin sister of Apollo, whose temple is in Persia and who represents the power of generation (see Munn, 2000). Scholars of the History have long noted the presence of dyads within the History, some more obvious than others: peace-war, motion-rest, Greekness-barbarianism, Athens-Sparta, justice-necessity (see chiefly Strauss 1963). But if we take seriously this pairing of Thucydides and Artemis, a pairing that would substitute our author for the embodiment of divine reason, then we might add to the list the following dyads: human-divine, male-female, and reason-generation. Since they open and close the History, Thucydides invites us to wonder what these dualities mean for everything that comes between them. The immediate contexts of both the beginning and conclusion of the History shed light on this question.

Tissaphernes goes to Ephesus to sacrifice to Artemis because he needs to heal a breach between himself and the Spartans, his nominal allies in what had become a joint war against Athenian imperialism. Among the many reasons for this breach is the fact that the Spartans had been helping Greek cities in Asia Minor defect from Persian rule. The citizens of one in

particular, Andtandrus, sought help from the Spartans because one of Tissaphernes' lieutenants slaughtered the leading men of their neighbours, the Delians, and he did so under the thinnest of pretexts. Naturally, the Antandrians feared that they might be next (VIII.107-09). The Delians, however, were not Persians but Greeks. They had moved to the Aeolic city of Attramyttium because the Athenians had driven them from their homes in an earlier effort to purify (yet again) the holy island of Delos (V.1), *the* center of worship for Apollo. Tissaphernes thus sacrifices to Artemis to propitiate the goddess on behalf of his lieutenant's slaughter of the inhabitants of her twin brother's holy island.

As with "Artemis," this story about the Delians draws our attention to the beginning of the History, in this case to the archaeology wherein Thucydides charts the emergence and growth of Greek civilization out of a pre-Hellenic past whose "greatest achievement" belonged to Minos: he subdued the rampant practice of piracy in the Mediterranean by seizing for himself and his sons the Cycladic islands (of which Delos was one), expelling their inhabitants (at that time, the Carians of Asia Minor), colonizing them and "outlawing" any future piracy (I.4). It is by virtue of Minos' successes here that later generations could come to view piracy as a shameful thing (I.8; Burns 2010, 36). But by casting Minos as little more than the most powerful and successful pirate of his day, Thucydides also revises the mythopoetic account of the archaic past wherein divine justice governed the affairs of men. In its place, Thucydides intimates that men were governed by the force of internal necessities and thus lacked the moral freedom that would make divine justice intelligible. The concluding scene of his History would suggest that affairs in the Mediterranean are returning to this pre-Hellenic (i.e., barbaric) past. Not only are Greek powers upsetting the affairs of those from Asia Minor, with Athens reprising the role of Minos, but Tissaphernes, using a religious ceremony to advance his political career, subordinates piety to the political interests of his satrapy. The calculus of power recommends this move. At the end of the History, the compulsory considerations of self-interest, and not piety or divine justice, appear authoritative.

While Minos helps establish the peace and commerce that makes Greekness possible, neither he nor his rule are "Greek." What distinguishes Greekness from all other pre-Hellenic life (as well as its barbaric future), is a paradoxical love of victory. For the Greeks, as opposed to the barbarians, victory—in political life (I.6.4) or in Olympic contests (I.6.5)—is sought as confirmation of one's superior nature. Such natural superiority is revealed primarily through (what appears to be) the voluntary restraint of one's own power, a trait that Thucydides describes

as "measured" (*metria*). The Spartan political elite revealed their superior self-sufficiency to those they would rule by voluntarily adopting a style of dress worn by the poor. The Olympic wrestlers did so by competing nude. And the wealthy Athenians did so by discarding the adornments that honored their autochthonous gods (*tettigon*, I.6.3; see Hornblower 1991, 26-27), distancing themselves from such deities, their ties to their particular land that those gods represented and the neediness that both their gods and their land signified. On the basis of such openness to nature, and thus to the truth, the self-sufficient life-in-common that defines Greek politics becomes possible (Dobski 2007, 100-2; 2010, 143-47). But this also means that the core of Greek politics emerges from an unstable combination of the desire to display openly one's radical freedom, such as one often finds in tyranny or imperial rule, with the need to devote one's self freely to the law. This is a volatile mix whose darkest implication suggests that what we understand to be both injustice *and* justice originates from the same source, namely the concern to overcome our fundamental and enduring human neediness. That such a political antithesis should share a common origin resonates poetically with many of the dyads interwoven throughout the History, but none more so than the "twin" bookends discussed above. But it remains unclear how Thucydides understands the Greek openness to nature, at work in the desire to disclose one's greatness for all with eyes to see, to cohere with its concomitant need to demonstrate such greatness through a public display of voluntary self-sacrifice.

Thucydides' final framing chapters point to a possible, if puzzling, solution even as, or precisely because, they recall the opening of the History. Just before his conclusion about Greek affairs in Persia, Thucydides notes the emergence of the regime of The Five Thousand in Athens, praising it as the best government the Athenians had in his lifetime (VIII.97.2). This government was known for being "measured" (*metria*) in part because it effected in its form a judicious mix of the one, the few and the many. This remarkable, if short-lived, regime managed to accommodate the ambitions of Alcibiades and the need for the consent of both the oligarchs and democrats and it did so without either permitting the tyrannical excess of one or subjecting all its parts to the rule of a single principle. The "measured" quality that defined Greekness seems here to consist in effecting a balance of particular contending forces, one that recognizes their independent integrity within the entire community and thereby refrains from trying to impose a single dominant view on its multiple, discrete parts. But if this is true, then it seems the meaning of Greekness has changed; in contrast to those early, wealthy Athenians, the

parts that make up The Five Thousand do not attempt to display their complete freedom which, in their case, might come through the mastery of the city and its empire. And the balance that this regime effects between the parts of the community is, unlike the Spartan elite, *not* predicated on the belief that the voluntary sacrifice of one's power (i.e., agreeing to accept one's limited role within the new order) constitutes the means by which one part of the city can demonstrate its greatness and thus its claim to rule over the others. What happened to produce this change in Greekness?

Thucydides' Speech

We can begin to unravel Thucydides' approach to the "measure" of Greekness by understanding Thucydides' *logos* and how that *logos* is revealed through the political action of the History. Much ink has been spilled over Thucydides' programmatic statements about his handling of speeches and deeds (I.20-22) and justly so (Orwin 1989). Given the difficulty of this famous passage, we shall limit ourselves here merely to observing that Thucydides' statements effectively blur the distinctions between speeches and deeds, on the one hand, and between his concern with historical accuracy and his own view of what was necessary on the other, distinctions that he is so careful to draw and on which his explicit remarks here insist. If we assume that Thucydides is in control of his work, as he surely is, then we must resolve this apparent contradiction. One possibility suggests itself. By insisting on such distinctions, his explicit remarks compel us to question their integrity, thereby effectively blurring the differences between them. By doing so, he can point to the true character of such distinctions in a manner faithful to their absence while avoiding the very fallacy he seeks to correct. Such indirectness might prove unbelievable were it not for the argument, placed in the mouth of one of the work's most humane actors, showing the necessity of such deception (III.43).

Now the significance of such blurring comes into focus when we consider that Thucydides presents his historiographical principles in competition with the *logoi* of the poets, and in particular the poetry of Homer (I.10, 21). According to Thucydides' presentation in the archaeology, poets like Homer tend to magnify or adorn the truth. Later, Thucydides links Homer to the political psychology defining Greekness when he informs us that Homer sought victory in his own contests at Delos (III.104); like the Olympic wrestlers whose self-display follows the emergence of Greek politics, the blind poet wanted to display his superior

nature for all with eyes to see. Thucydides' artistry invites us to conclude that the public display of one's superior nature is a form of political overstatement. If Thucydides is to defeat Homeric poetry, then his treatment of speeches and deeds must not magnify or overstate the truth; he must not "speak" hyperbolically by trying to preserve or insist upon certain distinctions that might not otherwise exist.

In Book VIII we learn that the emergence of the measured Five Thousand is precipitated by a "re-founding" of the Athenian democracy at Samos (VIII.76). And this re-founding was set in motion by the murder of Hyperbolus (VIII.73-4), Thucydides' *only* reference to a prominent Athenian whose actions were otherwise well known to classical authors like Aristophanes (*Peace* 681, 690, 1319; *Acharnians* 846; *Knights* 1304, 1363; *Clouds* 551, 557, 623, 876, 1065; *Wasps* 1007; *Thesmophoriazusae* 840; *Frogs* 570) and Plutarch (*Nicias* 11, *Alcibiades* 10-15, *Aristides* 7). It is not altogether fanciful to think that Thucydides, by showing how The Five Thousand is made possible by the elimination of a kind of "political hyperbole," invites us to link his speech to the virtue of a community he praises most highly. Perhaps the greatness of Thucydides' speech, like the "measure" achieved by parts of The Five Thousand, is revealed by its refusal to claim to *deserve* victory on account of its voluntary self-restraint; perhaps Thucydides improves on the "Olympian" Homer because his handling of speeches and deeds reflects a restraint that conforms to the truth about the relationship between the two, one which preserves their interwoven partiality within the context supplied by the History and which can only be grasped through the prism of Thucydides' remarkable indirection. Of course, as it turns out even The Five Thousand cannot come into being without at least *some* hyperbole; Alcibiades' reintegration into Athenian politics, so critical to the success of this regime, is made possible partly by his own exaggerations to the Athenian naval forces at Samos (lit. *uperballon*, VIII.56.4, 81.2). If Thucydides' work is to be a "possession for all time" and not some fleeting political mirage, then his "measured" speech must surpass the virtue of even this regime.

Book VIII begins with the Athenians, struck by news of the disaster in Sicily, putting their affairs on a more moderate basis (VIII.1.3). But by the end of Book VIII Athens is under a measured regime (VIII.97). One of the critical steps along this path from moderate to measured is Athens's "voluntary" change from traditional democracy to the oligarchic rule of The Four Hundred. This change was effected by the dialectical exchanges of the oligarch Pisander (VIII.53); in his conversations with individual defenders of Athenian democracy, Pisander convinced his reluctant opponents, one by one, to set aside their hope that the war could yet be

won if they retained their cherished ancestral regime. Similarly, the Athenian ambassadors to Melos, through their conversation with the Melians, sought to cure their interlocutors of their hopes that the gods, the Spartans, or chance would help them avoid defeat and enslavement at the hands of the Athenians (V.85-113). And in an earlier (and much neglected) exchange between an Ambraciot herald and Athenian soldier (III.113), we see dialogue reveal the truth about an annihilation so extensive and so devastating that it surpasses belief, leading the wailing and panic-stricken herald to abandon the pious task on which he was sent. If Socrates is right that dialectic is like rubbing two sticks together (*Republic* 435a), then Thucydides reminds us that such "back and forth," while illuminating, can also be politically destructive—especially when it arises naturally (II.76). Thucydides casually drops this "aside" in his account of the siege of Plataea. There his treatment of the daring Plataean escape makes it clear that the ability to find "the measure" (*ton metron*; III.20.4) is necessary if one hopes to be saved, even if it means that one cannot also save the community and many of its members. If we are to grasp in Thucydides' speech his appreciation of "the measure," one that can save us even if it means foregoing some of our most cherished beliefs and attachments, then we must read Thucydides' History dialectically.

To this way of thinking then the History can be read as revealing Thucydides' own education (Dobski 2010, 131-32), one learned at the feet of that violent teacher war (III.82). To access that education, we need to remain attentive to the structure of the work, a structure that, as much as its speeches and narrative, conveys an argument about the priority of politics to human wisdom. For the purposes of the present sketch, we can identify four major parts of that structure: Part One—Book II.1 to Book IV.133, or more specifically to V.17; Part Two—Book V.18 to V.113; Part Three—Book VI.1 to Book VII.87; Part Four—Book VIII. It is true that these divisions follow the major acts of the war and that they coincide with the "Books" that tradition gives us. But they also represent the steps of an argument, internal to the History, whose logic I hope to clarify. Needless to say, what follows can only constitute a sketch of the History's structure, one whose contours I draw more sharply than the History would otherwise allow. Much that needs to be said will have to remain unspoken.

The Structure of the History: Part One

Thucydides opens Part One and Part Two by noting that his account of the war will follow natural or seasonal chronology (II.1, V.20.2). He does not follow the customs of his time by recording events according to who

held high office (i.e., archons) or who won high honors at the time of a particular event (i.e., Olympic victors). After all, people disagree about when a particular term of office began or ended and the celebration of religious festivals or athletic contests can be altered and even suspended entirely by human agreement (V.20.2). The change of seasons, however, occurs regularly and entirely independent of human agency. And yet in both passages Thucydides identifies the years in question by referring to archonships, Olympic games, religious festivals and priestess-ships (II.2, V.20.1). Thucydides' puzzling procedure here forces us to pose a question: is the proper source of human guidance a nature that is the same always and everywhere and knowable to the unaided human mind or are we to take our bearings from the political community, whose laws and customs vary from place to place and time to time? Throughout most of Part One, Thucydides approaches this question solely from the perspective of the political community. Framed largely by the career of the Argive priestess Chrysis (II.2-IV.133), Part One examines a conception of politics which understands itself to be an authoritative, self-sufficient whole, one to which all else, even religious custom, is subordinate; as such the regular movements of nature, of growth and decay, are irrelevant from the perspective of the law. It is perhaps fitting then that we find early in this Part Pericles' famous Funeral Oration (II.35-46), a speech which gives luminous expression to what political life can mean at its highest—the glorious path to individual human fulfillment through a deathless reputation unblemished by time and fortune. But of course, this is not all.

As even the casual reader of the History knows, Pericles' eulogy is followed immediately by the devastating plague at Athens (II.48-2.54). And throughout the braided narrative of Book II, we learn of Athenian alliances with the Macedonians and Odrysians (II.29, 80, 95-101), massive and mighty kingdoms both, each on the fringe of civilized life and barbaric existence (cf. also II.15.2 and 97.6-6). In this context, Pericles' golden words are like that partial solar eclipse recorded at II.28, one where the stars can be seen at day-time: against the darkened backdrop of barbarian constancy and the plague, the brilliant Periclean Athens shines, dimmed perhaps, but not obscured by the less impressive, if longer lasting, luminaries of Perdiccas and Sitalces. And yet, if part of what makes Greekness distinct is a devotional submission to the common good, then Thucydides' artistry here, which suggests a deeper link between Greeks and barbarians, leads us to wonder about the integrity of the element that defines Greek politics. From this perspective, the first section of Part One (II.2-III.85) examines the limits to a conception of politics rooted in divine

and ancestral authority. And this entire section is framed by the Theban assault on Plataea.

The initial Theban sally on the city is frustrated by Plataeans digging through the walls of their private homes to coordinate their resistance (II.3). By breaking down what separates them as particular individuals the Plataeans courageously secure what is common to them all (cf. I.93.2). Thucydides builds on this wonderfully rich image when he turns to the first Spartan invasion of Attica. Faced with this threat Pericles ordered those who lived in the countryside to move to the city and take shelter behind its walls. As they did so, these people carried in with them the doors, shutters and walls of their country homes (II.14). That the Athenians clung to what privately separated them even as they "united" (cf. II.16.2) proves disconcerting for a city that sought to place the good of the community over that of the individual. And yet, as the experience of the plague in Athens reveals, there is such a thing as being too close together (II.53 and II.16-17); perhaps distance between us—such as is provided by walls and doors—is necessary. To have a healthy city requires more than just strong walls protecting "us" from "them"; it requires striking a judicious balance between mixing together and separating its own various distinct parts.

It is the genius of Pericles, a man most capable in speech and deed, that he is able to "mix and separate" so effectively (I.139). For instance, Pericles is the only speaker in the entire History to deliver a speech that produced unanimity in his audience (I.140-144), getting his contentious citizens to agree on all of his points both general and particular (I.145). Later, when the Spartans ravaged the Attic countryside, Pericles sent the knights, simmering with rage and resentment behind the walls of Athens, on ships especially designed to carry horses to attack the Peloponnesian coast. By placing the land-force par excellence on water (II.56; cf. II.17, 23; for another approach entirely, see II.31) Pericles was able to defuse civic tensions. And this ability to join and separate parts of the city in various combinations for the common good highlights Thucydides' otherwise obscure reference to the long-standing Athenian practice of using the city's ancient fountain to consecrate marriages (II.15.5), unions critical to the successful foundation of a community. In both cases, we see that whether the "parts" are oligarchic and democratic or male and female, "water," or motion, can be used to elide the distinctions between them, allowing one to create a union that also preserves particularity.

Of course, such unions can be fragile, especially when the moral and political categories binding them possess this same kind of mixed quality. Thucydides' account of the origins of Greekness already anticipated some

of the difficulties with a conception of justice that tries to combine a radical love of freedom with devotional submission to the law. But these difficulties are given their fullest treatment in the Corcyrean civil war (III.69-85), whose report follows the pitiful surrender of Plataea to Sparta and Thebes (68, especially 68.3; cf. II.3,14 and I.93.2). The sharp clash of partisan interest in Corcyra punctures the image of a hermetically sealed political community, one defined by a shared conception of the just and the good. Driven by the compulsory power of the apparent good (III.82; 45), individuals are no longer able to articulate a vision of the common good robust enough to convince them to set aside their own self-interested pursuits. In Corcyra, peaceful and civilized life gives way to a complete or nearly-complete Hobbesian State of Nature, one in which the laws of the gods and of men are disregarded almost without shame. *Almost*. For while the conception of politics as a self-sufficient whole rooted in divine and ancestral authority might prove problematic, Thucydides prevents us from dismissing political life completely. After all, even as they tear each other apart, the Corcyreans do so in the name of or motivated by moral categories (III.82.8), albeit ones now distorted by the pressures of the civil war (Ahrensdorf 2000, 587-88). It seems that while one can bend the meaning of words, one cannot do the same to human nature. Perhaps then there is hope. Perhaps supremely talented individuals can look to nature as a standard for their conduct of political affairs. Perhaps nature can authorize laws whose weakness in the face of human passions suggested that their power rested on little more than convention.

Thucydides appears to take up this alternative from III.86 to V.17, where he presents the careers of two generals, Demosthenes, an Athenian, and Brasidas, *the* outstanding Spartan, two men who, in many ways, reflect opposed views of nature. It is true that both men possess truly outstanding natures, ones whose virtues owe virtually nothing to the cities they fight for. But Demosthenes approaches nature as a guide and thus a limiting factor; one that can be used, imitated and perhaps even improved upon, but not one that can be overcome and disregarded. Thus Demosthenes' initial failures in Aetolia (III.97-98) and his later successes at Olpae (III.108, 110-11), Idomene (III.112), Naupactus (III.102) and Pylos (IV.8-36) and even his later failure at Epipolae in Sicily (VII.43-45) can be understood against the backdrop of the earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes whose report introduces his story (III.87-89). Moreover, Demosthenes' successes here derive in no small part from attention to the proper mixing and separating of forces (see 107.4, contrast Ambraciots with the Mantineans at 108.3; 111.3-4). His victories thus recall Pericles' unique ability to take the measure of and balance the contending forces of

Athenian politics, one that Thucydides elsewhere suggests (II.102) is predicated on a mechanistic view of nature that rejects the possibility of providential gods who intervene in our affairs according to our understandings of justice.

For Brasidas, on the other hand, alone in Thrace with an army full of Helots, nature is *his* nature and not the principles of the material world through which he marches on the way to more conquests. His greatness is not the product of harnessing the physical world to fit his designs; the greatness of Brasidas' nature comes to sight in his sweeping disregard of any and all concerns with the Spartan rule of law. It is what allows him to break with his ally Perdiccas (IV.83), to procure deceitfully the revolt of Athenian subjects (IV.84, esp. 86.6-7, 88, 105) and to openly and clearly violate the truce signed by Sparta and Athens (IV.120-1, 123, 134). Like an earthquake at the time of an eclipse and new moon (IV.52), Brasidas' victorious march through Thrace exhibits an unbridled nature in motion with no cosmic light to give it its bearings or to check its flow.

In the end however, the alternatives represented by Demosthenes and Brasidas are inadequate from Thucydides' perspective. Demosthenes' attachment to a nature that is apparently indifferent to human affairs reflects a particularly Athenian turn of mind, one whose openness to nature represents the flip-side of a pious concern for what one might call "divine" or unchanging wholes. Like the Athenians at Delos, whose increasing efforts to liberate Apollo's holy island from all that generates and de-generates reflect a pious concern with unblemished wholes (I.8, II.8, III.104, V.1, VIII.10), Demosthenes appears to operate militarily on a view of nature whose mechanistic principles are unchanging (compare Nicias at Minoa, III.51 with Demosthenes at Leucas, III.94). It is true that his signature victory at Pylos derived from an appreciation of the nature of *that* particular place (IV.3.2; cf. IV.4.3 contra Strauss 1963, 159). But his strategy there was earned through the hard lessons of Aetolia, a strategy that he used first against the Ambraciots and parts of which he appears to re-create for a third time en route to Sicily (VII.26, 27 and 31; cf. IV.28, 30, 32 and III.97). Insofar as nature remains unchanging and intelligible to Demosthenes, and therefore something that humans can manage for their purposes, it is not entirely indifferent to human concerns. And when we view his career as a whole Demosthenes appears as a man who, at crucial moments, relies too much on trust (Orwin 1994, 122). He is too trusting of his fortune in Aetolia (III.97, 98.4), too trusting in the stability of nature in Sicily (and perhaps even at Pylos), and, for a man willing to contradict *two* generals before Pylos (IV.3), he is too trusting in the judgment of Nicias at

Syracuse (compare his judgment at VII.47.3 and 49.2-3 with his decision at 49.4; see also his "last words" at VII.78.1 and 77).

Brasidas, on the other hand, cannot represent an adequate solution to the problems of political life if only because he seems to seek to leave behind political life completely. In being crowned by the Scioneans as an Olympic champion (IV.121) and venerated by the Amphipolitans as the founder of their colony (V.11), Brasidas wins those glories and honors sought by aspiring tyrants (I.126) and which are reserved for only the most revered, an immortality that belongs to those able to transcend political life entirely. And yet, Brasidas can only win the open acknowledgment that he seeks for himself by a kind of noble suicide—an act of selfless service to the common good in pursuit of individual glory—in which he leaves behind the means that allowed him to demonstrate his greatness in the first place (Burns 2011, 520-21). There may be no greater illustration of the incoherence at the core of Greekness than the illustrious end of this most famous Spartan. It is particularly fitting that the transpolitical trajectory of Brasidas' career emerges against a backdrop in which the inhabitants of Delos are expelled (V.1), Cleon is dispatched (V.10), Thucydides is exiled from Athens (V.26.5, IV.105) and Chrysis is on the run from Argos (IV.133). As the first ten years of the war come to an end, it seems that everyone is leaving politics.

The Structure of the History: Part Two

Part Two offers something of a backlash against the problems posed to regimes like Sparta by the natures of a community's most impressive individuals. In this Part, beginning at V.18, one encounters the text of a series of treaties and alliances (V.18, 23, 47, 77, 79; see 36, 45, 50 for even more treaties and alliances that are attempted but never consummated and 31, 39, 32, and 41 for the details of alliances, an armistice, and a truce that are discussed, but not recorded verbatim). These documents represent the effort to concretize and thus stabilize the contending interests of parties jockeying for power. What Pericles managed to keep in motion domestically, these treaties try to stabilize "permanently" in the international realm. But all of these treaties and alliances, forged under the awning of the Peace of Nicias, fail; and they fail because they insist on the sharpness of distinctions that political and human life do not allow, aspiring to a fixity of particular interests and needs. Thus the absurd length of these treaties (50 and 100 years respectively) and their detailed stipulations on oaths, each more elaborate than the next (V.18.9, 23.4, 47.8-9), testify to an implicit gap between what justice always requires and what we think

our self-interest can at times demand (cf. Alcibiades' "treaty" at V.77). Of course, the failure of treaties here to secure their goals has more to do with the limitations of the kind of political speech they represent than it does the ever-shifting forces of politics. After all, the rule of Pericles and The Five Thousand (both of which earn Thucydides' genuine, if conditional, praise, II.65, VIII.97) respect the dynamics of a community's parts within a coherent political whole. At the end of Book V, Thucydides illustrates the limitations to political speech in the dialogue between Athenians and Melians, the substance and outcome of which bears on the status of justice among nations.

Contrary to the long-standing claim that the Athenians at Melos represent hard-headed realists, it is the Melians, not the Athenians, who introduce the "realist ethic"; they tell the Athenians it is not unreasonable for men in their position to tell lies if such lies will save them (V.88). But the Athenians reject the need to resort to deception to make their case and instead insist upon a rhetorical candor that runs contrary to their political objectives. It is in the very frankness of their famed Athenian thesis (that the strong rule where they can and the weak suffer what they must) that the Athenians reveal their moral concerns; they want the Melians to surrender to them on the grounds of their self-evident superiority. For them it is not so much that their "might" makes them "right" as it is that their being "right" makes them "mighty." But the Athenians fail to translate the sign of their superior strength into evidence of their superior goodness. Even more than that, the Athenians make the contradictory claim that their virtue makes them noble and is thus its own reward even as it is the means by which they are to earn rule over the Melians, a rule which in turn will signify their superior worthiness. Though they would correct the naïve hopefulness of the Melians, it is the hope of the Athenians for a world that recognizes and rewards their superior goodness, a hope no less naïve than that of the Melians, that needs correcting.

The Melian dialogue, by revealing the incoherence of the Athenians' efforts, suggests that any attempt by purely human means to disclose openly and candidly the link between superior moral goodness and superior power requires a less direct route, a less candid route, a less explicit route, one that cannot be captured in speeches and certainly not captured in treaties. For while gods might yet bestow blessings and curses upon human beings, they cannot be known to do so on the basis of the moral understanding moving the Athenians here and at the core of Greek politics. If we remain concerned with discovering an intelligible order to our moral and political lives, then we must be open to the possibility that the truth of about where we should look for those limits that may rightfully

guide us—nature or custom—cannot be openly or explicitly revealed to men.

This may explain why Thucydides notes at the beginning of Book VI that the poetic accounts of the ancient past in Sicily are irrelevant from his perspective (VI.2). If their claims of revelation cannot provide us with knowledge about what they reveal, then we cannot confirm or deny their stories about the monstrous Cyclopses and Lastrygonians, beings who lack origin, terminus and detailed particularity (VI.2). We therefore need not bother engaging these accounts. Thucydides thus draws a contrast here with his approach to the poets in Book I and this contrast, combined with his Sicilian archaeology, signals that he is going to start anew. In fact, in Part Three (Books VI and VII), Thucydides doesn't just set aside the poetic treatment of the gods. He also is remarkably silent about those non-human motions that cause so much suffering in the rest of the History (though see VI.70, VII.53 and 79). Thucydides' account of the Sicilian campaign focuses solely on human nature as it comes to sight through Athens' engagement with Syracuse.

The Structure of the History: Part Three

Syracuse represents the Athenian alternative to Athens (VII.55). Not only is her government democratic, but her citizens are innovative, deliberative, and daring. And yet they appear to combine these traits without the frenzied erotic longing to rule that plagues her Athenian counterparts. The purpose of reflecting on this engagement between the two cities thus seems twofold: first, to show the political consequences of an unrestrained *eros* and second, to see if it was possible for a community that otherwise resembled Athens to regulate the erotic impulse to pursue empire. Of the latter, Thucydides' narrative shows Syracuse's imperial restraint to be the product of circumstance—the absence of power and opportunity—not of a principled or lawful resistance to it. As for the former, the erotic love of liberty found in the private romantic pursuits of the Athenian tyrannicides (VI.53-59) becomes in Athens a tireless push for democratic freedom and the limitless pursuit of empire: first Syracuse, then Italy, then Carthage, then Egypt, then Sparta, at least if Alcibiades is to be believed (VI.90; VI.18). In her citizens the pursuit of empire becomes the limitless pursuit of gain, or comfort or security (VI.24.3). In seeking mastery over the entire Mediterranean Athens aspires to an unrivaled freedom from anything that might serve to limit her as a community or as individuals. One senses that her imperial trajectory, like

that of Brasidas earlier, finds its logical conclusion in the transcendence of political life altogether.

Athens at its peak, *Periclean* Athens, proved so successful because it largely managed to respect and preserve the political distinctions—and the tensions between them—from which the city's political energies derived. But in pursuing the conquest of all of Sicily, Athens sought to overcome or disregard any such distinctions as unnecessary limits on its own erotic ambitions. The results of such an effort prove disastrous. Thus we see the Athenians, in their daring night attack on the heights above Syracuse, fail to take Epipolae because the darkness of the night and the similarity of human forms made it impossible for them to distinguish friend from foe (VII.44-45). The Doric language spoken by both armies also made it possible for the Sicilians to steal the watchword of the attackers and for the paeans sung by both sides to strike terror into the hearts of the Athenians. While the Athenians share a common speech and "forms" with their enemies, it is the failure to denote particulars—those details that give to speech and forms their political and human relevance (cf. VI.2)—that results in a defeat, and in some cases the self-destruction, of the Athenian force.

The disaster at Epipolae was followed by others. In an effort to save themselves, the Athenians attempt to "break out" of the Great Harbor. Thucydides describes their crushing defeat here, one determined as much by the hoplites on the decks of the triremes as by the triremes themselves, as a land-battle at sea. The defeated Athenians were thus forced to retreat over land, with troops suffering from dysentery brought on by their having encamped near a marshland; that is, their bodies were degraded by flux brought on by something that wasn't quite water or land (VII.47). And while his men suffered from too much flux, Nicias, by contrast, suffered from an insufficiency of motion (kidney stones). It is this same "Nician problem" that was responsible for the devastating loss of the fortifications and materiel at Plemmyrium (VII.74 and 4).

In an earlier effort to extend their siege works, the Athenians tried to cross the marsh by laying down doors and planks; the same material they once used to define and distinguish families from each other they now use for a common purpose: to overcome a categorical obfuscation found in nature (VI.101). The tactic worked and paved the way for (what should have been) the successful investment of Syracuse. Though Athens ultimately fails in Sicily, Thucydides' artistry tempts us here with the intriguing possibility that certain, well-defined political forms are critical to those particular distinctions that make our world intelligible. But the Athenians rejected these distinctions in their self-interested drive for gain

and glory. It is perhaps fitting then that their final defeat in Sicily takes place at the Assinarus river where, Thucydides notes, their exhausted soldiers "fell in with no order" (VII.84.3) and in the ensuing chaos were butchered by their enemies; their selfish pursuits dissolve in an excess of motion that destroys both particularity and the wholes that particularity helps define.

None of this should come as a surprise. From the very beginning, the Sicilian campaign was predicated on an almost willful disregard of political distinctions. Thucydides tells us that the Athenians were ignorant of Sicily, of its size and its mixed Hellenic and barbarian population (VI.1.1; even its character as an *island*, VI.1.2), despite a long experience with the place (I.44.3, III.86.1, 90.2, 115.2, 115.5, IV.2 and IV.65). When the Athenians voted for the expedition to Sicily, our author quietly indicates that while "*eros* fell upon all alike" (VI.24.3) to set sail there was still a part of the city that silently objected (VI.24.4). Athens sees a unified whole where there is yet division. And this political blindness at home leads to strategic errors abroad. Thus, despite Nicias' reminders that the Athenians will need cavalry to counter the Sicilian horse (VI.20.4, 21.1), the Athenians only take *thirty horses* with their initial forces (VI.43), a decision made all the more shocking by the fact that Alcibiades, one of the commanding generals here, depended on horses for his own Olympic victory (VI.16.1). Like the Athenians, Alcibiades thinks he is more self-sufficient than he is; had he reflected more deeply on the character of his own Olympic victory, he might have seen that Athenian success in Sicily would have required the knights, that part of the community almost certainly opposed to the expedition. And yet to have recognized this and to have incorporated the knights into the expedition would have required the Athenians to limit what they hoped to achieve in light of their essentially fractured character as a political community. While the disaster in Sicily provides them with a brutal reminder of their limitations, such an experience does not lead them to moderate their hopes in the kind of wholeness that political life can provide. Thucydides' presentation of the end of the Athenian expedition to Sicily suggests that the Athenians' simply substitute their grasp of a regular and predictable nature (VI.70) with a cosmos whose gods, at this point, must appear to them as arbitrary and hence inscrutable (VII.53, VII.79; cf. VII.77 and VII.86). Athenian confidence is replaced by Athenian despair.

The Structure of the History: Part Four

The destruction of the Athenian force in Sicily shows us the dangers to both politics and intelligibility of an erotic longing unrestrained by any limits, natural or divine. We thus leave this story impressed with the need for moral and intellectual limits. That need, combined with the History's critique of our ability to know and thus be guided by categorical wholes that exist in any pure or absolute sense, recommends to us a return to the kind of limits that one finds in Greek, and especially Athenian, political life. We make this return in Book VIII. Here Thucydides charts a course from a Spartan-like conception of moderation to a measured regime of The Five Thousand. In Sparta's three treaties with the Persians (VIII.17-18; 36-37; 58), in the oligarchic Four Hundred at Athens (67, 70), and in Thucydides' revealing comments about Sparta's slave population (40), we see the brutality of "moderation" at work; all of these represent forceful efforts to put an end to the clash between particular interests, needs, and conceptions of what is good, just and noble. But at the end of the History the rule of such "violence" is replaced by a measured regime that joins together contentious parts of the city without privileging one part over the others. While not produced by force, it is worth observing here that such a measured balance was based on an experience with extreme necessity and not, say, the more traditional (i.e., religious) sources of law and order.

Given that The Five Thousand proved remarkably unstable, devolving into full-blown democracy not long after it was established, it is unlikely that Thucydides presents it as an example for other communities to follow. And yet his praise of this regime suggests that we are to take seriously its chief virtue and the encounter with necessity of which it is the product. Such an encounter required the Athenians to see things as they are and not as they wished them to be. In this case, that meant that parts of the community, if only temporarily, had to suspend their claim to rule over others on account of their worth or deserving, on account of their willingness to accept their limited place in the new political order. This new, refined view of Greekness can endure only if one works through the contradictory character of justice, the concern for which fuels the Athenian hopes for a world in which their superior goodness will be recognized and rewarded. But to acknowledge and accept the necessity of such contradictions is also to accept that we cannot hope to know wholes, categories or forms apart from the adventitious particulars that make them humanly relevant. It is to accept that we cannot get beyond political life—the realm of contingency—if we hope to satisfy our concern to know "the clear truth" (I.20) about human affairs. And this means that our capacity to

know the world is conditioned by the very insight which occasioned such knowledge; the problematic character of Greekness provides us with both the means by which political life can be known for what it is and the character of that which is to be known.

By being incomplete, the final sentence of the History reflects these insights into our inability to know wholes. And with its final word it brings to a close the "twin frame" that opened the work, one possible interpretation of which is that reason (i.e., "Thucydides") is itself a form of generation (i.e., "Artemis"). Or to put it differently, perhaps the kind of reason embodied in Greekness generates the intelligible conditions on the basis of which the world can be known and thus can *be* fully. This interpretive suggestion can only be raised here. But its possibility should invite us to think more deeply about the artistry at work in the History and the artful product in which it issues. Thucydides' emphasis on Greekness and its fragility, a fragility reflected in its genesis and decay in the History's opening and closing, do not lead him to despair of an enduring and intelligible order to human nature. It simply means that if we are to access this order and intelligibility, then we require particularly "Greek" manifestations of our humanity to come into existence. Human wisdom it seems requires the presence of a particular kind of politics, one which Thucydides experienced for himself and which he allows us to experience in the artfully structured pages of his History.

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CHAPTER THREE

EURIPIDES' *ION*: IDENTITY, LEGITIMACY, AND THE TIES THAT BIND

MARLENE K. SOKOLON

May no other from any other House
grasp and rule the city, except
one of the noble Erechtheids . . .
(author's translation: Euripides 1999, 1055-60)

Euripides' *Ion* is based on a rather obscure myth, even for his fifth-century audience. Surviving references to Ion are few and, other than Euripides' play, there is no mention of his immediate progeny. Despite this, the Athenians did identify as Ionian and recognized Ion as the progenitor of the migrant Ionian people. This made Ion central to one version of the Athenian foundation myth. Competing with this Ionian story, however, was a foundation myth that recognized Athenian autochthony. For the ancient Greeks, autochthony meant not only that Athenians were indigenous people who always lived on their land, but that they literally sprang from the earth itself. In the *Ion*, Euripides reworks the story of Athenian founding by bringing together these two competing myths of origin. In doing so, he reveals how foundation stories reflect much more about the needs and desires of the present, than provide an accurate record of the past (Doughtery 1996). For our own present, his retelling remains useful as it simultaneously exposes the necessary role of foundation stories in crafting political identity, as well as the limitations of such stories to provide an unambiguous understanding of the political self. In addition, as Euripides locates the heart of foundation stories in the desire to be "ruled by one's own," he reveals the political problem embedded in determining "who is one's own." Thus, although it might be anachronistic to say that the *Ion* is a play about what we now call nationalism, his exploration of the stories we tell about ourselves and our community uncovers very ancient desires and contradictions which

continue to echo in our present claims of political identity (Hettich 1933; Pozzi 1991).

Euripides' Retelling of the *Ion*

Despite the fact that the play is set at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi, the story is "very Athenian" as it concerns the progeny of the Athenian autochthonous founder Erichthonios (cf. Kovacs 1999; Loraux 1993; Burnett 1971; Zeitlin 1996; Doughtery 1996). The play opens with Hermes telling the backstory of the plot: Creusa, the sole surviving granddaughter of Erichthonios, was raped by Apollo and exposed their child. Unbeknownst to her, Apollo saved the boy and raised him in Delphi; this boy, Ion, is now almost a man. In an ironic twist, Creusa and her current foreign-born husband Xuthus are about to arrive in Delphi to request a cure for their childlessness. Hermes also gives Apollo's foretelling of the tragedy's plot: Apollo will give Ion to Xuthus as his own son and will only reveal the truth to Creusa in Athens; thus, the shameful liaison with her will remain a hidden secret.

Ion makes his entrance carrying Apollo's symbols of the bow and laurel. His celebration to the god is interrupted by the Choral *parodos*. In one of the only existing descriptions of Delphic architecture, this Chorus of Athenian maidservants praise the carvings of the battle between the Olympian gods and monstrous giants (Mastronarde 2003; Zacharia 2003). Creusa then arrives in advance of her husband and meets Ion; their meeting is sympathetic but they do not recognize their family tie. Creusa reveals her intention to consult a secret oracle on behalf of a "friend" who was raped by Apollo. Ion defends the god, but she departs when Xuthus' arrival prevents her from asking "what the god is not willing [to speak]" (Euripides 1999, 375-80, also 810-20, 1055-60). Xuthus consults the Oracle and reappears with the message that his son will be the first person he sees upon exiting the temple; this person is Ion. Ion resists Xuthus' interpretation of the Oracle and notes that, as the bastard son of a foreigner, he will be rejected by the Athenians. Dismissing these concerns, Xuthus decides to spare Creusa's feelings by concealing Ion's "true" identity and presenting him as a guest-friend; a banquet is planned to celebrate Ion's departure.

From this point on, Hermes' prologue description of Apollo's prophecy begins to unravel. Appalled by Xuthus' deceit, the Chorus and the Old Tutor expose his "secret harvest of a child (Euripides 1999, 810-5)" and Creusa is informed that she will remain childless. At this unlucky news, she finally reveals the true story of the rape in Pan's grotto. A plot is

hatched to kill the new usurper by using Creusa's autochthonous inheritance: a twin vial of Gorgon blood (that cures) and venom (that kills). It is decided that Ion will be poisoned at the banquet by the Old Tutor. Their plot is exposed, however, when a bad omen causes Ion to pour out his poisoned wine and a bird dies from drinking this spilt wine.

In the final scene, Ion angrily arrives on stage but is prevented from violating sanctuary and killing Creusa by the Priestess of Apollo. By divine law, anyone, whether criminal or not, who sought sanctuary was considered inviolable; it was a grave violation of law to harm anyone who had claimed such asylum (Sinn 1993; Tomlinson 1976). The Priestess reveals the tokens found with Ion at the temple door: a cradle, a living olive branch, a cloth woven with the Gorgon and serpents, and a golden necklace of snakes. By these signs, Creusa and Ion come to recognize each other as "one's own." Still skeptical that he is the son of Apollo and not the result of an indiscretion with a mortal man, Ion plans to confront the god but is prevented by Athena's *deus ex machina* arrival. She confirms Ion's paternity and gives Apollo's prophesy of the future genealogy of Greece (Euripides 1999, 1550-1605). Ion, the great-grandson of Erichthonios, will become king and his four sons will establish the original Athenian tribes, as well as colonies in the Cyclades, Asia, and Europe. They will take their name "Ionians" after their common forefather. In addition, Creusa will go on to bear two sons with Xuthus: Dorus and Achaeus. These half-brothers will originate the Dorian and Achaean tribes of Greek peoples. Athena also cautions that Xuthus should not be told the truth, but should continue to believe the false oracle that Ion is his son. The play ends with Creusa agreeing to praise Apollo, Athena admitting that the god's "right time" may be considered slow by human standards, and the Chorus praising the noble who receive their just rewards.

Euripides' Innovations in the *Ion*

Unlike the comic playwrights who directly created plots from current events, Euripides followed the tragic convention which focused on a reinvention or retelling of pre-existing mythological stories. In this case, Euripides selected a relatively obscure figure in Greek mythology (Lee 1997; Swift 2008; Kovacs 1999; Pozzi 1991; Doughtery 1996; Hall 1997). Significantly, Ion is never mentioned in the typical lineage of Athenian kings. Fragments from Hesiod's genealogy in the *Catalogue of Women* (2007, F. 9-10) tells a version where, after being expelled from Thessaly, Xuthus marries a daughter of Erechtheus and had two sons called Achaeus and Ion. There is no doubt in this version of Ion's paternal lineage. In

another narrative, Pausanias (1933, 7.1) mentions Ion as the king of the Aegialian Ionians, who are displaced by invaders from their true homeland. Herodotus (2009, 1.145, 7.94, 8.44) echoes a similar account where Athenians came to call themselves Ionians after their migration to Attica following a defeat in their native northern Peloponnesian territory. In Herodotus' account, Ion is not their king but a general. Importantly, despite the obscurity of the Ion myth, there is strong evidence that the Ionian peoples did understand themselves to have a common ancestor and heritage. The Athenians, for example, identified themselves as Ionian at least as early as 600BCE (Hall 1997). Without mentioning Ion specifically, other authors do identify the Athenians with other Ionian *poleis*. In his archeology and elsewhere, for instance, Thucydides (2009, 1.2, 1.63, 7.57) points out common Ionian cultural practices, dress, and religious festivals.

Also important for an interpretation of this play is that Greek mythology portrayed the Ionian identity as less central and less noble in comparison to the other Greek peoples. Their rivals the Spartans, in contrast, traced their lineage to founders such as Dorus, Pelops, and the greatest PanHellenic hero of them all: Heracles (Rose 1958; Loraux 2000). The Spartan myth of origin emphasized not autochthony but the heroic, semi-divine founder who gloriously conquered their land and expelled or subjugated the original inhabitants (Swift 2008). In addition, the major Dorian cities, such as Sparta and Argos/Mycenae, were prominent in Homeric myth. As king of Mycenae, Agamemnon led the Greek armies in the Trojan War; his brother Menelaus, who prompted the war to retrieve his wife, was king of Sparta. Ajax was the only major hero in Homeric epic that came from the area around Attica; however, he was not Athenian as he came from Salamis. In fact, Homer (1996, XIII.685) only mentions the Ionians once in a passage that is considered anachronistic by scholars (Braun 1982). In addition, in the mythological genealogy of Hesiod alluded to above, the Greek founder Hellen (in some accounts the son of Zeus) had three sons: Xuthus, Dorus, and Aeolus. In Hesiod's version, Xuthus is the real father of Ion. This version of the family tree makes the Dorians and Aeolians genealogically primary peoples, with the Ionians a generation further removed from a divine progenitor (Kovacs 1999). From this more typical mythological perspective, the Ionians were a less significant, subjugated, and migratory peoples who came to Attica after being expelled from the northern Peloponnese. Ion, when he does appear in these accounts, is a relatively minor figure and is considered the true son of Xuthus.

With these competing myths in mind, Euripides' potential innovations and reworking of the genealogy of Ion is significant for a political

interpretation of his play. In Euripides' version, Ion is not the son of the mortal Xuthus, but of the god Apollo. There is no clear evidence that this divine lineage existed prior to Euripides' play. Is it possible, due to the established cult of *Apollo Patroos* (Apollo the Father), that Apollo was already an established common ancestral god of the Ionians. The Athenians did build a temple of *Apollo Patroos* in the agora in 340BC. Evidence for Apollo's direct link to Ion, however, only appears in other sources written after Euripides' play (Zacharia 2003; Doughtery 1996; Cole 1997; Hedrick 1988; Conacher 1967). Euripides' new genealogy also makes him the older, half-brother of Dorus and Aeolus who are now children of Xuthus (and not his brothers). Probably most significant, the common ancestor of the Greek people is no longer Hellen but the Athenian Creusa. This retelling essentially inverts the superiority of the Dorian and Aeolian lineage by replacing their authority with the Ionians and, more specifically, the Athenian Ionians.

Another significant genealogical alteration is Euripides' identification of Ion's four sons as Geleon, Hopletes, Argades, and Aigikores. Athena prophesizes that "born of a single branch" (Euripides 1999, 1575-80), these sons will establish the four original Ionian tribes (*phylai*); in 508/7BCE, Cleisthenes' reforms replaced (except for certain religious ceremonies) these four tribes with a new organization of ten tribes based not on family or Ionianism, but on locale or the earth (Woodruff 2005, Zacharia 2003). Athena further prophesizes that "in the fullness of time," these sons will found the Ionian colonies of the Cyclades and coastal cities of Europe and Asia. As several scholars have pointed out (Meltzer 2006; Lee 1997; Doughtery 1996; Loraux 1990), this revamped lineage firmly establishes Athens as the mother-city of all the Ionian Greeks and provides a convenient justification for their leadership of the Delian League. Furthermore, if Zacharia (2003) is correct in dating the play's performance to 412BCE as a response to the disastrous Athenian campaign in Sicily, this new genealogy would provide increased justification for Athenian hegemony over their largely Ionian empire. Finally with Ion's new lineage, as mother-city to all through Creusa, Athens is given primacy over the descendants of the mortal half-brothers Dorus and Aeolus. Thus, Euripides' new pedigree also justifies Athenian rivalry to Sparta for the leadership of PanHellenic policy. In Euripides' new mythology, no longer does Sparta have pre-eminence to justify leadership, such as they did in the mythical Trojan and very real Persian War.

In addition to this change in the parental genealogy of Ion, Euripides also creates a more coherent and linear genealogy of the competing foundation myth to Ionianism: the autochthonous founding of Athens

(Swift 2008; Zacharia 2006; Lee 1997; Loraux 1990, 2000; Saxonhouse 1986; Rosivach 1987). In this rival foundation mythology, autochthony had a double-meaning. On the one hand, as the ancient historians and rhetoricians stressed, Athenian autochthony emphasized the uninterrupted continuity of its people without external invasion. In Thucydides' archeology (2009, 1.2), for example, he notes that the Athenians had not been invaded (ironically, due to poor soil) and, thus "the Athenians ruled always (*aei*);" in other words, they ruled their land over successive generations without invasion or migration (Loraux 2000). Other rhetoricians, such as Demosthenes (1930, 261) and Lysis (2004, 17), also stress this continuity of Athenian rule (Champion 2009). The autochthony of the *Ion*, however, stresses not only uninterrupted rule, but also literal autochthony: the Athenians are men born from the earth itself (*auto-chthōn*) or earthborn men (*gegeneis*) (Rosivach 1987). The myth of autochthony was not unique to Athens as there were several stories of earthborn men in Greek mythology. The most famous of these stories is the sown men (*spartoi*) of Thebes. In the Theban myth, in order to found the city, the peripatetic Phoenician Cadmus slew the dragon which guarded the Theban sacred spring and sowed its teeth; from these teeth sprung up fully-armed soldiers who immediately set upon each other. Only five sown men survived this initial battle to found Thebes with Cadmus. It is for this reason that Plato (1968, 414b) calls his own earthborn myth of the metals "a Phoenician tale" (Saxonhouse 1986). Mythology also reports that Zeus raised earthborn men to accompany his son Aiakos as sailors; other autochthon founders include Pelasgos founder of Arcadia, Anax founder of Miletos, and Lelex founder of Lakonia (Clark 2012; Hall 1997). In addition, as several scholars have also noted (Swift 2008; Mastronarde 2003; Zacharia 2003), there was also a darker, more sinister side to autochthony. Other creatures such as the monstrous giants (*gigantes*), whom the Earth (*gē*) bore from drops of Ouranos' castrated blood, were also autochthons. Euripides' draws our attention to these giants in the *parodos* when the Chorus describes images of their war with the Olympian gods (Euripides 1999, 185-220).

The Athenians did take great pride in their status as autochthonous people born of the earth who ruled the same land continuously. As Hall notes (1997), the emphasis on the autochthonous origin became more prominent in the fifth century, especially after Athenians became more restrictive with citizenship following reforms in 451BCE. Unravelling the convoluted Athenian myth of autochthony, nevertheless, is difficult (see Parker 1987; Rosivach 1987; Zacharia 2003). Their first king Cecrops was also born of the earth; he was a hybrid creature with the top half of his

body human and the lower half snake. As king, he brought marriage and burial rites, religious ceremony, as well as literacy to Athens; as such, he represents the transitional time from savageness to civilization. Yet, the figures most prominent in Athens' autochthonous myth are Erichthonios and/or Erechtheus; as far back as the *Iliad* (Homer 1996, 2.547-8), there is reference to the Athenian Erechtheus as earthborn. Scholars (Parker 1987, Hall 1997) remain unsure as to how these two figures relate. One current theory is that Erechtheus merely represents an adult version of Erichthonios (Loraux 1993). From this perspective, as a baby Erichthonios was born after Hephaestus attempted, but failed, to rape Athena; the earth was fertilized when Athena wiped his sperm from her leg and threw it to the ground. Significantly, unlike the Theban *spartoi*, Erichthonios was born from the earth as a helpless baby. Athena rescued and gave him, in a basket surrounded by snakes, to be fostered by King Cecrops' daughters. Although they were told not look in the basket, these daughters disobeyed and, driven mad in consequence, they leapt to their death close to the place where Creusa was raped. This child grows up to be the king known as Erechtheus.

In his tragedy, Euripides straightens out this convoluted lineage by clearly making Erechtheus, not the grown version, but the son of the earthborn Erichthonios. As the son of Creusa, Ion would be the eldest surviving descendent of this earthborn founder. In addition, the play alludes to more of the royal family drama: in the past, Erechtheus had sacrificed all his daughters (except newborn Creusa) to protect Athens during an invasion. We also learn that Erechtheus died during this invasion, after being swallowed by the earth, again, near the place where Creusa was raped. Euripides (2008) also wrote another, most likely earlier, play on this part of the Athenian autochthonous story called *Erechtheus*; unfortunately, it now survives only in fragments. Thus, through Creusa, Euripides provides unambiguous and straight lineage from the earthborn Erichthonios to the now demigod Ion.

One final small, but not insignificant innovation is the role of Athena in the killing of the Gorgon Medusa. Other monstrous creatures, such as the Gorgon sisters, also were considered *chthonic* or belonging to soil. Not necessarily born of the earth like the giants, these *chthonic* creatures represented the violence, chaos, and panic of the transitional time before human beings were fully civilized (Zacharia 2003). The Gorgons were three sisters: Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa. Although the first two were immortal, Medusa was not. She had a human face surrounded by snakes; if a man glanced her face, he turned to stone. In Euripides' version (1999, 985-1010), he changes the lineage of the Gorgons: Creusa notes: "the earth

(*gē*) gave birth to the Gorgon," in Phlegra where the giants and the Olympian gods fought. In more common mythology, the Gorgons were considered to be daughters of the Sea Titans Poreys and Ceto. With Euripides' innovation, Medusa is no longer simply a *chthonic* figure, but an autochthon born directly of the earth like Erichthonios. In addition, in more typical mythology, it is the great hero Perseus who slays Medusa (with Athena's help); Perseus was also a great Peloponnesian hero who founded Mycenae. In our play, Creusa makes it clear that "the goddess Pallas Athena, child of Zeus, slayed her" and gave to Erichthonios the twin vials of her blood and venom. Euripides' innovation places Athens, with Athena as patron, firmly in the center of the great myths and no longer on the periphery of founding myths of Greece.

The Lessons of Euripides' Founding Myths

It is not a stretch to suggest that Euripides' *Ion* deals, at least in some part, with the foundation myths of Athens. What exactly Euripides meant to be understood by his reworking of this myth, however, is not so clear. As several scholars have pointed out (Swift 2008; Hall 1997; Doughtery 1996; Rosivach1987; Saxonhouse 1986), his genealogical innovations bring together the two competing origin myths of Athens: on the one hand, the story of Ionian heritage; on the other hand, their autochthonous legacy. In Euripides' new genealogy, Ion becomes the link between these two foundation myths as he, through Creusa, is both the earthborn descendent of Erichthonios and, through his four sons, the progenitor of the Ionians. As noted above, this provides a convenient justification of Athenian hegemony over its largely Ionian empire. What is not clear is whether this reworking reconciles Athenian imperialistic ambitions with democracy and its famous legal equality (*isonomia*). Some scholars, most notably Loraux (1993, 2000; see also Doughtery 1996) understand the autochthonous founding as creating and reinforcing the democratic myth in which all Athenians, as descendants of the earthborn, are equal. In contrast, Saxonhouse (1986) argues that the earthborn myth reinforces aristocratic and imperialistic power, especially after the people vote to abandon and not defend their mother-soil during the Persian invasion in 480BCE. What seems to be less contentious, however, is that Euripides' reinvention of Ion places their autochthonous origin on par with the foundation myths of their Spartan archenemies. With Euripides' new and improved Ion, he is not only the descendent of an autochthon but, like Heracles, is also a semi-divine founding hero; Ion now represents the best of both founding traditions.

Territory and Knowledge

Euripides' reworking of founding myths provides valuable insight into what the ancient Greeks may have perceived as important in founding mythology; yet, considering how foundation stories are still part of contemporary claims to identity, this play also reveals valuable lessons of what lies at the heart of our own origin stories. One common attribute of modern nationalism is that a distinctive people (with a unique culture, language, history, and religion) claim to rule over a particular delineated territory (Arnason 1990). Nationalism, as noted earlier, is a particular modern identity connected to the development of the nation-state. However, as will be developed below, Geller's (1983) notion that nationalist sentiment contains outrage at the rule of an outsider does not appear so unique to modernity. This story of ancient identity stresses the origin of a people found in their distinctiveness from other groups and their special relationship to their land (*chthonos*). In fact, it is through their autochthony or belonging to the land that legitimate rule is established. As the Chorus stresses: "May no other from any other House grasp and rule the city, except one of the noble Erechtheids" (Euripides 1999, 1055-60). In other words, at the heart of Euripides' myth of civic identity is a desire to be ruled by one's own.

Despite all this emphasis on Athens in the play the location of the play in Delphi is not without significance. Until it was closed by the Emperor Theodosius in 329CE, the Delphic Oracle, located in the beautiful Phocis valley, was the most sacred and significant oracular site in the ancient world. Apollo came to be worshiped in Delphi after he killed and supplanted the original prophet of the sacred site: the Python. The spirit of the Python, another autochthonous creature—a giant snake—was thought to still guard the *omphalos* that marked Delphi as the center of the earth. Euripides (1999, 210) reminds us of Apollo's role in supplanting this original autochthonous figure when he has the Chorus ask if the temple really stands on this *omphalos*. To some extent, the Athenians were estranged from the Oracle since the god had indicated support for Sparta earlier in the war (Flower 2009). Nevertheless, like any other city or private individual, Athens and her citizens continued to consult the Oracle before any major undertaking, such as a battle or founding of a colony (Doughtery 1996). This central role of Delphi as the origin of all foundings is echoed in the play with Athena's pronouncement that Ion's sons will found the Ionian colonies and Creusa's sons with Xuthus will originate the migrant Dorian and Aeolian peoples. Thus, from this very epicenter of civilization, Euripides has Ion (whose name literally means "to go") go

forth from the sacred site of all origins to firmly establish Athens as the mother-city of all Greek peoples.

Other than Delphi's fame as the center of the earth, it was equally famous for the inscription "know thyself" *(gnōthi seauton)*, which Pausanias (1933, XXIV.1) tells us was inscribed on the entrance of Apollo's temple (Pozzi 1991; Zacharia 2003). Both Plato (1927, 164e-165b) and Xenophon (1923, 4.2.24) refer to Socrates as employing this expression as part of his philosophical project of self-discovery. The meaning of the inscription, however, is ambiguous. In Plato's *Charmides*, for example, the eponymous interlocutor suggests the inscription means "to know" as in to know or remember one's place. Both the interpretation of self-discovery and remembering one's place are significant to the plot. The warning that worshipers should "know their place" is stressed several times in the story: Ion reminds Creusa that the god would not appreciate embarrassing questions; he is prevented, by Athena's arrival, from asking the same embarrassing question (Euripides 1999, 375-80, 1555-60). The play, in contrast, also highlights the Socratic meaning of "know thyself" as a quest for self-understanding. Quite literally, Ion does not know who he is: he knows no mother, no father, no family, not where he is from, and, at the beginning of the play, no name. Several scholars (Segal 1999; Pozzi 1991; Swift 2008) have focused on the tragedy from the perspective of a young man's journey to discover "who he is." From this perspective, Ion's coming-of-age story reflects the rites of passage that young men in Athens went through as they made the transition from childhood to a member of the political community. For Ion, in particular, this youthful journey of self-discovery, fraught with difficulty and dangers, highlights the connection between his lack of self-knowledge and lack of knowledge of one's "own."

Equally compelling, however, is the significance of the Delphic message to the autochthonous founding of Athens. It is not only individuals, but political communities which explore the question "who am I"? Or, put in contemporary political terms: "what is my identity"? Since Ion is the autochthonous heir, his personal journey of self-discovery is linked to Athenian identity. In other words, Ion's story underlines the interconnected relationship between the personal question "who am I" and the larger political question of "who are my own." Although most of us do know our immediate family, we are not unlike Ion in questioning "who are my own" beyond those very immediate, biological ties of kin. The play points to two crucial factors in making this identification.

First, as in Ion's recognition scene with Creusa, we come to identify each other through signs or tokens of community. In the case of Creusa

and Ion, the tokens of recognition include the basket, the olive branch, a weaving of the Gorgon, and the golden necklace of snakes (Euripides 1999, 10-25, 1410-35). These tokens are laden with meaning for the Athenian audience. The basket is significant as it unites Ion with Erichthonios, since both were conveyed in such a vessel to foster-mothers (Swift 2008). This basket is a symbol of the parallel between the founding king and re-founding king. Both the olive branch and the Gorgon weaving represent Athena, whom Cecrops chose as patron of Athens over Poseidon. As the play points out, the golden necklace is representative of the snakes Athena put in Erichthonios' basket to protect him. In Euripides' time, such necklaces were still given to children as a token of their identity and as a symbolic protection. The snake, in particular, was a vivid symbol of Athenian identity and their connection to Cecrops, whose spirit was thought to inhabit the sacred snake that lived on the acropolis. As Herodotus (2009, VIII.4) tells us, it was not until this snake did not appear to eat its special honey cake that the Athenians were willing to abandon their sacred earth to the invading Persians.

Such signs continue to be forms of community identification from specific designs on textiles and items of clothing, sacred animal totems and objects, to the contemporary usage of national symbols and flags. Importantly, symbols can only take on meaning in the specificity of their context. This connection has been an important topic in modern political thought with attention drawn to it, for example, by Foucault (1972), Taylor (1992), and in Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities. Although Ion is Athenian and clearly versed in its history, as he was fostered in Delphi, he remains confused about the meaning of what the symbols represent. In his first encounter with Creusa, for example, he is full of questions regarding Athens. Is it true, he asks her, that the father of the Athenians "sprang from the earth" or that her sisters were sacrificed to save the city? At the end of the play, Creusa must explain to her son the significance of the serpent necklace: "Athena asks for our children to be raised in this in imitation of ancient Erichthonios" (Euripides 1999, 1425-30). By highlighting this need for explanatory significance, Euripides points to the importance of the second crucial factor of identity: symbols and signs of community are meaningless without the story the community tells about itself and its origin. Without the story, the tokens are merely empty objects.

The Stories We Tell

Euripides' reformulation of the Athenian origin story highlights the role of storytelling in answering the question of "who we are." In the *Ion*, different types of stories – telling and retelling, narrating events, and foretelling the future – are at the centre of the play. Importantly, through his retelling the story of origin and identity, Euripides simultaneously explores the necessity of such stories for binding community together, but also the unreliability and limitations of stories to place such origins on firm foundations. As such, Euripides' portrayal of the enhanced origin of Athenian identity is more complicated than a straightforward patriotic play celebrating Athenian hegemony and dominance. Similar to Plato's subsequent exploration of noble lies which are prior to even the creation of laws, Euripides indicates that the stories we tell ourselves about "who we are" are based on unreliable truths (Loraux 2000; Saxonhouse 1986).

There are several indications in the tragedy that origin stories are not all they seem. One of the main stories told and retold throughout the play is the rape of Creusa. The story of the rape of Creusa is told four times, usually as a partial truth due to lack of information or, at times, through deliberate secrecy (Euripides 1999, 10-65, 335-65, 875-915, 1470-1570). In the prologue, Hermes admits Apollo forcibly (*bia*) joined with Creusa, but he tells the audience what she does not know: the child was saved and raised by Apollo. In the second telling, Creusa (out of shame, she notes) tells Ion it was a "friend" who was raped by the god. The secret remains hidden as Xuthus' arrival prevents her from asking what the god "would conceal." Creusa's second telling, to the Old Tutor and the Chorus, reveals that it was she, and not a friend, who was "seized by her pale white wrist and taken without pity"; yet, she still believes her exposed child was eaten by birds. She tells the story a third time, after she has recognized Ion as "her own;" yet, Ion believes she still "cover[s] around in darkness," the truth that, to hide a youthful indiscretion, she has "made up" this story of Apollo's rape. It takes the intervention of Athena to confirm Creusa's story and prevent Ion from asking what the god continues to conceal. The retelling of Creusa's rape reveals the secret and partial knowledge embedded in the telling and retelling of origin stories. Such stories are always partial because they conceal ignorance of the past or the shame of events, usually violent and chaotic, connected to our foundings. In the *Ion*, much of what is hidden and shrouded in darkness is intended to escape this reproach and shame: even the god continues to refuse to appear to avoid blame (*mempsis*).

Beyond mere partial truths told out of ignorance or shame, the story of Ion's origin and Athenian identity contains within it misleading and deliberately false stories or lies (Euripides 1999, 650-665, 1600-1610, 760-65, 780-85). The most obvious of these deceits concerns the "truth" of Ion's paternity. Xuthus lies to hide from Creusa what he has been told by the god concerning Ion's paternity. This is a lie within a lie, which ironically will be retold to Xuthus in the end. Although Ion is suspicious that the Athenians will reject a bastard foreigner as king, Xuthus claims this lie, that Ion is merely a *xenos* (guest-friend), is to spare Creusa's feelings. As the Chorus puts it, however, his lie is a deliberate concealment that will bring an outsider into the House of Erechtheus. The Chorus adds to this deliberate falsehood the further misinformation that Creusa will never have children of her own. It is not clear how the Chorus came to this conclusion, as Xuthus only reports the prophecy that Ion is his own; as we learn later, Creusa will have future children with Xuthus. Nevertheless, driven on by this lie or "unutterable story," Creusa almost commits the atrocity of murdering her son.

Most significant, perhaps, is the fact that the unreliability embedded in origin stories extends to the Delphic Oracle and the prophecies of the god Apollo himself. Scholars (see Conacher 2003; Zacharia 2003; Swift 2008) have long interpreted Euripides as a critic of Greek religion and it is possible that he intended this plot simply to disparage the Delphic Oracle, especially considering its support of Sparta during the Peloponnesian War. Yet, within the context of the play, Euripides focuses attention on the unreliability of divine prophecy several times. First, part of Ion's journey concerns his transformation from a trusting child carrying Apollo's symbols of bow and laurel to a man who openly questions the god's words (Euripides 1999, 530-60, 1530-45, 1600-5). Ion believes, for instance, Xuthus must have misinterpreted the Oracle; until the very end, he questions whether "the god is truthful or gives false prophecies." Of even more importance, Apollo's foresight appears inaccurate. As Kovacs (1999) notes, in the prologue Hermes provided a prophetic synopsis of the plot that indicated Ion's true paternity will be revealed only in Athens. The play unfolds accordingly, until Creusa and her followers decided to kill Ion; from this point on, Apollo is forced to intervene in order to stop kin-murder; he is also forced to send Athena to prevent further questioning of the Oracle.

In addition, although there is a long-standing scholarly debate (see Owen 1939; Burnett 1962; Meltzer 2006) as to whether Apollo deliberately lied or his prophecy was misinterpreted, the Oracle does appear to deliberately "speak falsely." In the prologue, Hermes reveals that Apollo

intends to use his prophetic voice intentionally to mislead Xuthus; thus, beyond the fact that Apollo's prophecies are undermined and proven inaccurate, they also contain deliberate lies or falsehoods. The most noteworthy of these divine falsehoods is that Xuthus' will find "his" son upon exiting the temple. There is another deliberate falsehood, however, connected to the gods that also concerns Xuthus; this time, Athena orders that the truth concerning Ion's real paternity remain hidden from Xuthus (who will keep his "sweet opinion") and, by extension, from the city itself. In the end, Apollo ensures his rape of Creusa remains concealed, but in doing so he reveals that even the *logos* of the prophetic god is untrustworthy.

Origin and Identity: The Lessons of the *Ion*

There is little doubt that the *Ion* is a carefully crafted story of origin that does reconcile Athens' two competing foundation myths and creates a new improved hero with a claim to greatness equal to Heracles. Yet, Euripides' story also reveals the limitations of such patriotic readings of origin stories. Upon closer examination, aspects of the founding story begin to unravel and prove partial, purposefully misleading, and unreliable. As Ion cautions in the play: "things do not look the same up close as at a distance" (Euripides 1999, 585).

If we look closely at this particular origin story, what do we learn about the essence of the stories we tell about our identity? The most obvious element of identity in the play is the connection between kinship and broader community identity. If there is a happy resolution, the play locates it in Creusa and Ion coming to recognize each other as "one's own." This family recognition has implications for community identity as Ion fulfills the Chorus' demand to be ruled only by a noble Erechtheid: a ruler belonging to the soil. Thus, together both mother and the Athenian people are able to rejoice that "Erechtheus is young once more" (Euripides 1999, 1465); and, as Zacharia (2003) points out, as this new Erechtheus, Ion becomes his "twin" and brings the story full circle to re-establish the political community. These kinship ties, however, also extend through his sons to the Ionians and through his half-brothers to the other Greek peoples. From this narrow patriotic perspective, Euripides' story provides a justification for the Athenian empire and transforms the value of both Athenian and Ionian identity.

Significantly, however, Euripides' very patriotic and empire-justifying story also undermines this straightforward xenophobic and chauvinistic theme (Dunn 2000). First of all, do we really know without any doubt,

that Ion really is Creusa and Apollo's son? Of course, through his messengers Hermes and Athena, we are *told* that he is the saved child; however, we also know that Apollo deliberately lies as Xuthus is also *told* that he is the father. Thus, Creusa is likened to a male, in that she cannot know or identify her child with certainty, but must trust that Ion is her own true son. This lingering question reveals the insecurity of kinship ties and tales of genealogy to substantiate who is "my own" in our community. His genealogical revisions, in addition, connect all Greeks as brothers and, through Creusa, as descendants of the autochthonous Erechtheus. From this perspective, the play is less a patriotic justification for Athenian superiority than a call for peace among warring brothers. Even more significant, although this new revamped genealogy names Ion's sons as founders of new colonies, it also undermines Athens' claim to hegemony over these peoples. Even if all Ionians can be traced back to this Athenian king, as much as Athens celebrates Ion as their new founder, the other Ionian peoples have their own founding fathers in Geleon, Hopletes, Argades and Aigikores. We may all be brothers if we go back far enough, but the justification for rule over another depends upon who is celebrated as the founder and how far back one cares to look.

A second important lesson of Euripides' story of origins is the status of foreigners or what we would now call "the other." Although Loraux (1993, 2000) and Saxonhouse (1986) analyze the other as the female outsider, the plot also focuses on the other as foreigner. The Chorus, in particular, reveals a loathing of the foreigner, such as found in their complaint that too many have been allowed to live in Athens (Euripides 1999, 720-5). To some extent, their xenophobia is justifiable. Xuthus did intend to lie about Ion's paternity with the intention of having "his" son usurp the throne of Erechtheus. Yet, this crude portrayal of the deceptive and untrustworthy foreigner is destabilized in the play. First, Xuthus is not the subject but the object of all the major deceptions: Apollo lies to Xuthus about Ion's paternity; Athena orders the lie to continue; Ion and Creusa willingly let Xuthus hold his false "sweet opinion." Second, Xuthus married Creusa because he saved Athens from invasion; thus, rather than the dangerous foreigner, Xuthus is the city's savoir who is deceived into accepting another's child as his own (Lee 1997). The reason for this deceit is not obvious, as it was common in mythological stories for human men, such as Heracles' stepfather Amphitryon, to foster the sons of gods (Swift 2008). However, considering the extent to which Euripides' contemporaries went to protect their male lineage, this act of deceiving Xuthus into thinking Ion was his son spoke to a real existing fear of the male population (Loraux 1993; Just 1991).

In addition, through the recognition scene, Euripides reveals how easily the Athenians transform animosity into celebration. Nothing, of course, about Ion or his character changed except their identification of him as "one's own." His character is the same (except, perhaps, that he has revealed a violent, impious side by attempting to murder the suppliant Creusa). In their easy transformation from hostility to rejoicing, Creusa and the Chorus reveal that what they desire most is to be ruled by one's own, regardless of this individual's character or service to the city. Most importantly, the categorical rejection and actions of violence towards the "other" and unconditional support of one's own reveals the connection between this ancient desire to be ruled by one's own and an equally ancient understanding of justice: helping friends and harming enemies (Blundell 1991). In the case of *Ion*, friends and enemies take on the most simplistic meaning since all kin are identified as friends and all foreigners as enemies.

Fourth, Euripides also destabilizes the representation of Athens' autochthonous founders. For one thing, there are several indications in the play of the darker side of autochthony. It is not only Erichthonios who is born of the earth, but also the dangerous giants and Gorgons (Zacharia 2003; Mastronarde 2003; Swift 2008). As noted above, the Chorus' description of Delphic architecture draws attention to battle between the giants and gods (Euripides 1999, 185-215, 1135-1180, 1015-20). The location of Delphi also reminds us of its former occupant the autochthonous Python. The tent that Ion erects for his celebration banquet is decorated with images of the Gorgon and Cecrops; it was at this banquet that Creusa used Gorgon venom to attempt to murder Ion. Significantly, this venom had a twin – which was not poison but a magical cure. Although Creusa claimed she kept these vials separate because good does not mix with bad, throughout the story autochthony consistently contains not only good but also evil; furthermore, as Burnett notes (1962), it is only the bad and never the good vial of magical cure that is used in the play.

Finally, this ambiguity of autochthony as drawing from both monstrous and heroic figures further connects the limitations of autochthony to the status of the foreigner. As Zacharia (2003) has argued, stories of earthborn men contain many false and impotent starts. Cecrops, the first autochthonous king of Athens left no progeny after his daughters leapt to their deaths. Erechtheus sacrificed all his daughters, except the infant Creusa, to save the city from invaders. Creusa and Ion almost kill each other; it is only because of Apollo's intervention that the House of Erechtheus is able to "recover its sight in the rays of the sun (Euripides 1999, 465)." Other stories of autochthony contain similar problems with

generation. The sown-men or *spartoi* of Thebes, for example, immediately set upon each other, with only a handful surviving to found their city. Autochthonous men and giants may spring from the earth itself, but the continuance of their lineage requires the intervention and institution of a non-autochthonous other (Saxonhouse 1986). Without the stranger – the other – autochthony fails to find purchase.

Conclusion

Euripides' remaking of the Athenian origin story reveals several elements still crucial to contemporary understandings of political identity. Most importantly, he explores both the desire to be ruled by one's own as well as the problematic aspects of such desire. The identification of one's own with political community, whether derived through genealogy or born from the earth (we would now, of course, say born *on* a country's soil) proves to be a shaky and possibly dangerous foundation. To some extent, Euripides reminds us that if we look back far enough we are all brothers and distinctive political communities are created by the choice of origin stories. Furthermore, his new improved Ion reveals the role of the storyteller in recognizing new heroes or re-creating old stories. Such foundation stories allow political communities to coalesce around a common history and, importantly, if a sufficient hero is not available, the stories told about the founders need to be reformed and remade until appropriate demigods are created. Thus, the French have Joan of Arc, the Americans have Washington who could not tell a lie, and the Scots have Robert the Bruce and the Battle of Bannockburn.

Euripides' retelling also reveals how easy it is to slip from identifying one's own as a friend, to classifying all others as enemies. This ancient view of justice, as Plato also pointed out in the *Republic* (1968, 334a-335d), assumes that one's kin is always good and the "other" is always bad; such a view of rule and justice ignores the reality that autochthons can be bad or good, as symbolized by Creusa's twin vials. Just because a ruler is one's own does not guarantee he/she is just or rules in the common good. Such a chauvinistic and xenophobic view also justifies doing harm to someone who has not done anything unjust, such as Creusa and the Old Tutor's attempt to kill Ion. Thus, this perspective of political identity ignores the valuable contributions of foreigners and outsiders, such as Xuthus, who benefit the city and are essential to avoid the impotency inherent in autochthonous rule.

Lastly, Euripides' story reminds us that, for a very long time, we have been telling ourselves stories about who we are in order to bind ourselves

to a political community. Yet, his story also reminds us that in our contemporary world of nationalistic movements, which demand referendums on separation and at times resort to political violence, that this very ancient desire does not have a firm foundation. Our founding stories contain much of which is partial, secretive, shameful, and deliberately false. Stories told of divine authority can be as misleading as those told and retold by our national storytellers, historians, and rhetoricians. Most significantly, therefore, Euripides reveals that these stories of one's own are not to be trusted without examination. The Delphic message of know thyself proves to be not just a philosophic, but also a political journey of self-discovery.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ARISTOTLE'S NOD TO HOMER: A POLITICAL SCIENCE OF INDEBTEDNESS

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In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explores the good for human beings, emphasizing the role of virtue and friendship in human happiness. A human being is happy, for example, when he does his own work well, and this is the activity of his soul according to its own proper virtue (*NE* 1098a11-18). But "without friends, no one would choose to live, even if he possessed all other goods" (*NE* 1155a5-6).[1] Because political science or art (*politikē*) is the architectonic art that aims at the final good for human beings, Aristotle's inquiry in the *Ethics* can be understood as assisting legislators and statesmen (*NE* 1094a28-b11). Not only do statesmen work to make the citizens good and obedient to laws (*NE* 1102a5-9) but they are also eager to promote friendship even more than justice, inasmuch as friendship holds cities together (*NE* 1155a23-26; see also *Politics* 1262b7-9). In light of these goals of statesmen, as Aristotle articulates them, it is appropriate that he refers to his work itself as a "kind of political science" (*NE* 1094b12). Aristotle's discussions of the virtues provide models for legislators, inasmuch as laws, if properly laid down, command every virtue and forbid every vice (*NE* 1129b20-26 and 1130b24-25). His new models for human life involve his claim that human beings are political, his description of virtue as a mean, and his own deeds in inquiring into the human good.

The *Ethics* frequently alludes to Homer, reminding the reader that like Plato in the *Republic*, Aristotle faces a Greek world strongly influenced by the images of virtue found in Homeric poetry. In many ways, Aristotle's account seems to challenge these images. Aristotle's talk of the common advantage, for example, and of securing the good of the community (*NE*

[1] Translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* are our own. We have consulted the translation of Bartlett and Collins (2011).

1129b15-17; 1094b7-11) are far afield from Achilles' wrath or his noble refusal to subordinate himself to an inferior. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle is explicit, for he claims there that the beauty (or nobility) of Achilles is misleading, and that Homeric poetry involves the speaking of falsehoods (*Poetics* 1454b11-15 and 1460a19-21). Aristotle thus seems to further Socrates' attack on Homer, and to confirm the quarrel between philosophy and poetry to which Socrates alludes (*Republic* 607b-c).

It is nevertheless notable that Aristotle, who is often critical of the opinions of others, consistently moves to show how the *Iliad* makes sense in terms of his own teaching in the *Ethics*. Aristotle illustrates the possibility of heroic virtue, for example, with Priam's claim that his son Hector seems like the offspring of a god rather than of a mortal (*NE* 1145a20-23). Likewise, in Book III of the *Ethics* Aristotle tells the reader that citizen or political courage is already found in Hector, who acts according to the virtue of shame when deciding to face Achilles in battle (*NE* 1116a20-29). In these cases, and throughout the *Ethics*, Aristotle uses Homer's *Iliad* in a way that is designed to help us make sense of his own arguments at the same time that his reliance on Homer complicates our understanding of Aristotle's text.

We argue in this essay that Aristotle finds in Homer's account of Achilles a model for his own presentation of moral virtue in the *Ethics*. Aristotle agrees with Homer in his reservations about the self-sufficiency of nobility, even while placing moral virtue and nobility among the elements that constitute the human good. Like Homer, moreover, Aristotle finds a tension between nobility and friendship, while ultimately showing their dependence. We argue further that Aristotle's *Ethics* builds on Homer's presentation of the noble or the beautiful, following his lead by using the "falsehoods" characteristic of poetry to invoke the wonder that initiates philosophy. In doing so, Aristotle defends poetry against a philosophic critique. Our exploration of this contribution that poetry makes to the pursuit of wisdom will proceed by examining several of Aristotle's frequent allusions to Homer in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, especially to the events surrounding Hector's death at the hands of Achilles.

Homer's Achilles and Aristotle's Noble Virtue

Although Aristotle never mentions Achilles by name in the *Ethics,* he knows that his immediate audience's understanding of virtue is indebted to Homer's presentation of Achilles' courage (or manliness) (Plato, *Hippias*

Minor, 363a-d).[2] Achilles is the most courageous and virtuous hero of the *Iliad*, combining speed and endurance, power and beauty, without having to sacrifice one for the other. Seth Benardete locates "the miracle of [Achilles'] excellence" in his "harmoniously unit[ing] two virtues that usually cannot even fit together, stamina and speed." That Achilles is "more than the sum of his parts" (Benardete 2004, 48-49), makes him like the great-souled or magnanimous (*megalopsuchos*) individual whom Aristotle describes in the *Ethics*, whose greatness of soul is "the crown" of the virtues (*NE* 1124a1-5). Although Aristotle names no specific individuals as examples of greatness of soul in the *Ethics*, he identifies Achilles in the *Posterior Analytics* as one who possesses greatness of soul (*Posterior Analytics* 92b15; Howland 2002, 27-56).

According to Aristotle, the great-souled individual possesses "perfect virtue" (*NE* 1124a29). Moreover, he considers himself worthy of great honour, seeks to possess beautiful things, and desires to mark himself as "self-sufficient" (*NE* 1123b20; 1125a12). His desire for self-sufficiency is seen in his attitude toward giving and receiving benefactions. Aristotle explains:

> The great-souled remember the good deeds they have done, but not those they have received. (For the recipient is inferior to the benefactor, whereas one who is great souled wishes to be superior.) They listen with pleasure to the good they have done, but with displeasure to the good they have received. That is apparently why Thetis does not mention the good deeds she had done for Zeus (*NE* 1124b13-16).

In the scene from the *Iliad* to which Aristotle refers, Thetis beseeches Zeus on behalf of her son Achilles, who believes that Zeus has failed to give him the honour he deserves by siding with Agamemnon in the dispute over who should rule. Achilles feels slighted not simply because he wants Agamemnon to honour him, but because Zeus allowed Agamemnon to dishonour him. In accordance with greatness of soul, Achilles desires the highest of honours, and these include honour from the gods. Zeus, he says, "should grant me honour at least. But now he has given me not even a little" (*Iliad* 1.353-56).[3]

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[2] Courage (*andreia*) is etymologically related to manliness (*andria*), and could even be translated as manliness. (See Smith 2001, 85; Collins 2006, 51n6; Mansfield 2006, 207; Pangle 2003, 90; Salkever 1986, 233). In the *Iliad*, Achilles is called "*theios anēr*," or "godlike man" (*Iliad* 16.798). Seth Benardete points out that, given the clear distinction between men and humans in the epic, "*theios anthropos*" or "godlike human" is inconceivable (2004, 15).

[3] Quotations from the *Iliad* are from Lattimore (1951).

When Achilles asks his mother to appeal to Zeus on his behalf, he tells her to remind Zeus that she once saved the god from a plot designed to depose him (*Iliad* 1.393-410). Achilles' advice to his mother on how to demand honour therefore follows the impulse of greatness of soul to remember the good deeds one has done and to take the side of the superior party—his mother in this incident. However, if Zeus himself has greatness of soul, as Aristotle implies,[4] and accordingly prefers not to remember the good deeds he has received, Achilles' advice is potentially disastrous: his greatness of soul cannot coexist with that of a god.

When Thetis approaches Zeus on her son's behalf, she tells him, "Father Zeus, if ever before in word or action I did you favour among the immortals, now grant what I ask for. Now give honour to my son" (*Iliad* 1.503-04). Although Thetis does allow Zeus to take the position of the benefactor, as Aristotle indicates, she at the same time subtly reminds him that she could enumerate the ways she has acted as a benefactor for him—an enumeration that Achilles asks her to make but that Aristotle suggests Zeus will not want to hear. It is an enumeration that Thetis does not make. Unlike Achilles, but like Aristotle, she is aware that the great-souled "listen with pleasure to the good they have done, but with displeasure to the good that they have received" (*NE* 1124b20), and manages to forge this teaching with the fact that they "will return good with greater good" (*NE* 1124b10). Achilles' mother mediates between her great-souled son and the great-souled Zeus, who grants the request with a nod. Thetis is able to do so because, like Aristotle (but unlike her great-souled son), she understands greatness of soul. Zeus nods his head, he tells Thetis, so "that you may believe me," for "this among the immortal gods is the mightiest witness I can give, and nothing I do shall be vain or revocable nor a thing unfulfilled when I bend my head in assent to it" (*Iliad* 1.524-27). Whether Zeus's nod acknowledges Thetis' power over him, Hera very soon reproaches him, for she fears terribly that he was "won over" (*pareipon*) by the silver-footed Thetis, using a word that suggests deception or at least indirection (*Iliad* 1.555-56).[5]

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[4] Homer provides evidence for Aristotle's observation. Although Thetis saved Zeus from the plot to throw him in chains, Zeus still thinks he is impervious to plots by the other gods (*Iliad* 8.19-25). Indeed, he claims that he is stronger than gods and mortals (*Iliad* 8.28-32). For another example of Zeus's greatness of soul, see *Iliad* 11.80-84.

[5] Hera herself is able to manipulate Zeus in turn, and temporarily to avert Thetis' design by arousing his sexual desire with the help of Aphrodite's charms, including "the whispered endearment (*parphasis*) that steals the heart away even from the thoughtful" (*Iliad* 14.217). Aristotle quotes this line from the *Iliad* in

Aristotle's reference to the encounter between Thetis and Zeus therefore calls into question the self-sufficiency assumed by the great-souled. Desiring the noble, Achilles wants to take the side of the benefactor in beseeching Zeus, but his ability to do so depends on his mother—self-sufficiency proves itself to be an illusion, and the great-souled attempt to attain it betrays a lack of self-knowledge. In the *Iliad*, the reminder of this illusion is Thetis, even as she both reminds and does not remind Zeus of the goods she has done him. And in the *Ethics*, it is also Aristotle, whose reference to the episode matches Thetis' mediation of Achilles' command. By alluding to the story of Achilles' mother, Aristotle imitates her by undercutting the self-sufficiency that tends to characterize the aim of moral virtue. And unlike the great-souled, even as Aristotle imparts the benefaction of this insight to his readers, he remembers from whom the insight was received. He acknowledges his debts.

Achilles, consistent with the greatness of soul that Aristotle attributes to him, is less willing to do so. In the course of his wrath after the death of Patroclus, when he is drawn back into the battle for the sake of revenge, he is dismissive of Thetis' role in his lineage. Meeting Pelegon in battle, Achilles mocks him for descending from a water-god, all the time tracing his own lineage to Zeus and forgetting that his own mother is a sea goddess (*Iliad* 21.185-195; Achilles also forgets that Zeus himself descends from water: 14.244-46). According to Benardete, if Achilles "is more closely related to the gods on his mother's side, Achilles prefers to emphasize the divine lineage of his father: for there is something womanish and humane about Thetis that does not fit with Achilles' image of himself" (2004, 62; see also *Iliad* 20.390-392 and 21.124-132; Saxonhouse 1988, 37-38). Fittingly, while Achilles fights the river god Scamander—an act that Homer says made him "like something more than mortal"—he complains to "Father Zeus" that "it is not so much any other Uranian god who has done this but my own mother who beguiled me with falsehoods" (*Iliad* 21.273-78). At the height of his pursuit of divinity, Achilles not only objects to his mother, he becomes her metaphorical enemy—he becomes like fire: "As inhuman fire sweeps on in fury through the deep angles of a drywood mountain and sets ablaze the depth of the timber and the blustering wind lashes the flame along, so Achilles swept everywhere with his spear like something more than a mortal harrying them as they died, and the black earth ran blood" (*Iliad* 20.490-494; see also *Iliad* 13.53, 688; 17.88-89; 18.154; 20.423; 21.12-16). As Benardete

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order to contrast the cunning of desire with the "openness" of spiritedness or anger, reminding his reader of the great-souled, who are "open" in their love and hate (*NE* 1149b14-16 and 1124b28).

argues, the result of Achilles' turn away from his mother is thereby brilliantly brought to light by Homer, for: "Fire is unlike all other elements, for it contains within itself its own destruction . . . . It is an exact image for wrath" (2004, 61).

The manly Achilles finally acts, then, not because of virtue, but rather because of passion. Aristotle not only distinguishes between the two (e.g., *NE* 1108a32 and 1128b16), he seems to be describing Achilles when he says, "Those who fight on account of anger or revenge are fit for battle, but they are not courageous, since they fight not on account of the noble or as reason commands but on account of their passion" (*NE* 1117a7-9). Homer concurs: at the beginning of the *Iliad* he asks the Muse to sing of the wrath of Achilles. Homer was not merely the educator of the Greeks concerning the beauty of Achilles' noble virtue; he also had much to teach Aristotle about the dangers of a great-souled man such as Achilles.

In discussing moderation, Aristotle alludes to Thetis' role in assuring that virtue tends in a more human direction when he mentions her attempt to moderate Achilles' wrath. Aristotle defines moderation as a mean in relation to the pleasures of food and sex. Licentiousness, the vice of the excess, is much more common to human beings than falling short in the enjoyment of such pleasures, he explains, for the desire for nourishment is common to all and natural, "since everyone who lacks food or drink (or sometimes both) has a desire for it; and also, as Homer says, everyone who is young and vigorous has a desire for sexual intercourse" (*NE* 1118b9-12). The words quoted by Aristotle are spoken by Thetis to Achilles in an attempt to quell his wrath and to end his prolonged desecration of Hector's body (*Iliad* 24.130-131; cf. *Iliad* 19.215-235). Despite being young and vigorous, Achilles has gone without food or drink or sex for eleven days, and apparently has had no appetite for them. Thus his mother asks him to eat and reminds him that it is good "to lie with a woman in love" (*Iliad* 24.128-31). Achilles' wrath denies nature (see *NE* 1118b15), as Thetis points out. Once again, Aristotle sides with Thetis and Homer in questioning the nobility of the *Iliad*'s hero.

Achilles' anger at Agamemnon's insult leads him to remove himself from the fighting in spite of how much the Achaeans need him. He feels no compassion for their suffering; nor does any need for honour from his fellows, or even for the pleasure of expressing his valour in activity, bring him back into the war. Like Achilles, Aristotle's great-souled individual spends time in inactivity. Although he thinks he is worthy of the greatest honours, he does not think any honours could be worthy of him (*NE* 1124a8). Aristotle defines happiness as "an activity of soul in accord with virtue, and if there are several virtues in accord with the best and most

complete" (*NE* 1098a16-18), but the one who is great souled has difficulty finding any deed worthy of his virtue. He therefore rarely acts, except "when a great honor or deed is at stake" (*NE* 1124b24-25). But by this criterion, he never acts, since he "regards nothing as great" (*NE* 1125a15; 1123b34). By conforming himself to an unchanging standard of nobility, the most virtuous of human beings becomes for himself the standard of nobility that measures and encompasses all others. Thus Aristotle says that there is no difference between the great-souled individual and the virtue of greatness of soul (*NE* 1123b1-2). Since the circumstances of human life pale in comparison to the nobility that for him defines his virtue, there is almost never anything to be gained by entering battle, for all earthly rewards are but small profit when compared to nobility itself. Even when he faces dangers, Aristotle says, "he throws away his life, on the grounds that living is not at all worthwhile" (*NE* 1124b8-9).

From this, the nobility of the great-souled individual appears self-sufficient and completely free from any consideration of the needs belonging to political community. He is in this way useless. Aristotle makes this implication of his virtue explicit when he says that the great-souled individual would "rather possess beautiful [noble] and useless things than those that are beneficial and useful, for they mark him as self-sufficient" (*NE* 1125a11-12). What he possesses is himself. The nobility of greatness of soul is a mark of its self-sufficiency and the standard by which all deeds are measured. When noble men become for themselves the standard by which all deeds are to be judged, they become self-referential (and self-defeating) artifacts of nobility, wholly separate from political life, and therefore not much use to their political communities, or their friends. Unless the beauty or nobility of virtue finds a place in a larger whole more conducive to the human happiness that is the highest good, it threatens to become little more than an unsustainable and dangerous illusion.

Homer's Achilles and Friendship in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle nevertheless observes near the end of his discussion of greatness of soul that the one who possesses greatness of soul is "incapable of living in relation to another, except to a friend" (*NE* 1124b30-25a1). With this reference to friendship, Aristotle offers an exception to the self-sufficiency of greatness of soul, and points to how noble virtue might find its place in a community with others. And, to be sure, it is his friendship with Patroclus that brings Achilles back to the aid of the Achaeans in the

Iliad. The friend appears as a link, for both the great-souled individual of the *Ethics* and for Achilles, to the human community. It is with Patroclus that Achilles spends his leisure time at Troy delighting his heart with lyre and song, almost as if there were pleasures for him beyond those associated with war and nobility (*Iliad* 9.186-190). It is Patroclus who feels the suffering of the Achaeans and insists on going into battle to help (*Iliad* 16.2-45). Once Patroclus dies, Achilles' grief is inconsolable (e.g., *Iliad* 18.22-36 and 316-18; and 19.312-13), for as he tells his mother, he "loved [Patroclus] beyond all other companions, as well as [his] own life" (*Iliad* 18.81-82). And it is his rage against Hector and desire for revenge for Patroclus' death that reconciles him to Agamemnon and the Achaeans (*Iliad* 19.65-68). In Plato's *Symposium*, Phaedrus praises Achilles both for his virtue and for his friendship (*philia*) with Patroclus from which his noble actions sprang (*Symposium* 179e-80b). Homer's *Iliad* highlights Achilles not only as an exemplar of heroic virtue, it seems, but as an exemplar of friendship.

Aristotle does not specifically mention Achilles' friendship for Patroclus, either in his account of noble virtue or in his discussion of friendship (but see *NE* 1171a4-16 with Rackham 1926, 568 note b). He does quote Homer's phrase, "two going together," when he explains that friends aid each other in performing noble deeds (*Iliad* 10.224; *NE* 1155a14-16). Although we may think of Achilles and Patroclus when we hear Aristotle refer us to the *Iliad* for an example of friendship, the Homeric passage Aristotle cites describes Odysseus and Diomedes, whom Homer never calls friends, and who accompany each other in an undercover mission against the Trojans that results in their slaughter of many when they lie asleep (*Iliad* 10.469-502).

Aristotle's quoting Homer here does not merely caution us about the nobility of the deeds that friends might undertake together. It also calls attention to the fact that Achilles and Patroclus do not go together into battle: Patroclus goes without Achilles, indeed wearing his friend's armour, in order to frighten the Trojans (*Iliad* 16.40-43). Achilles yields to his friend's request to do so, but warns him to return after he drives the Trojans back from the Achaeans rather than pursue them to Troy. If you fight the Trojans "without me," Achilles tells Patroclus, "you will diminish my honour" (*Iliad* 16. 87-90). That noble friends do not readily "go together" in support of each other's noble deeds is a point that Aristotle himself makes in discussing the friendship of noble men, whose very competition with each other for nobility means that their nobility competes with their friendship (*NE* 1169a18-b1; Cropsey 1977, 271-72).

Nevertheless, when his mother reports that Zeus has fulfilled his prayer that the Achaeans suffer in the war—and thereby honoured Achilles—Achilles' thoughts are only on Patroclus: "What pleasure is this to me," he asks Thetis, "since my dear (*philos*) companion has perished" (*Iliad* 18.73-80) Since Achilles knows that he is fated to die soon after killing Hector (*Iliad* 18.94-99 and 114-16), he is famous for choosing immortal glory over a long life. But by the time he does so it is no longer clear that he cares either for life or for the great honours that will be his. Instead he has become the soldier Aristotle describes, who has few goods to lose and can therefore face dangers more readily than others. Although such a man might even be the best soldier, Aristotle says, his courage cannot be as great as that of the more virtuous and happier man, "for whom living is especially worthwhile" and who therefore risks his life knowing the good he might lose as a result (*NE* 1117b10-21). After being kept idle by his great-souled virtue through most of the *Iliad*, Patroclus' death has impelled Achilles back into the fighting, but he pursues revenge and is moved by his wrath rather than any desire for the noble that characterizes virtue in Aristotle's sense (*Iliad* 18.113; 19.199-205; and 21.27-28; *NE* 1115b22-24). Indeed, how little the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus supports Aristotle's claim that friends aid each other in performing noble deeds is clear when, after killing Hector in revenge for Patroclus' death, Achilles so desecrates Hector's corpse that even the gods are appalled (*Iliad* 24.14-54). Achilles' wrath is never so great when directed against Agamemnon as it is when directed against Hector's corpse. Ironically, Achilles' "virtuous" inactivity was the cause of the very danger to the Achaeans that prompted Patroclus to act. Achilles' great-souled virtue is the cause of his losing his friend, and his losing his friend is the cause of his losing his virtue.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle is forthright about the problem of our tendency to adopt an Achillean view of nobility. He writes that those who praise and blame "do not consider whether someone has performed advantageous or harmful actions, but often they even make it a matter of praise that he did some beautiful thing in disregard of what was profitable to himself." Aristotle gives as an example the praise that is accorded Achilles, "because he went to the aid of his companion Patroclus in the knowledge that he would have to die, though it was possible for him to live. For him, a death of that sort was a more beautiful thing, though living was advantageous" (*Rhetoric* 1359a1-8). Those who praise Achilles interpret his revenge as going to the aid of his friend. By then, of course, Patroclus is already dead. Before the battle, Achilles aided him by loaning him his armour for the fighting. These interpreters of Achilles replicate the

contradiction of Achilles himself, who upon being overcome by anger at the loss of his friend, chooses what seems to be noble death, but it is a death that denies the very goodness of life that is for Aristotle confirmed by friendship. Their praise of the noble sides with death over life, and understands Achilles' anger as noble, while neglecting its implications for friendship.

The wrathful Achilles, however, is not the last view that Homer gives of him in the *Iliad*. When Hector's father Priam visits Achilles to beg for the return of his son's corpse, he asks Achilles to take pity on him, and reminds Achilles of his own father. Moved by Priam, Achilles weeps now for his own father, now again for Patroclus, while Priam weeps for his son whom Achilles killed. Priam is able to comfort Achilles by lamenting with him, and Achilles grants the old man his request (*Iliad* 24.503-14 and 560-61). Achilles' pity for Priam and memory of his own father helps him to obey the wishes of the gods to release Hector's body (*Iliad* 24.133-39 and 516). Before Priam takes Hector's body home for burial, Achilles asks Priam to share a meal with him—something that he was accustomed to doing with Patroclus (*Iliad* 19. 315-17). His invitation to Priam goes beyond what the gods commanded him to do. Even Niobe, he tells Priam, remembered to eat although she was worn out with mourning for her children, all killed by the gods on account of her excessive pride in them (*Iliad* 24.601-620).

The evident purpose of Achilles' reference to Niobe is to convince Priam, who has been fasting, to eat, since even the grieving Niobe did so. Achilles has learned his divine mother's humanity, and offers Priam the advice to eat that she earlier gave him. Priam is like Niobe as well in that the latter's pride in her children (*Iliad* 24.608)—she claims that she is superior to the goddess Leto due to the number of her children—seems to parallel Priam's own pride in Hector. Priam claims that Hector seems not the son of a mortal but of a god, for example, a claim that Aristotle quotes to illustrate heroic virtue (*Iliad* 24.258; *NE* 1145a21-23). Achilles' reference to Niobe rebukes Priam's pride and reminds him of his own humanity in this sense as well.

There have been other interpretations of the significance of Achilles' reference to Niobe. John Alvis, for example, argues that Achilles corresponds to Zeus in the story of Niobe, for just as Zeus prevents the burial of Niobe's children for nine days (*Iliad* 24.610-12), Achilles denies Hector burial, and even desecrates his body. Alvis understands this as a sign of Achilles' arrogance, for "his prerogatives are not divine, and in fact, he has usurped a wrath proper only to divinities in presuming to deny burial as once gods had denied burial to Niobe's children (1995, 74).

Indeed, Achilles could be seen to surpass the gods in his excess, for while he desecrates Hector's body for eleven days, the gods bury Niobe's children after nine days (*Iliad* 24.610-12). It is also the case, however, that Achilles mentions Niobe only after granting Priam's request to return Hector's body, and he agrees to return Hector's body only after yielding to Thetis' advice about his own need for food (*Iliad* 24.475-76). Moreover, he refers to Niobe only after Priam has reminded Achilles of the old age of his father and therewith of his mortality (compare with *Iliad* 20.192-95; 199-207). Achilles knows that the triumph over Hector means that he will not return home. By killing Hector, he has left his father in the same state as Priam finds himself. Achilles is correct to weep for his father as well as for Patroclus. He has assumed a god-like wrath and allowed his friend to go into battle in his place and now he will leave his father abandoned by his death. His reference to the story of Niobe and Zeus's treatment of her serves as a rebuke to himself as well.

For Achilles, the myth of Niobe is therefore both an act of self-reflection on his own mistaken assumptions about himself, a self-reflection supported by his mother's advice, and an invitation to Priam to join him in this reflection. Priam's excessive pride in his son has led him to deny Hector's mortality and, by implication, his own place as his father. By offering the analogy of Niobe to Priam, Achilles challenges Priam's pride, and indicates the importance of his recognizing his son's mortality by burying him, and his own fatherhood by his grief. In accordance with his invitation to eat with him, Achilles thereby reminds Priam of the need to affirm the goodness of *human* life, including its mortality and dependence on a community of other human beings.

In the *Ethics*, Aristotle also draws a lesson from the myth of Niobe by using her as an example of one of those who excessively devote themselves "to the pursuit of honor, or to their children . . . more than they should" (*NE* 1148a30-31). Niobe has done both for she claimed that her children made her worthy of an honour surpassing that of the gods. Aristotle's appeal to Niobe reflects Achilles', and demonstrates Aristotle's awareness of the tension between prideful nobility and human community.

This tension between prideful nobility and human community is likewise found in Aristotle's discussion of friendship in the *Ethics*, inasmuch as noble individuals prefer to bestow benefits than to receive them. Friends, in contrast, share their joys and their sorrows with each other (*NE* 1155a8-13). Aristotle asks, however, whether a noble man would want to share his sufferings with a friend, which would cause his friend pain at the same time as it would relieve his own ("for the pain of suffering is alleviated when shared with friends"). After all, says Aristotle, "a manly

nature does not tolerate becoming a source of pain to his friend, nor does he allow his friend to mourn with him, since he himself is not given to lamenting" (*NE* 1171a28-b11). Moreover, would such a man want to share in his friend's good fortune or become the recipient of his good deeds, which would put him in his friend's debt? By the same token, a noble man would want to go to his friend's aid when his friend is in need, and also to share his own good fortunes with his friend. The dilemma seems to make friendship impossible for noble men, whether in good times or in bad, for in such times one or the other would always be running away from his friend. In posing this dilemma, Aristotle reminds us of the great-souled individual, who is unable to live in relation to another, except to a friend (*NE* 1124b30-25a1). But how is he able to live in relation to a friend? Is his living in relation to a friend doomed to failure (see also Howland 2004, 52), as he moves endlessly toward and away from his friend, as the wheel of fortune turns?

In the encounter between Achilles and Priam, however, Homer presents two noble men coming together and comforting each other in their sorrow. The two not only console each other by mourning together, each benefits the other by reminding him of their common humanity. Aristotle may have once again learned from Homer when he concludes his discussion of nobility and friendship by distinguishing the "manly types" who are not given to sharing their grief or even to lamenting themselves from "women and men who are like them," who "find joy in lamenting with [others], and love them as friends and fellow mourners" (*NE* 1171b10-12). Like Achilles and Priam, women and men like them take comfort from sharing their grief with others and consider them friends. Able to share their suffering with their friends, they are presumably able to share the good fortunes of their friends as well. Speaking of these two different types, Aristotle says merely that "one ought to imitate the better in all things" (*NE* 1171b12). Unlike Socrates in the *Republic*, who relegates lamentations to "women—and not to serious ones among them—and to all bad men," and censors Achilles' lamentations for Patroclus and Priam's for Hector (*Republic* 387e-88a), Aristotle does not say explicitly which is the better. He does conclude that "being with friends is to be chosen in every case" (*NE* 1171b29). One cannot of course choose to be with friends in their good fortunes and in one's own misfortunes unless one is willing to receive benefits from one's friend. In placing friendship over nobility here, however, Aristotle saves nobility. Friendship requires an eagerness

to give as well as a willingness to receive. The different inclinations that Aristotle attributes to men and women are both necessary for friendship.[6]

Before Priam leaves with his son's corpse, Priam and Achilles share the meal Achilles offers him. Once again, Homer acknowledges Thetis' good advice to her son, just as Aristotle acknowledges the virtues of the woman, even her contribution to nobility as well as to friendship. The community of Priam and Achilles, which forms around food or the recognition of their mortality, allows them to appreciate each other's noble traits, and perform deeds befitting friends. Achilles calls Priam "old friend," and grants him time to mourn and bury Hector's body, and Priam asks for eleven days to perform the funeral rites, matching the length of Achilles' desecration of Hector's body (*Iliad* 24.629-42, 650-55, 660-670). It is an act of generosity on Achilles' part—one as Saxonhouse points out that is neither owed nor demanded by the gods (1988, 43). Following Priam's departure, we see Achilles for the last time in the *Iliad*. His mother's advice has led him to become reconciled with Priam, and his reconciliation with Priam has allowed him to fully follow his mother's advice. He is lying with Briseis (*Iliad* 24.676).

Poetry and Philosophy: Aristotle's Debt to Homer

Aristotle's concern with how we understand the *Iliad*, and by implication his concern with how we understand his own allusions to Achilles, is further drawn out in the *Poetics* when he discusses Achilles' pursuit of Hector. In Book XXII of the *Iliad*, while chasing Hector outside the walls of Troy, Achilles signals the Achaean soldiers with a nod of his head not to pursue Hector. Achilles wants to kill Hector himself (*Iliad* 22.205-07). Our "wonder" (*to thaumaston*) at what Homer describes, Aristotle says, requires that we not look too closely at the scene, whose irrational elements would turn it into a comedy. Specifically, Aristotle says, our wonder depends on not looking closely at the "one acting" (*ho prattōn*), Achilles himself (*Poetics* 1460a12-14).[7] Because we are so enthralled with the scene, we do not notice that since Achilles is pursuing Hector

[6] In Sophocles' *Ajax*, Tecmessa asks Ajax—one of Aristotle's examples of great-souled men in the *Posterior Analytics*—"when someone forgets good done to him/ And the recollection of it slips away,/ How could he still be a noble man?" (*Ajax* 524-25). Ajax's unwillingness to receive her advice (*Ajax* 293) is cited by Aristotle in the *Politics* (1260a29). Here, as in the case of Thetis in ways we have mentioned, Aristotle adopts the perspective of a woman (see Nichols 1992, 31-32).

[7] Translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* are our own. We have consulted the translation of Benardete and Davis (2002).

around the city walls at full speed, it would be difficult for a shake or nod of the head to be seen (let alone deciphered) by any soldier, to say nothing of the whole army. As Aristotle says, "Were the things concerning the pursuit of Hector on the stage, they would appear laughable—men standing and not pursuing while one man signals, shaking his head—but in the epic it is not noticed" (*Poetics* 1460a15-18; see Davis 1992, 140). Epic, Aristotle observes, allows greater scope than drama for what is irrational (*alogon*), and it is the irrational that leads to wonder (*Poetics* 1460a15-17).

Homer can obscure the difficulty, Aristotle explains, because he knows that if his audience accepts the end as true, then it will tend to accept the means that explain that end. This is the fallacy, or the "paralogism," Aristotle says (*Poetics* 1469a21-26). Our tendency to overlook the physical difficulties of Achilles' nod or shake of the head as a means of communication demonstrates our willingness to assume whatever is necessary to allow for Achilles to pursue Hector and to command the Achaeans to let him do so. Achilles' rule is so perfect, we assume, that he can command merely by a nod of his head. This mirrors how our understanding of Achilles' virtue as perfectly noble distorts the possibility of seeing his defects. Having seen his nobility or beauty we side with the anger and violence and the story necessary to defend its perfection, and even suppose that Achilles' wrath is beautiful in itself. In other words, when Aristotle says we do not look at the one acting, he means that we interpret Achilles' actions only in light of what we take his character to be (one of beautiful virtue), rather than in light of what he actually does. And, by implication, we are not looking at how we are experiencing poetry, we are merely experiencing it. It is wondrous, and as Aristotle says "the wondrous is pleasant" (*Poetics* 1460a18).

Although we do not notice it at first, it is laughable to think that the *Iliad* could be staged. No staging of the scene can answer the image in the mind's eye provided by the poem. To look at the one acting, as Aristotle asks us to do, also means to look at Homer, who has produced the *Iliad*, and Homer does not stage the *Iliad*. To stage the scene would be to make Achilles' deeds laughable, and by writing epic instead of tragedy Homer is able to make those deeds plausible to his audience. Homer does not make us laugh at Achilles; we remain in awe. As does Aristotle in his presentation of greatness of soul as complete virtue, Homer preserves the experience of beauty's wholeness. While Achilles cannot rule the Achaeans with a divine nod as he imagines, his attempt to do so is not a problem for the scene as long as it is not staged: Who among us would dare interfere with Achilles' pursuit of Hector? Would not the Achaeans, much like ourselves,

want to watch the action unfold as if on a stage? Do not they, like us, admire the virtue and beauty of Achilles? Would they not be ruled by his nod, if they could only see it? Are they not ruled, as they stand in awe, even without it? Achilles' rule of the Achaeans in this scene therefore makes sense. What we first experience as true because it is beautiful, and then as irrational, can then be understood in a more comprehensive way. We become perplexed, and even awed, when we find the irrational co-existing with virtue. That is why Aristotle's reference to the poetic fallacy as a paralogism is so appropriate: it is against reason, or outside of reason, while even at the same time being "by the side of reason," as the Greek term also connotes (cf. Davis 1988, 141). If Homer merely "lied," Aristotle would not defend him.

Although Aristotle tells us that the reader would notice the absurdity in Achilles' pursuit of Hector if it were staged, Aristotle does not need to stage the chase for us to see the inconsistency. Simply by having us *consider* the staging, Aristotle compels us to replace the initial image in the mind's eye with a new image, one that allows us to notice the irrational aspect of the scene: it is possible to look at the one acting. And in doing so, we see the scene's absurdity as well as its beauty. Homer himself of course asks us to look at the one acting, by his very descriptions of action, even if he does not place his characters on a dramatic stage. Looking at the one acting reveals the beauty of Achilles' virtue as less complete than it first appears, as our discussion of his nobility and friendship demonstrates, and thereby leads us to realize that our conception of his beauty has in turn been based on the mistaken belief that our vision is complete. By looking to the deeds that question the completeness of beauty, we become perplexed about our own experience of that completeness. Our experience of beauty may in fact be the most perplexing experience of all. Although Aristotle says that "the wondrous is most of all a consequence of the irrational [*alogon*] because we are not looking at the one acting," and then leads us to see that by looking at the one acting we see perplexities that are even more wondrous.[8] Since philosophy begins in perplexity or wonder (*thaumazein*), as Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics* (*Metaphysics* 982b12 and 17-18), philosophy cannot dispense with beauty. Philosophy learns from poetry.

[8] Howland makes an observation about Aristotle's treatment of perfect virtue similar to that we make about beauty: if "the man of godlike theoretical wisdom" whom Aristotle describes cannot claim to possess perfect virtue, "the imperfection that attaches even to godlike perfection would itself be a source of wonder." As Howland proceeds to argue, this applies whether "the virtue on which he prides himself is understood to be moral or theoretical" (2002, 46).

In discussing greatness of soul in the *Ethics*, Aristotle says that because nothing is great to the great-souled person he is not "given to wonder [or admiration]" (*thaumastikos*) (*NE* 1125a3). This is the only instance we have of the adjective *thaumastikos* in extant Greek literature. Inasmuch as philosophy begins in wonder, Aristotle's remark can be understood as pointing to a defect in greatness of soul (Howland 2002, 45). The word, however, might also be translated as "skilled in wonder," paralleling other words in Greek, such as *politikē* or statesmanship, which means literally "skilled in politics," or *poetikē*, which means skilled in poetry. Unlike the great-souled person, Aristotle *is* skilled in wonder. For example, he shows us that the perplexities of the great-souled individual's "completeness" emerge when we look to his deeds, especially when we try to stage his living in relation to a friend (cf. Lord 1987, 130). He himself is not given to wonder, but Aristotle presents him as a source of wonder when he shows us the imperfection of godlike self-sufficiency.

When Aristotle points out that *staging* Achilles' pursuit of Hector would reveal its irrationality, he does not criticize Homer's misleading poetry in favour of his own philosophic rationality. After all, Aristotle's rational critique of Homer is itself perplexing, for we notice the pursuit's irrationality with Aristotle's help, but without its being staged. Aristotle's critique of Achilles' pursuit through imagining it on the stage therefore repeats the very irrationality that it points to in Homer: because we accept the end provided by Aristotle—the irrationality of Achilles' pursuit—as true, we accept the means—the staging of the *Iliad*—that we thought was necessary to explain that end.

More important, the staging of the scene would not capture the irrationality to which Aristotle points. The stage would put the soldiers unusually, and even laughably, close to the pursuit (which a stage could not contain). While such proximity would bring the soldiers close enough to see and decipher Achilles' nod, that nod would become laughable for a different reason: gestures in the place of speech would be absurd. Staging the scene would allow speech to stand in the place of deeds: a falsehood indeed. It is a falsehood that parallels Aristotle's signal that we might transcend misleading poetry through philosophic rationality, which would require replacing the irrational with reason rather than leaving the paralogism to "the side of reason." Aristotle's signal turns out to be as problematic as Achilles' nod. Aristotle imitates Homer himself when Homer describes Achilles' noble pursuit. After all, as Aristotle says, "Homer has been especially effective in teaching others how they must speak falsehoods" (*Poetics* 1460a19-20).

So too for Homer, the persuasive beauty of poetry is not an end, but rather reaches its proper end when its irrationality is discovered, and reflection on our initial experience of its beauty and its completeness itself produces wonder. Thus when Aristotle claims that "Homer has been especially effective in teaching others how they must speak falsehoods," he is not criticizing Homer, or reminding us of the quarrel between poetry and philosophy that Socrates mentions in the *Republic* (*Republic* 607b), or deepening the divide between the beautiful and the true. Rather, Aristotle praises Homer for his ability to teach others to tell falsehoods because those falsehoods allow us to raise questions that lead us to see truths, not only about Achilles, but also about ourselves. As we have seen, when we question the completeness of Achilles' virtue we also question our own experience of completeness. The falsehoods Aristotle mentions are therefore not "mistakes" in Homer's poetry, but rather the falsehoods we tell ourselves when Homer "misleads" us (*paralogizetai*) (see *Poetics* 1460a25). By misleading us, Homer's poetry helps us to uncover the truth, and make it our own.

Even as Homer's art and Aristotle's writings put forward the irrationality of Achilles' actions and of his perceived self-sufficiency as falsehoods to be explored, the poet's and philosopher's own deeds—the works they composed—reveal the possibility of performing deeds of excellence that are both beautiful, and that cause wonder. This allows Aristotle's political science to serve political life and philosophy at the same time. And it shows his indebtedness to Homer. Aristotle like Homer is "one acting" to whose deeds we should look. The beauty of education does not lie merely in the teaching, but also in the teacher, whose deeds demonstrate the beauty and wonder necessary to education. When Homer teaches others how to lie—by providing an experience of beauty's wholeness—he also teaches Aristotle how to begin to philosophize. It is no wonder, even if it is wondrous, that an artist might imagine Aristotle admiring a bust of Homer.

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PART TWO:

ART, SCIENCE, AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN ENLIGHTENMENT THOUGHT

CHAPTER FIVE

BACON'S NEW ATLANTIS AND THE GOALS OF MODERNITY

TIMOTHY W. BURNS

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is best known as the chief original articulator of the modern scientific method. His most important writings in this regard are *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *The New Organon* (1620). But Bacon was also a highly successful statesman under Queen Elizabeth and James the First, and—more momentously, for our purposes—an outspoken admirer of Machiavelli, as well as the employer and older friend of Thomas Hobbes. Inspiration from Bacon was gratefully acknowledged by subsequent early modern political philosophers such as Spinoza (another open admirer of Machiavelli) and Locke. Thomas Jefferson, arguably the most theoretically inclined of the American Founders, counted Bacon (along with Newton and Locke) as one of "the three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception, and as having laid the foundation of those superstructures which have been raised in the Physical *and Moral* sciences" (Letter to Richard Price, January 8, 1789, my italics).

We can best begin to understand the relation between the scientific and the political strands in Bacon's thought if we start from his expressed indebtedness to Machiavelli. In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon cites Machiavelli a full ten times, almost always favourably—and this at a time when Machiavelli was on the lowest level of the Catholic Church's index of proscribed books, and when, even in non-Catholic countries, such a display of favour to Machiavelli entailed considerable daring. Bacon similarly cites Machiavelli with approval in his *Essays*. Why Bacon does so, not only in his political but *especially* in his scientific works is not immediately apparent. We can identify, however, three key ideas in Machiavelli's reflection on human nature that became roots of Bacon's new method for the science of nature in general.

The first idea is most visible in Machiavelli's description, in Chapter Six of *The Prince*, of the four greatest founders. Those "armed prophets" were afforded opportunities that "gave them the *matter*, enabling them to introduce any *form* they pleased." Machiavelli thus suggests that human nature can be regarded as essentially unformed or malleable material that strong, visionary leaders can shape like clay. The second idea is manifest in Chapter 25 of *The Prince*. Machiavelli there introduces the possibility of, and the need for, *conquering* fortune. He illustrates his point by likening fortune to a river, against whose flooding provident men can build dams and dikes. The nature that surrounds us as well as the nature within us, he thus suggests, far from being ordained by a just and loving God, is in itself hostile to humanity; nature is not to be respected, or revered, or accepted with resignation or humble prayer; instead, nature is to be subdued, by audacious and intelligent human beings, to whatever ends they wish or need. The third idea appears most vividly when we bear in mind that Aristotle had presented proud greatness of soul (magnanimity) as the virtue opposed to what he considered to be the vice of humility or meekness; especially in chapter 15 of *The Prince,* Machiavelli substitutes for magnanimity the virtue of "humanity"—meaning, the virtue by which superior men generously and confidently attend to the this-worldly needs of all human beings irrespective of city or country. Bacon employs these three ideas as crucial strands in his weaving of his new scientific method.

The first part of Bacon's *New Organon* criticizes ancient and primarily Aristotelian science as regards its aims, its method, and its starting point. The Aristotelian starting point, which was our pre-scientific awareness of the division of the world into common-sense kinds or classes or forms of things (the different sorts of animals, plants, heavenly bodies, etc.), Bacon repudiates on the grounds that concentration on these primarily evident classes or forms obscures our potential access to a more fundamental or underlying realm, of *homogeneous* matter pervaded by qualities like heat or light or sound or the pull of gravity. These "simple natures," as Bacon christens them, can be conceived to operate according to general relational and causal principles which Bacon calls (and was the first to call) "*laws* of nature." These are "laws" which neither have nor presuppose any lawgiver, other than science itself; the "laws of nature" are emphatically not "first principles" in the sense of *ultimate* causes (which, according to Bacon, we cannot know); they are instead hypothesized explanatory rules, posited by the scientists and then tested or verified by the extent to which they allow scientists to predict and to manipulate, even to transform, the observable world. The laws emerge in the scientist's mind when nature is put to "tests," or "bound and tortured," "under the vexations of art," that is, with

controlled experiments. The new end, a theoretical activity of a new kind, thus requires a whole new *approach* to inquiry, entailing armies of experimenters and researchers. Their work is to be conducted in accordance with eliminative induction, through precise experiments, with the help of ever-improving assistance from new scientific instruments.

The aim of science, therefore, ceases to be the sort of understanding sought by Aristotle—the careful articulation and contemplation of the various kinds of beings or "natures" as they naturally manifest themselves to us. The aim of science becomes instead a new sort of theory interwoven with practice, with the *conquest* of nature, or a progressive "lordship over the universe" by human beings, all of whom stand to benefit from the vast increase in human *power* that the new science makes possible.

Problems begin to loom, however, when we consider the application of the new scientific method to us humans, to human nature. The new science calls into question, as "unscientific," as merely preliminary or even primitive, the apparent insight afforded by our pre-scientific experience of our human nature in its distinct, fixed character and needs. The question then arises: what is the human character, and what are the human needs, that our new science ought to serve, given that our human character and its needs are understood to be, like all of nature, changeable or alterable by our new science? Where do we get our standards for judging which manipulations of human nature are good and which bad? How can Bacon's whole project have an end or purpose that is knowable as *the* good for humans? Once we see that there lurks within the new manipulative science a lack of clear limits or guides as regards its goals, must we not begin to question whether the vast increase in manipulative power made possible by the new science is something that will be good for us? Is the answer, that the new science gives us more truth? But why should we, precisely as seekers of truth, be focused on a humanly constructed, hypothetical realm of "laws of nature" conceived as underlying the common sense world of different classes of beings—when it is the latter (the primary, common sense, world) that is the only world for which we actually care, the only world in which we actually live, and the only world of which we have direct experience, to which all hypothetical modeling must ultimately refer back, for the test of its validity? In the final analysis, can Baconian science, in its perspective on reality, claim greater truth than the perspective of common sense? The ancient Socratic philosophers were not unaware that embedded in our common sense perception of the world are enormously powerful mental distortions: illusions created both by universal human cravings and by the diverse longings and beliefs instilled by the upbringing of the young in the various specific cultures (or "caves") of

particular times and places. Yet the Socratic philosophers did not take the path taken by Bacon (and anticipated in some measure by ancient atomist-materialists such as Democritus and Epicurus); the Socratics did not call into radical question the reality of what is perceived by common sense. On the contrary, the Socratics objected that to take such a step would lead to an obscuring of our only access to reality. The Socratics even insisted that reality or being was best understood as constituted by the interrelated forms of beings given in our common sense experience—even though that experience no doubt needed (and could attain) severe purification by critical, conversational self-scrutiny. What is it that convinces Bacon that this insistence is untenable? What is it that in Bacon's view the ancients failed to account for or to overcome, thereby dooming to failure their attempt to make progress in knowledge of reality?

In *The New Organon*'s aphorisms #45-52, and esp. 48, Bacon traces the errors of previous thinking to certain influences and prejudices that he calls types of "idols." The first of these, "the idols of the tribe," is the most crucial, since in articulating it Bacon indicates what prevented the ancient philosophers from even approaching the scientific method that he is proposing. The reason why mankind at large, seconded by the ancient philosophers and especially Aristotle, are so resistant to knowledge of general principles of the sort Bacon proposes ("laws of nature") is that human beings deeply long to find *instead* principles that can be referred to "final causes," disclosing *purpose* and purposefulness in all that exists. Bacon associates this with a desire for a beneficent, divine ruling power. The ancient philosophers, he charges, were moved fundamentally not by a desire for knowledge, but instead by a "shallow" desire to find in the world a kind of rescue from the world. Bacon's new scientific method, in contrast, unmasks this and all other "idols of the mind." The new Baconian method posits laws of nature that do not and are not intended to disclose final causes or purposes. These laws will instead enable scientists to bring to a *haphazardly* ordered nature an *imposed* order that is conducive to the satisfaction of human desires and purposes.

Still, while the new scientific method is directed explicitly against teleo-theological thinking, the new method cannot by itself settle the great issue of whether the world is in truth ultimately governed by divine purpose and meaning, or by blind forces of grim necessity. And given the wide prevalence, everywhere in human history past and present, of many humans beings testifying to their vivid personal experience of the presence and influence of mysterious divinity that places severe moral limitations, backed up by terrible punishments, on what science ought to do, the new science of nature stands in serious need of some means of disposing of the

doubt as to whether or not reality is at bottom governed by such divinity. Bacon's answer to this need would seem to lie in his hopes for and from the vastness of the practical success and popular impact of the new science.

The old science was "barren," Bacon charges. That is, it was constitutionally resistant to humans undertaking the transformation of the given world so as to impose on it the fulfillment of human purposes, above all that of vastly improving mankind's physical condition, a condition which is, prior to transformation by scientific inventions, impoverished and miserable. Through what has come to be called "technology," the new science will correct nature's stingy accommodation of human needs. As mankind progresses steadily away from its naturally vulnerable situation, the consequence will be that "slowly and by degrees scarce perceptible," all of humanity will be increasingly ready to admit that our natural situation is not purposefully ordered, but is instead appalling. People will feel less and less inclination to deny humanity's original, natural misery, and will be less and less prone to hope for a divine purpose in, and a possible divine redemption from, that misery. The mastery over nature, "for the relief of man's estate," will lead eventually to the extinction of the debilitating, misdirected hopes and longings to see the world as intrinsically ordered by a beneficent but mysterious divinity. It is in the *New Atlantis* that Bacon paints most vividly this vision of a future, scientifically and technologically satisfied humanity.

* * * * *

The New Atlantis is a tale narrated in the first person, by someone unknown, one of the principal men on an English ship that is in serious trouble but that has survived; he has lived to tell the tale, and brought back to the world the hitherto secret workings of "Salomon's House," a vast scientific laboratory of experimentation. In the dramatic opening the narrator and the other men are on board a ship in the Pacific, blown off course, without food, in "the greatest wilderness of waters in the world," and facing death. The opening of the tale thus contrasts strikingly, both in its gripping peril and in the sailors' understanding of its cause, with the tale's happy conclusion, which depends on the activities of Salomon's House and hence on something about which the sailors facing the storm are ignorant. How—the reader is drawn by the opening narrative to ask—can the sailors on the vessel be saved from the awful condition in which they find themselves? What is behind this terrible, life-threatening situation? Can the situation somehow be ameliorated or overcome?

The narrator's and the sailors' reaction to their situation is to pray to God for deliverance; he attributes their condition to their sinfulness and

orders them to seek forgiveness. An island then appears on the horizon, as if in answer to their prayers, and a delegation of people comes out in a boat, forbidding them to land and then reading an official scroll: you have sixteen days to leave, but in the meantime, tell us your wants. There is, significantly, a cross on the delegation's scroll, which is to the English sailors a "presage of good," i.e., the sailors are Christian and glad for this sign that the islanders are as well. Three hours later a "reverend" appears, and the sailors are asked explicitly if they are Christians. The narrator, having seen the cross, is not afraid to respond affirmatively: he might not have been frank otherwise.

The attendant to the reverend then explains the earlier behavior of the lord who had read the decree to them from his own boat. The lord had refrained from boarding the ship *not* through pride, the attendant explains, but having been warned of contagion. For the island's city has an authoritative "Conservator of Health," who gives advice or warnings to the rulers. Bodily health is a frank concern of whoever rules this island, the first or primary concern of which we learn, and it is maintained in part by taking physical precautions against contagion. The narrator also reports to us a striking feature of the desires of the island's inhabitants, which he discovers when he offers to pay the attendant in gratitude for his services. The attendant, refusing the money, explains that he must not be "twice paid," an expression that turns out to be common among the island's inhabitants. No precise punishment for accepting bribes or tips is cited; rather, the inhabitants appear to be remarkably willing to forego anything more than the reasonable reward that their offices are accorded them by the state.

The sailors are brought to "Strangers House," a handsome and cheerful rather than ornate or gothic residence, and asked to stay there (quarantined) for three days. They reply with expressions of heartfelt and respectful gratitude and with the declaration that "God surely is manifested in this land." They are given food and drink better than those found in Europe, and the sick are given both oranges and white pills to hasten their recovery. The following day, the narrator addresses the whole company.

> My dear friends, let us know ourselves, and how it standeth with us. We are men cast on land, as Jonas was out of the whale's belly, when we were as buried in the deep: and now we are on land, we are but between death and life; for we are beyond both the old world and the new; and whether ever we shall see Europe, God only knoweth. It is a kind of miracle hath brought us hither: and it must be little less that shall bring us hence. Therefore in regard of our deliverance past, and our danger present and to come, let us look up to God, and every man reform his own ways. Besides we are come here amongst a Christian people, full of piety and humanity:

> let us not bring that confusion of face upon ourselves, as to show our vices or unworthiness before them…[T]hese men that they have given us for attendance may withal have an eye upon us. Therefore for God's love, and as we love the weal of our souls and bodies, let us so behave ourselves as we may be a peace with God, and may find grace in the eyes of this people.

With a Biblical reference to Jonah, the narrator reminds the men of the continuing threat of death and hence of the need to reform their ways in order to avoid it, i.e., so that God will continue to reward them. Their ways are in need of reform; perhaps their suffering has been a punishment. In any case their preservation has been miraculous, and they will need another miracle to live and return to Europe; their fate is in the hands of an all-knowing, loving, and just God, who will reward the reform of their ways. It is also in the hands of a people "full of piety and humanity," who will likewise show them grace in accord with their comportment. The captain and his addressees may thus be said to understand their situation according to Biblical theology. Even the rapid healing of their sick over the next few days is understood in this manner: the sick think themselves cast "in some divine pool of healing." All of this, however, is about to change dramatically.

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The narrator recounts next the first of four conversations that he has with people of the island. It is with the Governor of the House of Strangers, who is also a Christian priest. He is with apparent redundancy described as "a new man that we had not seen before." Or does the term "new man" have its own meaning? The men fear that he will be issuing a sentence of life or death upon them, and they submissively bow to him. He wishes to speak only to a few of them, however. He comes chiefly as a priest, but has been given permission to tell them some welcome things in his official office. The news is welcome indeed: the state has determined that they may stay six weeks and perhaps even longer if he intervenes for them. He explains that there has been no visitor for thirty-seven years and so there is ample provision for them, at no cost. Their own cargo, too, will be well cared for or paid for in gold or silver. And he bids them make any request that they wish. He asks only that they stay within a 1.5-mile radius. The spoken reaction of the hitherto very apprehensive men to this generous offer is both expected and curious:

> That we could not tell what to say: for we wanted words to express our thanks; and his noble free offers left us nothing to ask. It seemed to us that we had before us a picture of our salvation in heaven; for we that

> were awhile since in the jaws of death, were now brought into a place where we found nothing but consolations. For the commandment laid upon us, we would not fail to obey it, though it was impossible but our hearts should be inflamed to tread further upon this happy and holy ground.

Not the terrifying prospect of death, with hope of salvation only from God, but the unexpected and therefore gratefully embraced prospect of salvation in this "happy and holy ground," captivates the men. Their hopes are still in something "holy," but they have now taken a significant turn toward seeing their salvation as in the hands of human beings.

How significant becomes clear in the statement that they add: "That our tongues should first cleave to the roofs of our mouths, ere we should forget either his reverend person or this whole nation in our prayers." This addendum echoes the famous words of psalm 137, mournfully sung during the Israelites' Babylonian captivity. Held captive in a strange land and asked to sing for the entertainment of Babylonian captors, the psalmist had expressed fierce and defiant devotion to Jerusalem, God's holy city, which had been razed by the Babylonians. The narrator's echo of that psalm thus stands in shocking contrast with the original. Not a violent and humiliating destruction and captivity of God's people but a healing and comforting accommodation of their every wish in a strange land is moving the men to remember *not* Jerusalem but their human saviors. To the men, this is "a land of angels, which did appear to us daily and anticipate us with comforts." The contrast becomes more pronounced as we learn, as we are about to, that the name of the island is "Bensalem," the Son of Salem, or the New Jerusalem.

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The narrator and nine others learn more about the island from one of its Governors, and the question of their devotion to the old or new Jerusalem becomes explicit. The Governor explains that the people of Bensalem are unknown knowers; they know well most of the habitable earth, but are themselves unknown. For by law they travel in secrecy, and their remote location keeps them unknown to others. But the secrecy is about to change; the Governor invites them to ask anything they wish about the island. They inquire first about how the island became Christian, and the Governor professes pleasure that the men remain committed to seeking "first," as he says—quoting Matthew 6:33—"the kingdom of heaven." He omits from his quotation, however, Jesus' explanatory statement of the need to seek "righteousness." And one has to wonder how long the men's

commitment will last when their brief taste of this "happy land" has already moved them to begin forgetting Jerusalem.

The Governor then relates a remarkable tale of the divine revelation that led to the island's conversion to Christianity, the elements of which raise more questions than they answer, especially in light of what follows. The revelation came according to the Governor twenty years after the ascension of Christ—so around 53 A.D.—to members of a remote small village on the island named Renfusa (or "Sheep-natured"). The inhabitants saw a pillar of light a mile out to sea, with a bright cross on the top, and went out in boats to investigate the marvelous sight. They were held back from the pillar of light by a kind of force-field, and so sat "as in a theater" around it. But not all the viewers were from the remote village; in one of the boats was a "wise man" from "Salomon's House," which the Governor calls a college that is "the very eye of this kingdom." And this man uttered a very curious "prayer" vouchsafing that what everyone saw was a miracle:

> Lord God of heaven and earth, thou hast vouchsafed of thy grace to those of our order, to know they works of creation, and the secrets of them, and to discern (as far as appertaineth to the generations of men) between divine miracles, works of nature, works of art, and impostures and illusions of all sorts. I do here acknowledge and testify before this people, that the thing which we now see before our eyes is thy Finger and a true Miracle; and forasmuch as we learn in our books that thou never workest miracles but to a divine and excellent end, (for the laws of nature are thine own laws, and thou exceedest them not but upon great cause,) we most humbly beseech thee to prosper this great sign, and to give us the interpretation and use of it in mercy; which thou dost in some part secretly promise by sending it unto us.

The man's boat was then released from the force field and he rowed toward the pillar of light, which then burst (like fireworks) as it were into many stars, and he found a cedar ark containing all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, including at least one that had not yet been written. A note in the ark explained that the apostle Bartholomew received the ark from an angel, with instructions to commit it to the sea, and that the people of the land where God ordained it to land should receive salvation, peace, and goodwill "from the Father, and from the Lord Jesus." Through this revelation, then, the island became Christian.

But a number of things about this tale must strike us as very odd. In the first place, the wise man from "Salomon's House" utters a prayer—allegedly before anyone on the island had any knowledge of the Bible, to a single "God of heaven and earth," who has created the world, and who works miracles and signs to divine ends; this God shows grace or favour to

certain men, and can be beseeched in "humility" to act mercifully. The man even uses the Biblical term "thy Finger" to describe the miracle. How could the wise man from Salomon's House have known all of this about God before he received the biblical revelation? On the other hand, and in the second place, the man distinguishes "divine miracles" from "works of nature" and then speaks of nature as governed by "laws of nature," i.e., Bacon's own and original term. Nor do these "laws of nature" manifest themselves to everyone, but are available only to those who know "the secrets" of the works of creation, who pry into those secrets with, as it seems, the blessing of God. But the man then describes these "laws of nature" as God's "own laws," which He contravenes or "exceeds" when working a miracle, for some "great end." The laws are, then, not permanent necessities that bind even God, but laws that God has as it were put in place to govern normal relations of natural bodies and that He contravenes when He wishes to disclose something great. But this indicates the highly problematic character of the man's certification of the miraculous character of the revelation. For a full, complete, final knowledge of such "laws of nature" would be needed in order truly to distinguish miracles from natural events—to confirm with certainty, that is, that a given wonder is indeed a miracle and not either a rare phenomenon intelligible on the basis of the fully grasped laws of nature, or a work of human artifice and deception achieved through knowledge of the laws of nature. It would also mean, more radically, that there really are no necessities, no causes, strictly speaking, since all of "nature" would be controlled by, susceptible of being suspended by, the creator God. It would mean, then, that there is not really a "nature" at all, but only what appears so to those who remain unaware of or deny the existence of the creator God.

These difficulties show the confused character of the prayer that was uttered by the wise man for his listeners, and point to a great fundamental difficulty in Baconian science, a difficulty that becomes more apparent in the subsequent account of this particular alleged revelation. The miracle entailed in this revelation seems, we can say, utterly impossible or preposterous and hence highly suspicious: how could a completed, "canonical" version of the Old and New Testaments be put out to sea in an ark in 53 A.D., when most of the parts of the New Testament had not yet been written, much less made canonical, and, as the account itself makes clear, the revelations to John had not yet been made, let alone written down? Does the whole account of this alleged revelation not seem to be a manifest hoax? Yet why should we consider this miracle any more impossible than any other miracle? Why could not a creator God who can suspend the merely apparent necessities of nature not deliver by an angel

something that had not yet otherwise come into being? Does this event's apparent utter impossibility not speak, in fact, the more strongly to its miraculous nature? Is Bacon not indicating here a serious challenge to any science and in particular his science, whose laws do not claim to be accounts of causes strictly speaking but instead humanly posited hypotheses about the principles of bodies? How then can the member of the mysterious Salomon's House be called a "wise man"? How has he or any other member of that House overcome these difficulties?

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Bacon's answer unfolds gradually. The Governor's account of the revelation is cut short just after he compares the arrival of the Bible in the ark to the salvation of the human race through Noah and his ark and thereby calls attention to the great significance of the people of Bensalem for the future of the human race. (It will also not be the last time that the Governor refers to Noah and the flood.) The Governor returns, however, the next day, and again invites the men to ask any question they wish. Curiously, the men do not inquire about Salomon's House, which had figured so crucially in the previous day's story. They do speak of "our former life" as something far less desirable than their present time with the Governor, and do ask—hesitatingly and with great reluctance and begging to presume upon his "humanity"—a question that shows that the wondrous tale of the previous day, along with the island's secrecy, has raised some bewilderment if not suspicion: how is it that you know so much about us, while we Europeans have had no inkling of you? Being hidden and unseen to others while having those others open and in light seems, they say, to be "a condition and property of divine powers and beings." The Governor takes their reluctance to ask the question as an indication that the men in fact suspect this to be "a land of magicians," as he says with some humour. They respond that they do think there is something "supernatural" about the land, but "rather angelic than magical," and claim that they were reluctant in truth because they did not wish to ask anything that would cause the Governor to violate the laws of secrecy concerning strangers. The Governor confirms that on account of the laws of secrecy his reply will indeed have to omit some things, but that his answer should nonetheless satisfy them. The short answer he might have given concerns another law about travel, laid down long ago by an ancient king of the island named Salomona. But to understand the purpose of that law, which the Governor indeed wishes them to understand, he must give an extended and very significant history of Bensalem and a fuller account of the

foundation and aims of the mysterious but obviously authoritative Salomon's House.

The Island, the Governor explains, was once well known through its nautical trade—some three thousand years earlier, when navigation was, hard as it seems to believe, greater than now. "Whether it was, that the example of the ark, that gave men confidence to adventure upon the waters; or what it was; but such is the truth." The island was at that time frequented by men of many nations in and around the Middle East, and its own ships traveled around the world. It had most of its commerce with the peoples of the Americas, including members of "the great Atlantis," the imperial city of North America. The Governor knows that that name will ring a bell with his listeners because of the tales told in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias* about a city in the far western seas whose attack on Mediterranean countries in the distant past was allegedly repulsed by the ancient Athenians. The Governor lets his listeners know that he has doubts about much of the tale as Plato reports it. But Atlantis was nonetheless, he claims, one of three "mighty and proud kingdoms in arms, shipping, and riches" in the Americas. Atlantis, Peru ("Coya") and Mexico ("Tyrambel") were great imperial nations. And Atlantis did indeed make a great expedition into the Mediterranean, from which none returned, while Coya made a great expedition against the island of Bensalem. But the island's king, Altabin (or "Twice Lofty") "a wise man and a great warrior," defeated it easily at the time, through "knowing well both his own strength and that of his enemies." Unlike the Athenians, however, who seem to have had the "glory" of killing all the Atlantians, King Altabin mercifully permitted all the Coya to return home safely after they swore an oath that they would not again bear arms "against him." It seems that the island of Bensalem was itself, then, at this time as mighty and powerful as the other three, with a warrior king who considered an imperial attack on the island to be an attack on himself, but who was merciful. What, then, happened to this island? How did it become unknown, and does it still have proud and merciful kings?—for this is the first we hear of any political or military life on the island.

Everything was changed, according to the Governor, by "the Divine Revenge," which "overtook not long after those proud enterprises." As he goes on to explain, some 100 years later a "particular deluge" destroyed Atlantis, flooding all of America and driving its remaining inhabitants into the hills, where they reverted to primitive life. Its people are thus now a thousand years behind the inhabitants of the rest of the world—that is, as the Governor puts it, a thousand years "younger" than all others who descended from "Noah and his sons" after "the universal flood." And the

island's commerce with the peoples of these other great empires was thus lost "by this main accident of time," and navigation in the rest of the world decayed, so the island became isolated.

The Governor's explanation of the flood that destroyed Atlantis—that it was caused by divine revenge upon Atlantis for its proud, imperial ambitions—explicitly echoes the Biblical account of the earlier, universal flood, with the suggestion that sinful pride brought about divine vengeance in both cases. Yet the Governor's conclusion, which attributes the flood to an "accident of time," and which similarly attributes the worldwide decay in navigation to either "wars" or "a natural revolution of time," points in an altogether different direction: a mere accident of nature, rather than God, is the cause. So too does the fact that the Governor has gone out of his way to discredit the possibility that an earthquake had a role (as it does in Plato's account) in the destruction of Atlantis. "For that whole tract," the Governor explains, "is little subject to earthquakes," while it has "far greater rivers and far higher mountains to pour down waters, than any part of the old world." This explanation would be utterly irrelevant, of course, if Atlantis had indeed been destroyed by divine vengeance—since God, as the Governor previously indicated, can suspend any "laws of nature" to effect his ends, even covering the whole earth in water. The Governor's account includes, then, an explanation that tends *away* from any "Divine Revenge" as the source of the catastrophe and toward an explanation as an accident with a natural cause. Now, which was it? And how did the monarchs who succeeded Altabin in rule of the island, which was spared destruction—its navigation is still "as great as ever"—understand the destruction of Atlantis and so take measures to prevent it from happening to them? What caused the people of the island to "sit at home" rather than to continue with their worldwide commerce and activities? And how did they avoid the decay in navigation experienced by everyone else?

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The answers comes in the Governor's description of a re-founding of the island that soon occurred, under one King Salomona, who ruled, according to the Governor, around 288 B.C. The people of the island still adore this king as a mortal, "divine instrument," and still esteem him as "the lawgiver of our nation." Salomona's disposition appears to have been quite different from that of his proud, warrior predecessor Altabin. With echoes of biblical passages that describe Salomona's namesake, King Solomon, the Governor attributes to him neither pride nor mercifulness to enemies nor martial prowess—he was not intent upon glory through

conquest either offensive or defensive—but instead a desire "wholly bent on making his kingdom and people happy." Salomona's observation of the new isolation of the island and its natural fertility moved him, in conjunction with his "memory" of how it might be "altered for the worse," to a policy of isolationism. With the fate of Atlantis in mind, then, Salomona first turned his nation's powerful fleet into a merely local fishing fleet and merchant marine, and laid down laws to protect his happy people from the "novelties, and commixture of manners" that strangers might introduce. But which of the two interpretations of the fate of Atlantis moved this re-founder of the island so dramatically to pull in his nation's sails in this way?

It turns out that Salomona had in mind an alternative to humble devotion to divine law as a means of escaping any devastating flood, a means that rests on the alternative understanding of events like the flood, i.e., on seeing them as accidental natural cataclysms. Our first indication of this is that the Governor describes Salomona's intentions as "noble and heroic" rather than humble or meek. They differ not in kind from those of the former leaders of Atlantis but only in the means chosen to achieve them. Second, the Governor thrice attributes to Salomona the virtue of "humanity" when he is describing Salomona's deliberations about how to handle whatever strangers might make their way to the isolated island; he says nothing of Salomona's piety. He adds that an attempt "to join policy and humanity together" is what informed Salomona's decision to permit strangers to either stay on the island at the state's expense or return home. "Humanity" is, we can say, a virtue that combines the pride and clemency of Altabin but without either his martial valor or his disposition to rely on oaths. It is not linked to any piety.

Moreover, as the sequel makes clear, the "policy" that Salomona combined with the practice of humanity consisted of buying off all strangers who were permitted to land on the island, by offering them state pensions for life if they stayed, or safe passage home if they wished to return. Not one ship, says the Governor proudly, has ever returned, and only thirteen individuals ever chose to be returned—and their accounts of the island to their countrymen back home can safely be assumed to have been dismissed as the product of a dream. (And in the sequel, we learn that once word got out among the rank-and-file English sailors of the possibility of staying on the island with a lifetime pension, it became extremely difficult for the narrator and the other leaders to keep the men from begging the Governor for this alternative.) Now, while the Governor of course doesn't say so, those thirteen who returned over the years must have found certain things, like devotional love of their friends, family, or

fatherlands, to be more important than the state pension for life and the acceptance of subjection that Bensalem's monetarily generous offer would necessarily entail. The island is thus kept safe in a "humane" way from such dangerous opinions and passions—which would otherwise re-animate political life and hence imperialism. *No* education of the strangers in Christian piety or the divine law is mentioned.

The Governor also stresses the great differences between Salomona's isolationist policy and the famous Chinese isolationist policy, and he begins thereby to provide the decisive indication of Salomona's rejection of the pious interpretation of the calamitous end of Atlantis. The Chinese policy of keeping out all strangers has, the Governor says, rendered the Chinese an anxious, "ignorant, fearful, foolish nation," which is not the case, he implies, with the people of Bensalem. Similarly, Salomona's proscription of any travel abroad by the people of the island differs from the policy of the Chinese, who permit their own people to travel abroad at will. The Governor claims that Chinese permission to travel reveals the Chinese policy against admitting strangers to be cowardly and fearful. He implies, that is, that Chinese travelers realized through their travels the deep flaws or inadequacies of their nation and hence developed the fearful desire to keep strangers out; Salomona's policy, on the other hand, is grounded in a firm confidence that strangers will almost always find life on his island better than any other. His prohibition against travel abroad is, the Governor suggests, designed only to keep his island secreted from the rest of mankind, who would seek it out for conquest if they ever came to know of it. Still, as we have seen, the removal of those strangers who are unsatisfied with the life offered to them on the island suggests that there remains some reason for the rulers of Bensalem to be apprehensive; dispelling the Bensalemites' ignorance of life in other countries, through travel, might likewise cause problems for Bensalem. What, then, makes the Governor so sure that life on this isolated island is indeed the best life for human beings? On what ground can he claim that the island's people are not kept in the dark about the best—the happiest—human life but instead simply guarded against a "corruption" of that life through the adoption of customs and manners that lead away from it? What, in short, was Salomona's understanding of the human good, and the grounds of his confidence that, unlike the Chinese, he had a genuine and not spurious grasp of it—that his would indeed be a wise and not a foolish people?

The full grounds of his confidence, and the enormously ambitious end that Salomona actually had in view with his refounding, become clear through the Governor's description of a significant *exception* to Salomona's prohibition against travel abroad, an exception that finally explains how

the people of the island know so much about others while remaining unknown to others. That exception shows that Salomona feared not any and all outside influences upon the life of the people of the island; he was not closed to any improvements for his people that could be made through the incorporation of practices and especially the science and inventions found in other nations. His refounding looked, then, toward a better future rather than toward a perfect past; it was 'progressive" in a sense with which we are today very familiar.

The exception is that certain members of Salomon's House are, in recurring twelve-year missions, ever engaged in scientific and technological espionage around the world. Their task is to acquire what Bacon himself tentatively attempts or limns in the fifth part of his *Great Instauration*: a catalogue of the manufactures, inventions, and instruments that have been haphazardly brought forth throughout the world, catalogued for the future systematic advancement of a fruitful science that will alleviate the natural condition of human beings, liberating them from the vicissitudes of nature.

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The Governor clearly wishes to ensure that his listeners will grasp the deep significance of this exception to the proscription of travel—of the bearing that it has on the way of life that King Salomona envisioned for the island, or his vision of the best life for human beings. He makes an explicit digression, before its disclosure, to provide them with a fuller account than we have heard thus far of the activities of the members of Salomon's House:

> [It is] the noblest foundation (as we think) that ever was upon the earth, and the lanthorn of this kingdom. It is dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God, … our excellent king … instituting that House for the finding out of the true nature of all things (whereby God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them, and men the more fruit in the use of them,) … .

Salomon's House is a scientific think tank that looks into "the true nature of all things," for the production of fruitful goods from their inquiries. Those of its members who spy on the rest of the world in their missions, dolling out oodles of gold, bring back knowledge, inventions and instruments that assist in this endeavour. The inhabitants of the island benefit, then, from advances in science, arts, manufacturing, and inventions. They benefit from what, on the basis of passages like these, came to be called "Enlightenment," and from all of its material benefits. Still, this

enterprise is presented as an innocent, indeed biblically-sanctioned activity: God has the glory in the workmanship, while men have the fruits of the inquiry into it. What, then, does this tell us about the understanding of the best life by which King Salomon directed his people? How does it come down on the great issue of whether God and his justice are behind events like the destruction of Atlantis, or whether, instead, it was an accident of nature?

To answer this question, and to understand better what this still somewhat mysterious think tank called Salomon's House is, we must at this point look ahead to the third and final description of the activities of Salomon's House.

When we do so, we find in the first part of that final, four-part description the following, stated by a "Father" of that house to the narrator, in a private, frank conference held before he leaves the island:

> The End of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible.

In this, the final, frank, and true statement of the purpose of Salomon's House, *nothing* is said of God or his purposes or his glory or his work. Instead, the narrator is given a frank disclosure of the most ambitious, imperial human endeavour imaginable, "the effecting of all things possible," a statement that is followed by a description of scientific experiments and inventions that discloses a staggeringly ambitious endeavour to utterly transform or re-make the natural world. That account ends with the following statement:

> Lastly, we have circuits or visits of divers principal cities of the kingdom: where, as it cometh to pass, we do publish such new profitable inventions as we think good. And we do also declare natural divinations of diseases, plagues, swarms of hurtful creatures, scarcity, tempests, earthquakes, great inundations, comets, temperatures of the year, and divers other things; and we give counsel thereupon what the people shall do for the prevention and remedy of them.

What King Salomona envisioned for the future of the island and the happiness of its people entails predicting and controlling, and thereby overcoming, by scientifically informed human action, the destructive effects of events like the flood that overcame Atlantis. It entails nothing less than the replacement of God as the mover of such events, the overthrow of the understanding of them according to which they entail "divine revenge," or entail any other cause that implies divine intervention

in nature or a divine concern with human affairs. This was the basis of Salomona's confidence that his will be a self-sufficient, enlightened, confident, wise nation.

Nor is the new science practiced in Salomon's House limited to defending human beings against the catastrophes that had hitherto been taken to be part of God's mighty quiver of punishment. The experiments that go on in Salomon's House yield instruments, inventions, and machines touching every part of human life, eliminating from it want, sickness, drudgery, physical suffering, and even, perhaps, death itself. Many of these are listed in the second of four sections of the final disclosure that the Father of Salomon's House gives to the narrator: the scientists' "preparations and instruments." They include the following: refrigeration, used for the production of new artificial metals, prolongation of life, and curing diseases; composts, for "the making of the earth fruitful"; towers for observing atmospheric phenomena and weather; lakes, for observing decomposition and for artificial de-salinization; the production of motion from engines utilizing hydro-power; the capturing of wind for power and the artificial creation of wind tunnels; synthetic mineral waters; artificially created waters for prolonging life; the artificial creation of precipitation and of animals; rooms that alter the air for the cure of diseases and preservation of health; baths that cure diseases; skin creams; gardens dedicated not to beauty but to testing varieties of soil and to experiments of grafting and cross-breeding; artificial alteration of seasonal production of fruit and flowering; artificially altered speed of fruit production. "We make them also," says the Father of Salomon's House, "by art greater much than their nature," changing their natural taste, smell, colour, and shape, using many for medicinal purposes. One plant can be made to "turn into another." In parks and pools, animals are raised not to be looked upon or for their rarity but rather for dissection and experimentation—for "trials," as scientists still say, upon beasts, birds, and fish as subjects of poisons, surgeries, and medicines, of things potentially useful or harmful to humans, including the resuscitation of things apparently dead. "By art likewise, we make them greater or taller than their kind is; and contrariwise dwarf them, and stay their growth; we make them more fruitful and bearing than their kind is; and contrariwise barren and not generative." Through crossbreeding, they have produced "many new kinds, and them not barren." They predict and make wholly new species, generating new kinds of bees and silkworms and other useful animals. Kinds, in other words, are not permanent, nor are natural kinds respected as the product of an originating order. Kinds or species are to be re-made, in accordance with perceived human need and the need for genuine knowledge.

Their kitchens produce new food and drink with "special effects," dried fruits and condensed juices that can last many years, vitamin drinks and foods that allow people to "live very long," others that cut down on the need to eat, and others that build muscle. Medicine shops produce great variety of drugs, with instruments for distilling and separating and compounding. Their mechanical arts make synthetic papers, linens, silks, and dyes. Great furnaces of widely different degrees of *heat* allow for its study as a homogeneous force, and furnaces even imitate the heat of the sun, to produce "admirable effects." Heat is likewise studied in bodies, and is produced artificially solely by motion of bodies. The heats are used "as the nature of the operation which we intend requireth," i.e., the scientists themselves determine the intention of the "nature" of an operation; nature itself has no intention.

In houses of optical instruments, *light* and *colours* are studied, not as they "naturally" appear, but separated out; far-travelling and non-dispersing artificially produced light (lasers) are made, and "delusions and deceits of the sight, in figures, magnitudes, motions, colors," and—following the study of reflections and refractions—rainbows. They have many telescopes and microscopes that "make feigned distances," with which to observe far off bodies and minute bodies in urine and blood. Natural and artificial *minerals*, metals, glasses, and magnets "of prodigious virtue" (i.e., power) are studied, produced, and transformed. *Sound* is likewise studied, artificially produced in amplifications and modulations, with woofers and tweeters, and hearing-aids are likewise invented. Flavorings and smells are artificially created, which can "deceive any man's taste," as are wines and soft drinks.

Very important are the Engine houses that make "engines and instruments for all sorts of motions," including guns and cannons and basilisks "exceeding your greatest," gun powder, unquenchable fires, fireworks, airplanes, and submarines. The island is clearly in a position to defend itself from an imperial attack.

Bacon thus presents the reader with three steps or phases in the gradual disclosure of the new science practiced in Salomon's House, in its atheistic ends. In step one, there is a co-optation, through re-interpretation, of Christianity, as compatible with and even vouched for by the activities of science. Nature's laws are presented as God's laws, and their uncovering as divinely sanctioned. The second step is the implementation of the transformational findings of science among a Christian people, satisfying their needs and making them happy. Third, and finally, is the full, authorized disclosure of the truth about the new science to humanity in and through the presentation of the transformative power of science as a means of

earthly salvation. The victory of the new science will cause human beings to expect nothing from God or nature, and to turn their gratitude to the human beings—the scientists—from whom they had hitherto expected nothing but had instead suspected.

The Father's long description of the "Preparations and Instruments" concludes, significantly, with an account of the "houses of deceits of the senses," where the scientists reproduce among other things "false apparitions, impostures, and illusions; and their fallacies." They could, says the Father, if they wished, deceive the senses and work to make particulars "seem more miraculous," but "we" have severely forbidden impostures and lies to the fellows. But is this credible? Who, after all, will hold the chief scientists to account if they decide that a deception is needed? We recall in this light that in the Governor's account of the revelation of the Bible, a member of Salomon's House was said to have immediately—without any of the kind of careful investigation that goes on in Salomon's House—proclaimed the apparent revelation to be an authentic miracle, distinguishing genuine miracles not only from "works of nature" but also "works of art" and "impostures and illusions of all sorts." And we are now in a position to see that all of the wondrous elements of that tale of the revelation are mentioned as *replicable* by the members of Salomon's House: lasers, fireworks, the impediment of locomotion, and most significantly, "impostures." (Salomon's House was founded by King Salomona, who lived "about 1900 years ago," i.e., about 288 B.C. It would then have been in existence, according to the tale, for 338 years before the alleged revelation took place.) Putting two and two together, we are able to see that the alleged revelation of the Old and New Testaments was indeed a giant hoax, its perpetration permitted by both the haze of time past and the knowledge of the control of nature that had been acquired by the men of Salomon's House. But far more importantly, we are provided, through the full description of the activity of Salomon's House, with the principle through which alleged miracles of the past are soon to be refuted: knowledge of the laws of nature affords human beings the ability to replicate what *seem* to have been wondrous events, and thereby to remove their wondrous quality. Manifest human accomplishment removes the human need to resort to the divine for an understanding of purposeful causes. The world can be disenchanted by the progressive conquest of nature, the apparently extraordinary explained as in fact quite ordinary, when the knowledge of what is required to bring it about rests in human hands. Only ignorance of the laws of nature and of the enormous capacity of human beings to produce identical effects, in other words, leads to the credulity of "young," primitive peoples, to their awe and fear

of what they can explain only as a miracle. For a while, then—as long as it takes to advance science to the point where it can confidently present itself as the true means to human happiness—the project must be kept under the veil of a pious, biblically sanctioned activity. But use is in fact being made of the people and their limited ends to create a society favourable to the ambitions of the truly great, the scientific men of contemplation, by means of the conquest of nature, which will achieve in the end the overthrow of Christianity that Machiavelli had envisioned through the political re-emergence of the great.

Yet if the true, deep, practical intention of Salomon's House is an eventual disclosure to the world of human power, why is this particular deceit needed? Why does the Governor, and at times even the Father of Saloman's House, dress the replacement of God by human beings in the pious garb of the Christian religion? Why do they present this thoroughgoing atheistic effort, at least for the time being, as a pious endeavour, sanctioned by religious faith and by the Christian faith in particular?

Bacon, it seems clear, has found in Christianity and its emphasis upon meekness and charity both a present obstacle and a potential ally in his endeavour. Meekness or humility, and the hope to supplicate and practice devotion to a powerful God in order to find redemption in the face of human suffering, is a great mistake and stands against the proud human activity of conquering nature through art. But the Christian commandment to charity, to love of one's fellow human beings, can if properly directed be transformed into a new virtue, the virtue of "humanity," by means of which the activities of Salomon's House, i.e., the activities of Baconian science, can become a source of popular support for the transformation of the world through science. That is, in practical agreement with the biblical understanding, Bacon finds the human tendency to love of honor or glory achieved through proud martial conquest of other human beings to be fundamentally mistaken, and in need of significant re-direction. But the re-direction cannot come from Christianity as it is currently understood. The Christian virtue of charity must be "secularized," made to be conducive to the great scientific project. Christianity and its moral teaching must, in other words, be gradually re-interpreted, transformed, so as to be enlisted in the progressive scientific project that will eventually lead to its demise.

This requires, Bacon indicates, a complete reinterpretation of the Bible, achieved through a philosophic re-presentation of its core message with respect to God's disposition toward unassisted human knowledge. And Bacon chooses King Solomon as the key figure in the rhetorical strategy he has deployed to effect this re-presentation of the message of the Bible.

The Father of Salomon's House makes it clear, finally, that the leaders of that institution hold the real authority on the island: whether the inventions will be disclosed to the state or withheld from them is in the scientists' hands. And while we have learned from the Governor's tale of the deed of King Altabin and the founding achieved by the scientist-king Salomona, we hear nothing of the deeds of any other kings. The present king of the island (whoever he is) seems to sign official state papers, nothing more. The most regal public ceremony is reserved, moreover, for the Father of Salomon's House, when he comes to visit the narrator and disclose to him the truth. While the Governor had not permitted the men to kiss his tippet in reverence, this Father of Salomon's House does so; he accepts reverence. And the greatest scientists and inventors of Salomon's House are given great monetary prizes and have statues erected in their honor; there are no statues to any political or martial leaders. Life on the island appears to have been significantly de-politicized, the monarch and his governors reduced to mere figureheads of state. It also seems utterly pacified; the people stand at attention to greet the Father of Salomon's House like ranks in an army, but this underscores the absence of any actual army or gendarmes in Bensalem. Two additional parts of the narrator's tale—the description of the Feast of the Family and the account of the narrator's conversation with Joabin the Jew—permit us to grasp this depoliticization in all of its amazing complexity and thoroughness. They show us that both the moral and religious education of the island's inhabitants have been privatized, and disclose the understanding of erotic longing that informs this privatization. We therefore turn in conclusion to these two remaining parts of the work.

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The men stayed nineteen days on the island between the Governor's account of King Salomona's founding and the disclosure of the workings of Salmon's House to the narrator. And their transformation has proceeded apace. "We took ourselves," says the narrator, "now for free men, seeing there was no danger of our utter perdition; and lived most joyfully, going abroad and seeing what was to be seen in the city and places adjacent." Does the narrator refer here to the "utter perdition" of their bodies only, or also of their souls? Have he and the others perhaps lost their fear of hell—of the perdition of their souls? The narrator certainly speaks, strikingly, no longer of the piety but only of the "humanity" of the inhabitants of Bensalem, whose free desire to take in strangers "was enough to make us forget all that was dear to us in our own countries." Does this forgetting

not entail, again, the "forgetting" of Jerusalem—of God's holy city and all that it promises? He and his fellows met, he tells us, "many men, not of the meanest quality," but the only conversation he reports is with Joabin, a Jew. Are Jews as worthy, then, in this city as Christians? Has faith in Jesus as the Messiah become fundamentally unimportant, and if so, how? The narrator and his men observed many things "worthy of relation," but the one of which we learn is "The Feast of the Family," a state-sanctioned celebration of a private event, to which two of the men were invited.

As the narrator explains, the state pays for this feast in honor of any man who has lived to see thirty of his bodily descendants above the age of three. The narrator calls it "a most natural, pious, and reverend custom," but one of its purposes seems to be to encourage procreation as the highest honorable activity, outside of Salomon's House, for the men of the island. Two days before the feast gets underway, three friends of the fecund man's own choosing, along with the local governor, assist him in settling by appeasement any and all discords within his family. Impoverished members of the family are also offered material relief, and those "subject to vice" are "reproved and censured." (We are told neither what the vices nor the censuring consist of.) Direction is also given at these meetings to family members who are considering marriage and various careers. The only role played by the state in these important meetings is for the local governor "to put in execution by his public authority the decrees and order of the Tirsan [the father], if they should be disobeyed; though that seldom needeth; such reverence and obedience they give to the order of nature." This arrangement seems, and to a truly remarkably extent is, "bottom-up," with the state executing the decrees of a merely private individual over members of his family. But what is meant here by the term "the order of nature"? Is it the authority of the father as father? Or is it, rather, or at least also, the inducements to obedience supplied by the monetary largesse of the father, inducements made possible by the state? Are the members of the Tirsan's family not bought off, as are the strangers, by monetary rewards?

The Feast in any event clearly honors and rewards *fecundity*, not only by honoring a man with thirty living descendants but also with appeals to biblical characters who exemplify this trait. We hear of Adam and Abraham and Noah, but nothing of Enoch or Isaac or David. There is, however, one significant exception to the honoring of male fecundity: any member of the family who belongs to Salomon's House, male or female, sits at the head table with the Tirsan. Salomon's House and what it represents stands, then, as an alternative to the patriarchal ordering of human relations represented by the feast of the family.

The Feast's next part is a "divine service" attended solely by the father, followed by a procession into the dining hall, with boys in front of the father and girls behind him. The mother "sitteth but is not seen." Her position is strikingly similar to the Bensalemites with respect to the rest of the world (seeing but not seen). She, not the Tirsan, we may say, is the image of Bensalem. She quietly makes possible a taming of the male desire for glory, a redirection of it toward fruitful human procreation. The ruling characteristic of Bensalem is then fundamentally "feminine." In accord with this, the distinction by sex ends among all the others once they enter the dining hall—except that the *men*, not the women, serve the Tirsan as he eats dinner; the women stand around, leaning on a wall. The men are reduced to servants of a man whose highest goal in life is to have many descendants over whom he can preside. The Herald reads the king's charter, which reflects the number and dignity of the family. When the charter is handed to the Tirsan, all present utter the fully secular proclamation: "Happy are the people of Bensalem." The Tirsan then receives as badge of honor the golden vine of grapes, which the "son of the vine," the son whom the Tirsan has chosen to live with him henceforth, subsequently displays before the Tirsan whenever the Tirsan goes in public. The image of a fruitful vine steadily growing and extending itself into the future is *the* image captivating the men, the symbol of their highest ambition, the highest public honor of anyone outside of Salomon's House.

There is a short dinner, and a hymn sung to Adam, Noah, Abraham—the great progenitors of the Hebrew scriptures—and to the nativity of Jesus (not to his death or resurrection). The Tirsan then withdraws for private prayers. And then he gives a blessing, in the order that pleases him, though it is usually by age. The Christian blessing is to both daughters and sons: "make the days of thy pilgrimage good and many." This is a strange blessing; pilgrimages are usually difficult, and so one would normally wish them speedily fulfilled; the blessing encourages a longing for strictly earthly satisfaction and longevity. Nor is anything said in this blessing about virtue or moral goodness. There is, moreover, a second blessing given to at most two sons "of eminent merit and virtue." These do not have to kneel, but stand, and they are given a pious but still strange blessing: "persevere to the end." This blessing is the only indication in the work of any need for endurance of an unrelieved hardship for anyone on the island. Virtue is simply hard. The feast concludes with music and dancing.

The picture that emerges from the feast is of a society, ruled over by fathers with the aid of state largesse, that (in addition to science) esteems

nothing above propagation, longevity, and health, and for the few who want hardship, there is an honoring of virtue, but there is no joy associated with it, and it is not given the highest honor.

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The second major part of the de-politicization of the island becomes clear in the narrator's account of his conversation with Joabin.[1] Bacon gives this character, whom the narrator calls "a wise man, and learned, and of great policy" the name of a very significant advisor to King David, and Joabin's biblical namesake helps us understand what he represents in the narrative. Joab was according to scripture the head of King David's army. It is he who eliminated Abner, Saul's son and David's rival, and he who convinced David of the need to eliminate his own rebellious son Absolam, as well as Amasa. The pious David is ever denouncing Joab, but it is Joab who appears to keep David on the throne, as one sees, for example, in his strenuous protest against David's weeping over Absolam. Joab accuses David of loving those who hate him and hating those who love him, and points out that his weeping over his rebellious son's death must stop, or he will lose the faithful soldiers who put that rebellion down (II Samuel 19.7). Joab was keenly attentive—as David was not—to the distinction between friend and foe, and what that distinction meant to the men who were devoted to David and who had suffered on his behalf. The final, deathbed order of David to his son and future king, Solomon, is for this reason to kill Joab, who, according to David, does not follow the "ways of the Lord" but *instead* "policy." (Solomon has his new henchman, Benaiah, kill Joab even as he clings to the ark of the covenant: Kings 2.28.) The new Joab, Bensalem's Joabin, represents indeed "policy," but a new policy that bids to overturn the distinction between friend and foe. Not Solomon, but Salomon's House, kills off the old Joab.

Joabin is introduced as a merchant and a circumcized Jew, and immediately the issue of religious strife is raised.

> For they have some few stirps of Jews yet remaining among them, whom they leave to their own religion. Which they may the better do, because they are of a far differing disposition than the Jews in other parts. For whereas they hate the name of Christ, and have a secret inbred rancour

[1] On this important figure, see Jerry Weinberger, "Science and Rule in Bacon's Utopia: An Introduction to the Reading of the New Atlantis." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Sept., 1976), 865-885. Weinberger significantly overstates, however, Joabim's authority in Bensalem.

> against the people amongst whom they live: these (contrariwise) give unto our Saviour many high attributes, and love the nation of Bensalem exceedingly.

The rancor of Jews to which the narrator refers has of course a deep cause in the Christians among whom they live, since the latter have rancor against the Jews for refusing to accept Jesus as their Savior. The solution suggested by Bacon to the rancorous standoff between them is, in a word, assimilation, a solution with which we are very familiar. The Christians of Bensalem do not require the Jews to convert, and the Jews, rather than cursing Jesus as a false messiah and contemning Christians as fools, give him high names:

> Surely this man of whom I speak would ever acknowledge that Christ was born of a Virgin, and that he was more than a man; and he would tell how God made him ruler of the Seraphims which guard his throne; and they call him also the Milken Way, and the Eliah of the Messiah; and many other high names; which though they be inferior to his divine Majesty, yet they are far from the language of other Jews.

Now to many devout Christians—and not only in Bacon's day—there is something not only dissatisfying but a bit ridiculous about this position. Pretending that Jesus was some kind of great man or angel is an attempt to avoid confronting the issue of his divinity. The Christians of Bensalem don't mind such patronizing statements, however; there is a change in their disposition toward religious doctrine as surely as in that of the island's Jews.

Joabin is also a lover of the nation of Bensalem. How, then, can he square this with his devotion to the Jewish nation and its God?

> Being desirous, by tradition among the Jews there, to have it believed that the people thereof were of the generations of Abraham, by another son, whom they call Nachoran; and that Moses by a secret cabala ordained the laws of Bensalem which they now use; and that when the Messiah should come, and sit in his throne at Hierusalem, the king of Bensalem should sit at his feet, whereas the other kings should keep a great distance.

The narrator dismisses these as "Jewish dreams," but Joabin's claims are of course no less plausible than the Governor's claim about the lost scientific writings of King Solomon, which the narrator had easily accepted. Instead of abandoning their Judaism or abandoning their devotion to Bensalem and its laws, Joabin and his fellow Jews have re-interpreted their theological tradition, making it conform to what is attractive in the present and turning it even into the hidden source of what is deemed good in the

present. The Christians do the same. In the one case the greatest prophet of God's laws, Moses, becomes the alleged secret source of the laws of Bensalem. In the other, King Solomon becomes an exemplar of modern scientists and honored as such.

Bensalem has in any event so succeeded in making its people happy that members of its minority religious community are drawn, in their efforts to maintain their tradition, to reinterpret it, to make it compatible with the majority religious community. They are seduced away from orthodoxy and the hard path it would require them to follow. But at least for the time being, the deep human desire for reassurance, which religious faith had previously answered, does not permit a full abandonment of religious faith. It does permit, however, a re-interpretation of fundamental and previously antagonistic differences—of differences that had been previously so meaningful to religious believers. Human life is able thereby to become tolerant. In the absence of state-enforced religious orthodoxy, human beings become fundamentally indifferent to the doctrines that had formerly animated "cultures" or peoples. Members of religious sects re-interpret their former enemies to accord with the new virtue of humanity, and the material, earthly satisfaction that has begun to change their needs. In the face of increasing material security and satisfaction, the importance of sharply distinguishing religious doctrine becomes a thing of the past, accepted and perpetuated only by the "fanatics" who existed in former, dark ages. What came to be called the advance of "civilization" eventually causes serious religious devotion to be outlived.

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But won't the erotic longings which, according to Socratic political philosophy, give rise to religious faith as well as to noble deeds and great political enterprises, cause human beings to remain *dissatisfied* with the mere material meeting of their wants? Won't there be eruptions of great dissatisfaction, a resurgence of proud independence or of attempts to win glory through rule, on one hand, and rejection of secular, man-made, and short-lived satisfaction, on the other?

The discussion that leads the narrator to declare Joabin a "wise man, and learned, and of great policy" addresses the heart of this issue: erotic longing. The discussion takes place when the narrator expresses admiration for how much "nature presides" at the solemnity of the Feast of the Family; its manifest intention to promote fecundity prompts the narrator to ask whether there is polygamy on the island. Joabin offers in reply a long speech on the contrasting sexual mores of Bensalem and Europe. The

former, Joabin says, is a "chaste" nation, while the latter has foolish and ugly practices with respect to sex.

> They say ye have put marriage out of office; for marriage is ordained a remedy for unlawful concupiscence; and natural concupiscence seemeth as a spur to marriage. But when men have at hand a remedy, more agreeable to their corrupt will, marriage is almost expulsed.

The Bensalemites appear to take their bearings in sexual matters from an injunction about sexual purity found in one of St. Paul's letters. "To avoid fornication," says Paul, "let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband… if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (Corinthians I, 7:2, 7:6-9). Now in Paul's teaching, the celibate life is presented as superior to the married life, since it permits undivided devotion to God. (See e.g. Corinthians I: 7:32-38.) The Bensalemites say nothing of this; they attempt instead to ensure that sexual desire is "a spur to marriage," which it will be only if there are no other ways to satisfy it, no other "remedy." For when there are other ways—brothels, artful concubines, mistresses, easy hook-ups—marriage becomes "a dull thing, a kind of imposition or tax." The toleration of opportunities for extramarital sex, that is, makes marital fidelity into a dull duty, a deprivation of delights rather than a benefit. The Bensalemites mean to ensure that it is a clear benefit, a source of delight.

They therefore limit the means of sexual gratification solely to one's own spouse, which also increases the mothers' ability to require the youthful fathers to be concerned with the rearing of their children. The Bensalemites engage, we could say, in a self-conscious construction of devotion to another human being. To use a later term, they "sublimate" sexual desire by restricting it to a single object, the spouse, who alone is permitted to satisfy it. And there is, says Joabin, no "male love," i.e., no homosexual love of the type that characters in Plato's *Symposium* associate with political ambition and glory. Their policy implies that sexual desire is *not* "erotic" in the Socratic sense; it is not an expression of longing for that which promises an eternal good, a longing to redeem oneself from suffering and the painful awareness of mortality. It is more like a stream of desire for a physical gratification that can be dammed up, diverted, or channeled in a single, peaceful direction through sound policy. We may say that the policy reflects the grand policy of Salomon's House, but in reverse or as a mirror image. While Salomon's House offers a human "remedy," as the Father of Salomon's House puts it, for every possible calamity hitherto ascribed to divine punishment and thereby weans human beings away from their fear in and faith in God, expelling him thereby, the Bensalemites'

policies with respect to sexuality ensure that there is only a single "remedy" at hand for it, so that marriage is not expelled.

Bensalemites' chaste sexual mores are supported by what they call "self-reverencing" or self-respect, "which next to religion, acts as the chiefest bridle of all vices." Religion has then, in self-reverencing an alternative, though it appears initially as religion's helper or co-worker in a battle against vice. Now religious bridles on vice might include such things as the belief that the human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, or a fear of God's punishment for the practice of "abominations." But of such things we hear nothing from the Bensalemites, and so it is only when *we* supply them that we begin to see that self-reverence, a form of *autonomy*, could well be fundamentally at odds with them and so could bid to *replace* reverence for God and his laws.

Similarly, Joabin discloses, there are "Adam and Eve's pools," found in each town, where men and women can be viewed naked by the friend of a potential spouse. Bodily perfection or allure is a frankly important concern to the Bensalemites. Of equal importance, the Bensalemites clearly have no shame in having their naked body exposed in this way. The name of the pools is, we may therefore say, a final example of the gradual renunciation of biblical theology by its re-interpretation. For the name reminds us, of course, of the Biblical account of humanity's first parents, who were commanded to be fruitful and multiply, but the name carries no reminder of Adam and Eve's fall, of the shame in their nakedness that overcame them upon their eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It instead suggests a recovery of their pre-Fall state of absence of shame, yet with the possession of the knowledge that Adam and Eve had been forbidden by God to acquire. The name thus suggests the creation by human beings of paradise on earth. And the scientists in Salomon's House who are extending life and intent on overcoming death through science are, of course, replacing the tree of life that God had, according to the Bible, planted in the garden.

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We thus see by the work's end that we have been given a series of tales within a tale, an allegorical history of our species from the time of Noah that is about to take a real and dramatic step in a new direction, away from the rule of chance and the misery it has brought to human beings, away likewise from the tales told by Plato in the service of his political philosophy, and toward control of nature through scientific experimentation and invention. The tale's heroes, besides the scientist-king Salomona, are

other scientists, inventors, and pioneers. It has no villains; instead, there are merely benighted human beings who to their misfortune had been moved by their fear to a fundamentally mistaken understanding of the world as governed by divine providence. Through that misunderstanding human beings had hitherto remained the sometimes proud, sometimes humble, but always miserable because miserably mistaken actors, who attempted to overcome misery, suffering, and death by devotional virtue or glorious conquest. That mistaken understanding, Bacon teaches, will soon become not only a thing of the past but a thing visibly and emphatically belonging to the past, to a former, primitive age of human consciousness. Thanks to the new science, Progress can finally replace Return—repentance—as the guiding disposition, the lodestar, of human life.

CHAPTER SIX

ROUSSEAU'S 'PROFESSION OF FAITH OF THE SAVOYARD VICAR' AS DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

LEE WARD

By any measure Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one of the preeminent figures in the development of modern democratic political theory. His democratic sympathies are well known as they relate to the sovereignty of the people expressed through broad-based legislative assemblies and collective decision-making in the form of plebiscites and referenda ideally involving the entire citizen body.[1] Moreover, Rousseau demands that individual rights must be interpreted and contextualized in terms of the common good which requires the "total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the entire community" (SC 1.6.24). In addition, Rousseau famously rejected the Hobbesian and Lockean self-interested conception of human nature in favour of the "natural goodness of man" based upon certain natural sentiments especially pity (Rousseau, "Second Discourse" 1964: 128-33). It is this core of natural sentiment which grounds Rousseau's argument for the flexibility and even perfectibility of human faculties. Rousseau thus did much to illuminate the political and psychological features of modern democracy.

The focus of this paper is on a less well-documented aspect of Rousseau's thought; that is, the democratic character of his views of natural theology as they are expressed in perhaps his most important statement on moral philosophy "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" contained in his masterpiece *Emile*. The Profession stands out in Rousseau's work for a number of reasons. First, he identified it as the single most important of his writings; indeed, lauding it as "the best and

[1] See for example, Rousseau 1987: bk. 2, ch. 6, p. 37; 3.14.73 and 4.4.88. Hereafter in text and notes SC book, chapter, and page.

most useful writing in the century during which I published it" (Rousseau "Beaumont" 2001: 46).[2] Second, the Savoyard Vicar's profession offers arguably Rousseau's fullest reflections upon natural theology and the moral implications flowing from his foundational premise of the natural goodness of human nature.[3] The Vicar presents a moral vision that rejects both scientific materialism and dogmatic orthodoxy, while providing metaphysical support for an egalitarian and tolerant democratic political order. Finally, the Savoyard Vicar offers a particularly powerful demonstration of Rousseau's use of the literary form. The Vicar is not only the proponent of a particular philosophical position. In the context of the larger work the *Emile*, the Vicar is also a character whose life plays a role within the broader narrative about the natural education of Emile. The Vicar emerges as a kind of democratic hero, whose narrative helps limn a literary form that Rousseau intends will replace the traditional textual authority of scripture and philosophical treatises. The narrative form of the Vicar's speech causes the reader to reflect upon both the democratic character of modernity and the meaning of a text.

A Democratic Narrative

Before examining the content of the Vicar's profession of faith, it is important to recover a sense of both its context within the larger work *Emile* and the significance of its narrative form. In terms of context, the Vicar appears at a specific stage in the education of Emile. Book IV begins with Emile's entry into puberty, a phase of life Rousseau identifies as a kind of "second birth" beyond which the young man's education will necessarily take on a character entirely different from that prior. The central issue of Book IV, of which the Savoyard Vicar's speech constitutes the major part, is the question of how to deal with religious instruction in Emile's natural education.[4] Prior to Book IV, the tutor carefully avoided

[2] There is much debate about whether the Vicar expresses Rousseau's authentic views on religion. Bloom (1979: 20), Macy (1992: 617), Nichols (1985: 548), Scott (1994: 490) and Melzer (1990: 30) argue that the Vicar does not represent Rousseau's genuine position. My argument is in line with Williams (2010: 533; 2007: 61-63) and Wilhote (1965: 502) who believe that the Vicar does articulate Rousseau's fundamental reflections upon natural religion. See also Rousseau's claim to ownership of the Vicar's ideas in 1992: 34.

[3] This is contra Masters (1968: 54) who argues that the Vicar's metaphysical teaching is detachable from his moral philosophy.

[4] This is confirmed by Rousseau's selection of the illustration representing Orpheus teaching men the worship of the gods to adorn this fourth book in the

introducing religious concepts or practices into Emile's education. This rejection of catechism—the traditional form of religious instruction for children—signifies dramatically the novel, indeed revolutionary, character of Rousseau's educational theory. In discarding the "sorry stupidity" of catechism, whereby children are encouraged to mouth words and concepts that they couldn't possibly understand, Rousseau presents an alternative model for Emile's religious development which requires simply that "we shall put him in a position to choose the one [religion] to which the best use of his reason ought to lead him" (260). Rousseau ascribes even greater urgency to the matter of Emile's religious education when he juxtaposes his support for the general proposition that "a child has to be raised in his father's religion," with his theoretical ambition to "shake off the yoke of opinion in everything" to do with Emile's education so that we "teach nothing to our Emile which he could not learn by himself in every country, in what [ever] religion shall we raise him" (260). Thus, the question of religious instruction presents the education of Emile with serious conceptual challenges even on its own quite rarified terms.

Understanding the context of the Vicar's speech is, however, inseparable from the questions raised by the narrative and quasi-literary form Rousseau adopts with the Vicar. The completely fictional Emile, the semi-fictional (semi-real?) Vicar, and the very real author are interwoven as characters in a complex narrative of meaning that extends beyond the text of the Vicar's speech.[5] The narrator practically begins the profession of faith with a series of disclaimers that have the effect of setting Rousseau as author, and Jean-Jacques as narrator and transcriber at least one remove from the dialogue and action of the Vicar's speech. The tutor pointedly demurs from offering his own theological and metaphysical speculations, and instead vouchsafes the thoughts of a "man more worthy than I" (260). This is the case even though the narrator assures the reader that: "I am not propounding to you the sentiment of another or my own as a rule. I am offering it to you for examination" (260). The Vicar's role then in the

work. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*. Allan Bloom, translator. (New York: Basic Books, 1979): 261. Hereafter in notes and text simply page number in parenthesis. All translations are from this edition except my own taken from the French original in Rousseau 1967.

[5] In the 'Letter to Beaumont' Rousseau insisted that the Vicar was based upon a real person and was not 'chimerical' (Rousseau, "Beaumont' 2001: 42). Damrosch makes a persuasive case that the Savoyard Vicar is based upon the Abbé Jean-Claude Gaime, whom the young Jean-Jacques Rousseau met in Turin (Damrosch 2005: 63-4).

larger context of the natural education project of Emile is clearly didactic, but not dogmatic.

The narrative form of the Vicar's speech unavoidably, indeed intentionally, draws the reader's attention back toward a number of ambiguities in the text. To start, while the Vicar claims that Jean-Jacques is the first "and perhaps the only one to whom I shall ever tell" the profession of faith (310), the reader is obviously aware that Rousseau has taken the liberty to publicize the Vicar's words on a mass scale. Even as the narrator attempts to minimize authorial intent by insisting that he has merely "transcribed" (*j'ai transcrit cet écrit*) the Vicar's words (Rousseau 1967: 387), the reader nonetheless is reminded of the problem of relying on the testimony of other's by the Vicar's own hermeneutical principles with respect to scripture. The narrative format thus operates on at least four levels. First, there is the overarching text, the *Emile* authored by Rousseau. Second, there is the Vicar's speech within the *Emile* which is drawn from a putatively different narrative source. Thirdly, however, there is the oral communication of the Vicar to Jean-Jacques that was supposedly only later transcribed and included in the text of the *Emile*. The final level of textual analysis is the concept of the "Book of Nature" as "text" introduced into the written text by the narrator, which seems to make palpable the Vicar's reflections upon the metaphysical reality informing the text. The narrative format of the Vicar's profession of faith both allows for, and ultimately relies upon, the complex interplay of these multiple levels of textual analysis.

The overarching structure of the Vicar's speech in the context of the *Emile* highlights the problematic status of text as authority. The Vicar's story is central to his theological reflection. That is to say, the Vicar stands as a democratic hero whose story of disgrace and redemption exposes the psychological examination of natural goodness in concrete form. The chief virtue of Rousseau's democratic hero is authenticity, a characteristic cast as a mixture of humility and self-respect by the terms of which the Vicar assures Jean-Jacques that "you shall see me, if not as I am, at least as I see myself" (266). Insofar as the Vicar's exercise in introspection, private in original but made public by writing, constitutes a challenge to traditional political and religious authority, it also sketches out what is required to reconstruct a moral vision for democratic modernity based upon natural goodness and human equality. To the substance of such a vision we now turn.

The Vicar's Case for Natural Theology

The first part of the Vicar's "Profession of Faith" is characterized by two main thrusts. First, the Vicar tries to demonstrate the case for natural theology on the basis of what can be known about nature, God and the human soul as provided by unassisted reason. Second, the Vicar contrasts the intellectual rigor and salutary moral effects of natural theology with what he takes to be the theoretical inadequacy and destructive moral scepticism characteristic of the materialist metaphysics of modern philosophy. The animating spirit of this defence of natural theology is, however, drawn from the Vicar's own personal experience of disgrace. Rousseau's use of the narrative form, then, allows the Vicar to preface his argument for natural theology with an account of a phenomenology of religion drawn from the experience of a solitary, but nonetheless representative, individual.

The Vicar's autobiographical introduction to the topic of natural theology is an absorbing tale of scandal, disappointment and hope. Despite being born "poor and a peasant," the Vicar was able to become a priest even though he and his parents were more concerned with acquiring a profession than "seeking what was good, true and useful" (266). It was the Vicar's conventionalized eroticism, that is a combination of his inability to remain celibate and his unwillingness to violate the sanctity of marriage, that led to scandal. As the Vicar recounts:

> My respect for the bed of others left my faults exposed. The scandal had to be expiated. Arrested, interdicted, driven out, I was far more the victim of my scruples than my incontinence; and I had occasion to understand from the reproaches with which my disgrace was accompanied, that one need only aggravate the fault to escape the punishment. (267).

The effect of this disgrace on the Vicar was to produce "that frame of mind of uncertainty and doubt that Descartes demands for the quest for truth" (267). In this episode of Cartesian doubt, the Vicar gradually "lost each day one of the opinions" he had received and eventually witnessed all of his ideas of the "just, the decent and all the duties of man" overcome by doubt (267). In the Vicar's rewriting of the fall from grace, radical doubt forms the starting point for a process of purification, rather than marking the legacy of mutilated innocence. For the Vicar, redemption involves the movement, at least initially, from conventional belief to philosophic scepticism.

As the Vicar relates it, the restorative power of Cartesian doubt lies in its inherent instability. It is difficult to maintain the sceptical perspective

over the long term: "Although I have often experienced greater evils, I have never led a life so constantly disagreeable as during those times of perplexity and anxiety, when I ceaselessly wandered from doubt to doubt and brought back from my long meditations only uncertainty, obscurity and contradictions about the cause of my being and the principle of my duties" (268). Finding in the texts of the philosophers only "destructive criticism," the Vicar began the process of reconstructing his understanding of justice and morality on the basis of Cartesian "clear and distinct ideas," those being both simplest and most reasonable as well as deriving force from being "what was immediately related to my interest" (269).[6] The more limited the claim to truth, the more solid the substance of the finding.

The key to the Vicar's account of the reconstruction of knowledge after the onset of radical doubt is sense perception. Our senses make us aware of the existence of matter and bodies: "I am as sure of the universe's existence as of my own … To perceive is to sense; to compare is to judge" (270). The Vicar's empiricism points back to the thinking subject insofar as sense experience is coordinated and organized by a thinking being. Regardless of whether one calls it "attention, meditation, reflection or whatever one wishes," the faculty of mind that allows the thinking agent to collect and reflect upon sense experience signifies that human beings are not simply or fully immersed in sense experience (271).[7] The rational being reflects upon causation in addition to the perception of matter and bodies. The Vicar's speculation about elementary physics leads perhaps inevitably to the deeper question about the causes of motion: "I perceive in bodies two sorts of motion—communicated motion and spontaneous or voluntary motion" (272). That is to say, the Vicar's account of the stages of development of religious ideas in the movement from radical doubt to reflection on causation eventuates in an exploration of freedom and necessity.

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[6] It is worth noting, however, that while in his other works Rousseau also finds fault with philosophic writings, he does not reject philosophic or scientific research per se. Recall in the *First Discourse* where Rousseau famously included Descartes, Bacon and Newton in his list of "preceptors of the human race;" that is scientific minds who should be left to conduct their studies in peace as long as they do not publish works that will excite the intelligentsia and upset public morality (Rousseau 1964: 63-64). For an insightful treatment of Bacon's scientific project, see Chapter Five in this volume.

[7] Here the Vicar is suggesting the existence of a faculty of mind similar to the suspension power central to Locke's doctrine of happiness in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke 1975: book 2. chapter 21. section 47. page 263; and 2.21.50.266).

The Vicar's phenomenology of religion has its roots in his personal experience of scandal and disgrace. It was this traumatic blow to his *amour-propre* that made possible a kind of renewed innocence. However, the innocence that the Vicar proposes is inseparable from the shedding of authoritative opinions, and thus at least begins in a manner akin to Socratic knowledge of ignorance. It is on the basis of what can be confirmed by unassisted reason that the Vicar produces the three articles of faith that represent the culmination of his reflection on causation and in effect supplies the core of his natural theology.

Three Articles of Faith

The Vicar's speculation about natural causation with respect to bodies and matter produces the three "articles of faith" that form the basis of his natural theology. Each one of these articles is supposedly in principle apprehensible to unassisted reason. The first article of faith is that "a will moves the universe and animates nature" (273). The Vicar's primary assumption is that "the natural state of matter is to be at rest" (272). As such, the Vicar deduces from the property of matter that it can communicate motion but does not produce it. Strikingly, the Vicar uses the relation of body and soul as the model for understanding matter and motion, that is, one wills one's body to act and then it moves. While the Vicar admits that this analogy is perhaps obscure and question-begging, he insists that it does not require accepting anything "repugnant to reason or observation" (274). This first article of faith is directed quite explicitly against the principles of a purely materialist scientific metaphysic which the Vicar claims can neither prove that motion is essential to matter nor that it is inseparable from it. For the Vicar, determinate motion presupposes a cause determining it.

The second article of faith derives from what the Vicar takes to be observable laws of motion. Behind the physical laws of the universe the Vicar claims reason detects a supreme, divine intelligence. Nature provides our senses and rational faculties with support for the possibility that matter and motion is not simply random and chaotic. The two major pieces of evidence that the Vicar adduces to demonstrate this abiding principle of order in nature have to do with providence and the concept of species. With respect to general providence, the Vicar asserts that the existence of God is proven by the operation of nature: "Not only in the Heavens which turn, not only in the stars which give us light, not only in myself, but in the ewe which grazes, in the bird which flies, in the stone which falls, in the

leaf carried by the wind" (275).[8] By associating this sense of divine authorship with "inner sentiment," the Vicar scales back the theological claims in the second article of faith. The point is not to posit or articulate a visible end or "telos" that could support a full blown Aristotelian metaphysic. Rather the Vicar seeks to reinforce the notion of divine agency with support from what he takes to be the observable harmony of nature.

Species membership stands for the Vicar as the unique human participation in general providence. The moral implications of the Vicar's use of the concept of species operate on several levels. To start, the Vicar's emphasis on the moral meaning of species constitutes a rejection of the Spinozist and Hobbist claim that human beings are natural enemies. The Vicar thus presents a version of the argument for natural goodness that Rousseau famously advanced in the *Second Discourse* (Rousseau 1964: 128-33). Indeed, the Vicar also articulates the metaphysical basis for natural goodness in the primal awareness of, and identification with, members of a distinct species. That this idea of species membership can be extended into a form of democratic universalism is hardly surprising. In this sense, the Vicar puts forward himself as a model democrat whose membership in the human race trumps any commitment to a particular political party: "I who have no system to maintain, I, a simple and true man carried away by the fury of no party and does not aspire to the honour of being chief of a sect, I who am content with the place in which God has put me, I see nothing except for Him, that is better than my species" (278). The Vicar's second article of faith thus promotes species identification as a natural source of religious feeling rooted in a sentiment of "gratitude and benefaction for the author of my species" (278). While not simply discounting the weight of prejudice and the impact of social forces, the Vicar nonetheless exudes an optimistic humanism encouraged by the belief that regarding gratitude toward the creator of one's species: "I do not need to be taught this worship" (278). The Vicar's second article of

[8] The Vicar's focus on general providence closely follows the main contours of Rousseau's argument made in his own name in the celebrated 1756 "Letter to Voltaire" (Rousseau 1997: 232-46). In both cases theodicy means explaining God and nature's concern for an entire species as opposed to the particular members of a species. As such, it is not surprising that the Vicar dismisses particular providence with the declaration that he does not pray to God: "What would I ask of him? That he change the course of things for me…I who ought to love, above all, the order established by his wisdom…This rash wish would deserve to be punished rather than fulfilled" (293-4).

faith thus advances the idea that there is a religious sensibility prior to or independent of reason per se.

The third and final article of faith forms the basis of the Vicar's metaphysical dualism: "Man is free in his actions and as such is animated by an immaterial substance" (281). The central proof for the existence of soul is then human freedom for free actions signify that we are not completely immersed in material causation. The Vicar's claims about soul take on the character of a theodicy for he maintains that divine providence is justified by "immaterial soul" that survives the body because otherwise the frequent and obvious triumph of evil in the material world would signify "great dissonance in universal harmony" (283). While the Vicar does not buttress this decidedly weak argument with any further claims about the afterlife or eternal rewards and punishments, the greater philosophical significance of the Vicar's account of soul is that it possesses intrinsic awareness of its immateriality: "I sense my soul. I know it by sentiment and by thought. Without knowing what its essence is, I know that it exists" (283). The metaphysical dualism defining human beings means, according to the Vicar, both that God is not "corporeal and sensible," and in addition that God is not immaterial substance either, "as if God and my soul were the same nature" (285). The Vicar's natural theology, then, presupposes that God stands partly outside of nature providing for cosmic order even as divine will is expressed in the laws of nature.

Central to the Vicar's idea of soul is his treatment of conscience. Conscience is the voice of the soul, just as passions are the voice of the body. Sentiments are housed in the conscience and provide a rudimentary basis for moral judgement: "I have only to consult myself about what I want to do. Everything I sense to be good is good; everything I sense to be bad is bad" (286). The Vicar does not mean by this that moral reasoning is exhausted by reflexive reference to the sentiments. To the contrary, his point is that while natural sentiments such as self-love, aversion to pain, fear of death, and desire for well-being are prior to experience, they are not simply irrational. In fact, the Vicar connects sentiments to a fundamental "love of the beautiful," which delights in order and symmetry, and rejects narrow self-interest (287). The sentiments which the Vicar locates in conscience are the material composing a moral instinct that includes an "innate principle of justice and virtue" (287). Conscience is thus the means that the Vicar uses to distinguish acquired ideas from natural sentiments. Natural goodness means that on some psychological level human beings actually enjoy being just and virtuous, despite our naturally self-regarding sentiments.

Conscience thus contradicts philosophical scepticism which the Vicar ridicules as a kind of perversion of reason divorced from reality.[9] The operation of conscience demonstrates the interaction of natural sentiments and reason in a particularly powerful way. As the Vicar explains: "To know the good is not to love it; man does not have innate knowledge of it, but as soon as his reason makes him know it, his conscience leads him to love it. It is this sentiment which is innate" (290). Reason naturally relates everything to the subject, whereas sentiment includes some awareness of a greater common interest. It is conscience, according to the Vicar, which makes it possible to de-personalize reason without stifling it: "The good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself" (292). In the Vicar's conception of natural theology, reason and sentiment are both required to confirm the existence of an overarching structure of cosmic order and justice.

The Vicar's argument for natural theology, which constitutes by far the largest portion of his profession of faith, rests on important claims about the metaphysical truths apprehensible to unassisted human reason. The Vicar's aim is at least in part to encourage an admiration for natural order in his auditor and by extension in Rousseau's reader. By setting this conversation on a hill overlooking the beautiful Po valley with the Alps crowning the landscape, the Vicar seems to indicate that both reason and sentiment, especially love of the beautiful, are vital elements of his natural theology (Barber 1985: 476). With nature presenting its splendor as "text for our conversation," it is no surprise that the Vicar's natural theology has little room for prayers. If reason and natural sentiment leads to the natural theology that the Vicar professes, the obvious question remains: Do we need anything else in addition to reason in order to ascertain religious truth? Or to put it another way, how does scripture relate to the Vicar's natural theology?

The Problem of Revelation

Whereas the first and largest part of the Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith is a defence of natural theology against what he takes to be the extreme materialism of modern scientific philosophy, the second part constitutes the Vicar's reflections upon revealed scripture. The catalyst for this discussion is the dramatic intervention by Jean-Jacques, who while

[9] See for example the Vicar's mockery of Montaigne who he claims put himself through "torments" trying to unearth some obscure corner of the world in which one can find a custom supposedly "opposed to the notions of justice" (289).

"believing that I was hearing the divine Orpheus sing the first hymns and teaching man the worship of the Gods," nonetheless suspects that the Vicar's speech sounds to him like "the theism or the natural religion that the Christians pretend to confound with atheism" (294). In order to convince his audience about the truth of natural religion, the Vicar has to confront the immense authority of scripture: "You have only told me half of what I must know. Speak to me of revelation, of the scriptures, of those dogmas through which I have been wandering since childhood" (294). Jean-Jacques' intervention, thus, reminds the Vicar that for non-philosophers, that is most people, religion is primarily about what scripture reveals regarding God and morality.

The difference in tone between the first part of the Vicar's speech and the latter section is striking. Rather than his panegyrics about the splendor of natural order and divine intelligence, when it comes to speaking about revelation the Vicar is very cautious for on this topic all he sees is "perplexity, mystery and obscurity." As such the Vicar confesses to Jean-Jacques: "I tell you my doubts rather than my opinions" (295). The Vicar expresses concern that young Jean-Jacques may not be emotionally or mentally prepared for a radical challenge to received authority: "But in your present condition you will profit from thinking as I do" (295). The narrator reveals the full significance of this statement for Rousseau's larger political project when he adds: "This is, I believe, what the good Vicar could say to the public at present" (295). The parallel between the spiritually troubled youth and modern peoples generally is perhaps the clearest indication within the text that Rousseau saw the Vicar's speech as pointing toward a new religious dispensation for European civilization.

The Vicar's claim that "the greatest ideas of the divinity come to us from reason alone" is the animating spirit behind what we can call his "Spinozist Moment." That is to say, the Vicar's defence of natural theology contains an important element of biblical criticism drawn unmistakably from the hermeneutical principles first developed in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* written by arguably the first early modern champion of democracy Benedict Spinoza. The Vicar expresses inherent distrust toward any claim that divine will is translatable into textual form. In the first instance there is the problem of relying on the testimony of others who were supposedly witness to miracles or prophecy: "And who wrote these [holy] books? 'Men.' And who saw these miracles? 'Men who attest to them.' What! Always human testimony? Always men who report to me what other men have reported! So many men between God and me!" (297; cf. Spinoza 2007: ch. 2). With clear echoes of Spinoza, the Vicar details the extensive scholarship that would be required even to begin to

verify the authenticity of ancient texts that were originally written in now forgotten languages and have doubtless been revised, expanded, altered, and redacted by scores of editors over the centuries (297-298, 303; cf. Spinoza 2007: ch. 8). How can we know today what of the original text has even survived to present times?

The Vicar contrasts the deep opacity and ambiguity of scripture with the illuminating power of rational reflection on nature as out of all books "there is one open to all eyes: it is the book of nature. It is from this great and sublime book that I learn to serve and worship its divine Author" (306). Revelation distorts religion because reason draws from the sentiments of the human heart a principle of unity and one true religion, whereas by making God speak revelation produces a potentially dizzying variety of Gods issuing contradictory directives. Again employing the naturalistic hermeneutic pioneered by Spinoza, the Vicar insists that it is healthy to take a very sceptical stance towards miracles, prophecy, and the biblical idea of election. All of the laws of probability should be exhausted to determine the status of miracles because the promiscuous attribution of miracles can undermine confidence in the "unalterable order of nature" (298). Likewise with respect to prophecy the Vicar insists claims to direct divine communication should be resisted as "a subjection of the authority of God, speaking to my reason, to the authority of men" (310). Behind the claims of the "inspired man" the Vicar sees only the bigot's lust for power and the fanatic with the instincts of the persecutor. Finally, the Vicar rejects the Old Testament notion of election on the grounds that "He who begins by choosing a single people for Himself and proscribing the rest of mankind is not the common Father of Men" (299). Revelation, then, is of highly dubious value for instruction about the divine.

The Vicar's sceptical biblical criticism reorients thinking about religion toward a cultural or sociological perspective. The apparent dogmatism of scripture often masks or obscures a deeper cultural relativism at work in the religious traditions of a people. As the Vicar explains: "Each religion has its traditions, its views, its customs, and its prejudices which constitute the spirit of its belief and must also be considered for it to be judged" (302). While recognizing the particularistic aspect of religion, the Vicar also suggests that the special social function served by organized religion is undermined by the dogmatism encouraged by scripture. True worship is "in spirit and in truth," and must be freely chosen. However, the Vicar admits that external forms of worship must be uniform even if only for the sake of good order, but he adds "that is purely a question of public policy" (296). What assumption is the Vicar making with respect to the uniformity

of external worship that he does not make in regard to interpretation of scripture more generally?

The closing section of the Vicar's profession is a passionate defence of the principle of toleration. Some form of toleration certainly seems logically to flow from the Vicar's Spinoza-inspired biblical hermeneutic. It is impossible to study fully and deeply every religion and religious text. Therefore the religious person is best served to be careful about making sharp judgements or condemning other religions. However, the Vicar expresses more than just a prudential objection to intolerance. Rather he professes deep abhorrence toward the cruelty intrinsic in intolerance. This is seen most vividly in the Vicar's sympathy for European Jews, the persecuted religious minority par excellence. As the Vicar confides to young Jean-Jacques:

> Those among us who have access to conversation with Jews are not much further advanced. These unfortunates feel themselves to be at our mercy. The tyranny practiced against them makes them fearful … I shall never believe that I have seriously heard the arguments of the Jews until they have a free state, schools, and universities, where they can speak and dispute without risk. Only then will we be able to know what they have to say (304).

The Vicar's philo-semitism crystallizes a general concern for the pernicious affects of religious intolerance including even an oblique reference to Spinoza's accusers among the "Amsterdam rabbis" (304). The Vicar's deeper political point, however, is that civil intolerance and theological intolerance are inextricably linked. That is to say, the Vicar does not believe one can live in peace with those one believes to be damned (309-10).[10] Needless to say, natural religion as the Vicar presents it offers no real theological grounds upon which to anchor accusations about heresy or infidelism.

The Vicar's condemnation of intolerance and his endorsement of natural theology did not lead to the call for personal liberation and hyper-individualism one might expect. Indeed, the Vicar's profession concludes on a rather conservative note. Behind the Vicar's support for toleration lay certain clear assumptions about the practical utility of religion as a source of social cohesion. The Vicar assures Jean-Jacques that rational religion is not a recipe for anarchy: "Let us protect public order" (310). The public authorities should encourage a general respect for the external rites of the dominant, ideally tolerant, civil religion. On a practical level,

[10] See Rousseau's identical statement of the issue in the *Social Contract* Bk. 4, chapter 8 (Rousseau 1987: 4.8.103).

however, the Vicar indicates that this also means that a priest in a heavily Catholic area should not seek to convert or harass in any way the Protestant minority. The clergy must be exemplars of toleration. The most obviously conservative aspect of the Vicar's closing remarks is, however, his advice to Jean-Jacques to renounce Catholicism and return to Geneva and the Calvinist heritage of his forefathers. But what does this call for authenticity signify about the broader meaning of the Vicar's religious vision?

Toward a Democratic Religion

Perhaps the Vicar's greatest achievement in his profession of faith is to cast natural theology, long the exclusive preserve of philosophers, in a new light as the voice of the common people. This democratized version of natural religion issues from a moral instinct rooted in natural sentiments that are in principle apprehensible to unassisted human faculties and in practice supports tolerant and inclusive civil orders. The Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith is thus Rousseau's blueprint for a new religious dispensation for a democratic age. The Vicar's parting advice to the young Jean-Jacques to return to his homeland and the faith of his fathers is presented as a call for authenticity rather than a celebration of particularism per se. In democratic modernity, the individual shorn of the many inherited ties and bonds of the *ancien régime* will be defined not by an abstract and contentless conception of freedom, but rather by profound moral commitments that are freely chosen. The Vicar's heroism, however, lies in his fearless effort to articulate a moral vision that is humane, tolerant and deeply egalitarian. The democratic hero inspired by the Savoyard Vicar is the individual who will "dare to acknowledge God among the philosophers; dare to preach humanity to the intolerant" (313). The double-headed threat to this moral vision is the "dispiriting doctrines" of materialist philosophers, on the one hand, and the bigotry of the religious fanatic, on the other. Ultimately both the *philosophe* and the inquisitor undermine the average person's confidence in cosmic justice. The Savoyard Vicar's defence of natural theology and sceptical biblical criticism thus encourage two parallel principles; namely, that there is a discernible natural order expressing divine intelligence and that natural goodness means that a rational person can normally find some good in practically any religious tradition.

The Vicar's profession also represents a novel democratic orientation toward religion in the sense that the narrative format signifies a new way to communicate religious insights. Rather than the traditional idea of

prophecy and divine inspiration, Rousseau's literary figures such as the Savoyard Vicar and his romantic heroine Julie from *La Nouvelle Héloise* engage in extended introspection.[11] Whereas revelation relied on testimony of witnesses about miracles, Rousseau's model of psychological exploration seeks to engage readers by appealing to both their rational faculties and their sentiments. The non-dogmatic and mildly self-critical posture of Rousseau's narrative format reinforces the universalist implications of the central democratic claim that relatively ordinary individuals such as the Vicar and Julie can without the advantage of class privilege or unique divine inspiration meaningfully examine religious truth solely on the basis of their own faculties and experiences.

This is not, of course, to suggest that the Vicar celebrates atomistic individualism. The individual self that forms the basis of the Vicar's analysis is assumed to be a social animal. By this, the Vicar does not contradict the idea of solitary natural goodness that Rousseau famously advanced in the *Second Discourse*. As the Vicar clarifies: "man is by nature sociable, or at least made to become so" (290).[12] The Vicar's conclusion seems to be that in modernity human sociability simply has to be taken as a given insofar as the perfectibility of our faculties has effectively altered our nature. For the Vicar, as for Rousseau, there is simply no going back to pre-civil existence.

Alienated from his own natural goodness, the Vicar is a model for how individuals can partly reconcile the divided components of the modern psyche. That is to say, inevitably the Vicar represents a kind of model for Emile, the object of Rousseau's project for natural education. The transcriber of the Vicar's profession assures the reader of the *Emile* that the Vicar's speech is not meant to establish any prescribed rules for religious instruction, but rather merely to provide an "example of the way one can reason with one's pupils" (313). The narrator thus refers to the inherent limits of religious instruction per se. The Vicar displays perhaps the acme of how far the natural education based upon unassisted reason can take the individual on questions of metaphysical and religious truth. As the narrator concludes: "the light of reason alone cannot in the education founded by nature, lead us any farther than natural religion"

[11] See Julie's Profession of Faith, which bears many of the markings of the Vicar's teaching: "Elle vanta l'avantage d'avoir été élevée dans une religion raisonnable et sainte, qui loin d'abrutir l'homme, l'ennoblit et l'élève ; qui, ne favorisant ni l'impiété ni le fanaticisme, permet d'être sage et de croire, d'être humain et pieux tout à la fois" (Rousseau 1960: 712; see the whole 702-722).

[12] This is contrary to Melzer (1996: 355) and Marks (2005: 126-7) who see a contradiction between the Vicar and Rousseau's position in the *Second Discourse*.

(313). As such, the suggestion by some scholars that Rousseau recognized shortcomings in the Vicar's teaching is correct (Bloom 1979: 20; Nichols 1985: 536, 554), but risks missing Rousseau's deeper point. Rousseau never intended that the natural theology of the Vicar's profession was meant to replace later development in Emile's education, especially the formation of erotic attachment in the family. Rather Rousseau intends the dramatic intervention of the Savoyard Vicar within the text of the *Emile* to be a reflection of a formative experience for the education both of Emile and for the readers of the treatise.

This formative experience serves a multiple duty in Rousseau's larger political and theological project. For instance, we recall from the narrator's preface to the Vicar's speech that the aim of religious instruction in the natural education is to put the pupil in a position to choose the religion "to which the best use of his reason ought to lead him" (260). The Vicar's role, then, is clearly a preparatory one that builds upon the other advantages of the natural education such as freedom from opinion of others and the careful management of *amour-propre*. Jean-Jacques and Emile, or for that matter any individual in the modern age, may be free to choose his or her own religion, but that choice is structured through a substantive process profoundly shaped by the Vicar's vision of natural theology and religious toleration. The freedom inherent in Rousseau's conception of religion presupposes the rationality and doctrinal simplicity marking the Vicar's profession of faith. Thus, the Vicar's bias toward natural theology and suspicion toward scripture is inevitably part of the substance of the religious vision Rousseau offers modernity.

In the final analysis, the narrator even suggests that natural religion could actually be the outer limit of Emile's religious education. As the tutor explains: "If he must have another religion [beyond natural religion], I no longer have the right to be his guide in that. It is up to him alone to choose it" (314). This ambiguous, but potentially portentous "if," may only indicate the narrator's theoretical confusion about the limits of Emile's religious education. It may also, however, suggest Rousseau's openness to the possibility of a radical or post-biblical future in which natural theology becomes the dominant religious perspective, perhaps retaining a veneer of Christian symbolism and minimal scripturalism.

The "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" advanced a model for a new way of expressing religious truth that emphasized introspection, psychological complexity and individual freedom rather than miracles, dogma and the authority of scripture and its select interpreters. Herein lay the seeds of a revolutionary way of considering the harmony between nature and conscience that would profoundly impact religion, politics, and

society in the modern age. What makes the Vicar a democratic hero is not only what he says, but also how his teaching is transmitted to a mass audience via Rousseau's quasi-literary format. One is justified then to conclude that Rousseau believed that for any democratic political community to flourish, its citizens must more or less share the Vicar's internalization of the norms of tolerance, as well as his fundamental confidence in natural order and divine justice.

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PART THREE:

ART AND THE HUMAN CONDITION IN 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER SEVEN

ART AND THE VOICE OF THE COSMOS IN NIETZSCHE'S *BIRTH OF TRAGEDY*

ANN WARD

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche argues that science conquers art, especially the tragic art of the Dionysian poet of ancient Greece. This chapter explores Nietzsche's understanding of the unique materialism of Dionysian tragedy by considering his reflections on the origins of tragedy in the tragic chorus. It then turns to the Dionysian confrontation with science or the mind of philosophy. Nietzsche claims that the Greek tragedian embraces life in all its pain by indulging in the "*craving for the ugly*" (*BT* 21).[1] Embodied by the satyr chorus as the physical image of Dionysus, the "ugly" is understood to be the animal passions of human beings, specifically their sexual drives. Appealing to the natural, primeval self that is suppressed but not extinguished by the knowledge of culture, Dionysian tragedy gets us in touch with our bodies and its deepest longings. Tragedy, strictly speaking, invites us to *feel* the presence of the god and not simply to see or hear him.

Nietzsche argues that tragedy is opposed and eventually destroyed by science.[2] Associated with the "Socratism" of the theoretical man, the response of science, or philosophy, to pain, is quite different from the response of tragedy (*BT* 18) (also see Tessitore, 2007: 196-97; but see Lampert, 1996: 127) Craving the "beautiful" rather than the ugly, science

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Walter Kaufmann trans. New York: Vintage. 1967. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition.

[2] Laurence Lampert denies that as an advocate of art Nietzsche was an enemy of science. Rather, Lampert argues that Nietzsche's philosophy advances a science that breaks with both the Platonic science of the transcendence of nature and the Baconian science of the mastery of nature to embrace what Lampert calls a science of 'pure immanentism or naturalism' that is wholly consistent with the naturalistic worldview of contemporary biology and ecology. See Lampert, 1993: 10-11.

and philosophy celebrate the human mind and the rationality of the universe (*BT* 21). Although Plato, according to Nietzsche, preserves the tragic art form in his dialogues, it is Euripides, another student of Socrates, who destroys the Dionysian entirely. Euripides destroyed Greek tragedy by bringing the *demos* along with their everyday reality onto the stage. By doing so he brought the human individual separated from their god into view. Nietzsche suggests that Euripides celebrated the unadorned individual because only the individual is intelligible or accessible to reason; he wanted art to be comprehended by mind or to be rationally understood. Euripides was possessed of such a rationalizing drive, Nietzsche claims, because his primary audience was Socrates. It is Socrates, therefore, who is the true opponent of Dionysus.

In suggesting that for Nietzsche Dionysian tragedy attempts to get its audience in touch with their deepest sexual longings, my argument is similar to that of scholars such as Joshua Foa Deinstag. Deinstag argues that "the terrible power of sexuality [is] the center of tragic drama" (Deinstag, 2004: 92). Moreover, for Deinstag, sexuality, in Nietzsche's view, is more difficult than cruelty to come to terms with not because it is more shameful, as Christianity insists, but because it represents the flux and change that the individuated self is ultimately subject to (Deinstag, 2004: 92). Just as the pre-Socratic philosophers viewed the natural universe as in constant, chaotic flux without an underlying order, so the pre-Socratic artist embraced a small part of that nature, human nature, as something constantly in the process of becoming and thus constantly in the process of being destroyed (Deinstag, 2004: 87). Sexuality is the chosen symbol of the tragic artist, according to Deinstag, because the "violation of self—simultaneously painful and pleasurable [that it involves] is the simplest and best evidence that our own nature is as unstable and tumultuous as that of the rest of the universe" (Deinstag, 2004: 92). The human individual, therefore, is characterized by a radical temporality and changeability, made evident by our experience of sexuality.

Giacomo Gambino, like Deinstag, argues that the Greeks found the radical temporality and flux which is the source of human suffering difficult to accept. In response the Greeks sought to create collective identities that could provide some permanence against the relentlessly destructive movement of time, the most refined of these being the *polis*. The *polis*, fostering and protecting individualized existence and hierarchical social structures, stood against a Dionysianism that celebrated the creative, reproductive cycles of nature and opened the Greeks to a primal, undifferentiated being lying beneath and beyond established political identities.

I agree with Deinstag and Gambino that for Nietzsche the Dionysian sought to connect civilized human beings with a primal, sexual nature that exists beneath and beyond particular political identities. Yet, I disagree with their claim that Nietzsche embraced this aspect of tragedy because it fostered democratic tendencies. According to Deinstag, the instability of the self reflected in tragedy, "sanctions a process of identity renovation" that sits uncomfortably with conservative politics (Deinstag, 2004: 94-95). For this reason Deinstag notes that Nietzsche's Dionysian politics has appealed to many radical democratic theorists such as Camus, Arendt, Foucault, and William Connelly.

Gambino argues that the Greek Dionysianism celebrated by Nietzsche reinforces democratic politics in two ways. First, by putting individuals, especially through the music of Dionysus, into contact with their deepest sexual drives, tragedy produces an emotional and even bodily unity between citizens of democratic Athens, more powerful than their contract relations derived from mutual interest (Gambino, 1996: 428; also see Makus, 2007: 215-16). Moreover, in this emotional and physical communalism between citizens, all social and political castes give way to an ecstatic egalitarianism. Second, although providing the emotional and physical grounding to democratic Athens, the Dionysian, Gambino argues, also connects citizens to the universal human community that exists beyond any particular political regime. As such it opens human beings to "the richness of undifferentiated life beyond established identities," and hence to an appreciation for human plurality essential to democracy as such (Gambino, 1996: 416).

Although Deinstag and Gambino persuasively argue that Nietzsche's analysis of Dionysian tragedy can support a democratic, progressive politics, it seems that Nietzsche himself intends otherwise. Nietzsche argues that Euripides, student of Socrates, destroyed tragedy by attempting to make it rationally intelligible. He did so by moving the democratic individual to the center of the tragic drama. By pointing to Euripides' celebration of democratic individualism as that which caused the Dionysian to disappear, Nietzsche strongly suggests his belief in the inherently aristocratic nature of tragic art (also see Schutte, 1998: 286-87).

Tragedy as Chorus and the Body

Nietzsche turns to the origin of Greek tragedy in section 7 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, and locates the earliest manifestation of tragedy in the tragic

chorus.[3] He denies, however, that the chorus has a socio-political role, representing the people of democratic Athens viewing the aristocratic scenes on stage (*BT* 56). Rather, the origins of the tragic chorus, according to Nietzsche, are purely religious (*BT* 56). To understand the religious origins of the tragic chorus, and thus of tragedy as such, we must first investigate the role that the chorus played in tragic drama.

The tragic chorus, according to Nietzsche, is a group of actors usually portrayed as satyrs, the half-man half-goat image of the god Dionysus (*BT* 21, 59). The chorus is usually not on stage itself but at points in the drama will respond to the actors who are, or speak directly to the audience in their seats. The chorus is thus both inside the play, when it interacts with the actors on stage, and outside the play when it speaks with the viewing audience. Nietzsche, appearing to accept Schiller's interpretation of the role of the tragic chorus, suggests that the chorus is a "living wall that tragedy constructs around itself in order to preserve its ideal domain and its poetical freedom" (*BT* 58). The chorus, in other words, ensures that the audience views art as art rather than reality. Through the action of the chorus the audience is reminded that the scene in front of them is fictitious and not real.

In modern drama a similar situation occurs when an actor breaks the dramatic illusion, walks forth and speaks to the audience in his or her own voice. When this happens, we know that we are only watching a play and that the characters, as opposed to the persons, on stage are not real. The chorus, therefore, like the actor in modern drama who breaks the dramatic illusion, divides the world of reality, represented by the audience, from the world of fiction on stage. The chorus separates or divides the audience from the drama in two ways. First, when the chorus speaks to the audience it separates the audience psychically or intellectually; it allows the audience to see art as art or the drama as fiction rather than reality. Second, when the chorus interacts with the actors on stage it separates the audience physically; the audience is excluded from the drama being played out between chorus and actors.

After apparently accepting Schiller's interpretation of the role of the tragic chorus, Nietzsche raises a major problem with it. According to Nietzsche, "*tragedy arose from the tragic chorus*, and was originally only chorus and nothing but chorus" (*BT* 56). In the earliest stages of tragedy, therefore, the chorus *was* the actors or drama on stage, as only the chorus was present. Even the god Dionysus himself, of whom the satyr chorus is

[3] For an alternative approach that denies that the origins or the primitive manifestations of the Dionysian captures its essence, see Bennett, 1979: 420-22.

an image, was not present or visible, according to Nietzsche, in the oldest period of tragedy (*BT* 66). The significance of the fact that in the earliest form of tragic art only the chorus was present is that the audience is to the chorus what the chorus will be to the actors on stage in later tragedy. According to Nietzsche, the logic of this primitive relation is as follows:

> The tragic chorus of the Greeks is forced to recognize real beings in the figures on stage. The chorus of the Oceanides really believes that it sees before it the Titan Prometheus, and it considers itself as real as the god of the scene. But could the highest and purest type of spectator regard Prometheus as bodily present and real, as the Oceanides do? Is it characteristic of the ideal spectator to run onto the stage and free the god from his torments? (*BT* 57).

Nietzsche suggests that the psychic and physical separation between audience and art maintained by the chorus in later tragedy is absent in earlier tragedy when the actors on stage have not appeared and all that is present is audience and chorus. In such a situation, Nietzsche implies, the audience fails to see art as art or cannot without difficulty distinguish between what is real and what is fiction. The psychic separation is absent as art becomes life and life becomes art when the spectator, running on to the stage to free their god from torment, becomes part of the scene. Not only is the psychic separation between audience and drama absent with the sole presence of the chorus, but the physical separation is absent as well. According to Nietzsche, "this process of the tragic chorus is the *dramatic* proto-phenomenon: to see oneself transformed before one's own eyes and to begin to act as if one had actually entered into another body, another character. This process stands at the beginning of the origin of drama" (*BT* 64). As the audience experiences ecstatic union with the chorus, they "surrender their individuality," as Nietzsche characterizes it, and enter into and become another character, namely their god (*BT* 64). The significance, therefore, of the sole presence of the chorus at the origin of tragedy is that it encourages the unity of the audience with art, the spectator with the drama.

The audience of early tragedy could only unite physically with the chorus, however, or enter into another body, as it were, in a metaphorical way. What is really happening is that the audience see, or more likely feel, themselves in the chorus of satyrs. Thus, according to Nietzsche, "we may call the chorus in its primitive form […] the mirror image in which the Dionysian man contemplates himself […] The satyr chorus is […] a vision of the Dionysian mass of spectators" (*BT* 63). Tragedy as chorus, therefore, is self-reflective; the presence of the satyr chorus allows the spectators to become an object to themselves both individually and

collectively. That part of the self that the audience reflects on or feels when they imagine themselves united with the satyr chorus is the natural, primeval self that is suppressed but not extinguished by the culture of civilized life. Nietzsche thus argues:

> The Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satiric chorus; and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and […] the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort […] that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably […] behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and the history of nations (*BT* 59).

Ecstatic union with the satyr chorus and thus with Dionysus himself, Nietzsche indicates, gets the audience in touch with a primeval nature that lies hidden beneath and is constrained by civilized life. Nietzsche gives content to this primeval nature when he describes the satyr as one who "proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature, a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature which the Greeks used to contemplate with reverent wonder" (*BT* 61). As a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature in contrast to the "knowledge […] of culture," the uncivilized, natural self that the satyr brings before and gets the audience to feel is their sexual nature. Nietzsche, it seems, associates our experience of tragedy with the arousal of the sexual passions. Thus, whereas civilization appears grounded in rationality and the mind, tragic art, or the Dionysian, appears to arise from nature understood as sexuality and the body. Tragedy, Nietzsche suggests, gets civilized and cultured human beings in touch with their bodies and its deepest longings, longings which have been constrained but not extinguished by the socio-political structures within which they live.[4]

After uncovering the Dionysian origins of tragedy Nietzsche turns to the rise of what he calls the "Apollinian" aspect of tragedy. The Apollinian refers to the actual appearance, via an actor, of the god Dionysus on stage

[4] Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall suggest that Nietzsche's embrace of the Dionysian and the importance he places on the body open promising avenues for feminist philosophy. See Oliver and Pearsall, 1998: 3-4. For a similar argument that suggests that Nietzsche's Dionysus is feminine, see Kofman, 1998: 44-46. For alternative readings that question Nietzsche's value for feminist philosophy and egalitarian politics, see Schutte, 1998: 294-99, and Owen, 1998: 321-23.

with dialogue (*BT* 67, 73). Thus, whereas in the Dionysian aspect of tragedy the god is *felt*, with the Apollinian aspect of tragedy the god is seen and heard (*BT* 66-67). The Apollinian is the direct visual and verbal presence of the god Dionysus himself, who, Nietzsche claims, was the first character to appear on stage when tragedy developed beyond the tragic chorus (*BT* 73). Moreover, as Dionysus was the first character of Greek tragedy, its sole theme for a long time was the "sufferings of Dionysus" (*BT* 73). Yet, it is reasonable to ask: why is Dionysus suffering? Why is a god in pain? In other words, why is Dionysus associated with tragedy rather than comedy or epic?

The Cosmos and the Suffering God

Nietzsche argues that Dionysus is the suffering god because the existence of an intelligible universe means that he is a dismembered god. Nietzsche gives clarity to what is meant by Dionysus as the dismembered god when he says:

> In truth […] the hero [of tragedy] is the suffering Dionysus of the Mysteries, the god experiencing in himself the agonies of individuation, of whom wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and now is worshipped in this state as Zagreus. Thus it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we are therefore to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself. From the smile of this Dionysus sprang the Olympian gods, from his tears sprang man. In this existence as a dismembered god, Dionysus possesses the dual nature of a cruel, barbarized demon and a mild, gentle ruler' (*BT* 73).

Nietzsche indicates that according to Greek myth the process of the god's dismemberment—the separation or individuation of his being—is the creation of the universe. The image that Nietzsche draws is that before the cosmos comes into being, what exists is unified, undifferentiated matter. This undifferentiated mass of matter can be understood as the god Dionysus in his original condition. The god, however, is then torn to pieces or individuated, as Nietzsche would say, which can be understood as the process of creation. After this creative action, there exist a number of particular and therefore intelligible beings in the cosmos, such as Olympian gods, human beings, animals, plants, and the elements earth, air, fire and water. All of these particular pieces of the whole are actually the body of Dionysus separated or alienated from itself. The suffering of Dionysus, therefore, is caused by his dismemberment, which is also the

Greek story of the coming into being and continuation of an intelligible universe.

In relation to sexuality—the presence of the suffering Dionysus in us—our bodily longing for union with another body seems to reflect our longing for the original unity of matter that we believe existed before our world came into being. Thus, in our ecstatic desire to free Dionysus from his sufferings we reflect our deepest wish to return into an undifferentiated material being prior to the creation of the cosmos.[5] The ultimate but unachievable aim of sexuality, therefore, seems to be the fusing of our material existence into matter as a whole, such that all matter or body would come together in a way that would destroy our world. In this sense sexuality desires to transcend all limits or boundaries, not just moral boundaries but also physical-factual boundaries. Thus, Nietzsche says of the rapture of the Dionysian state that it is the "annihilation of ordinary bounds and limits of existence" (*BT* 59). Sexuality, in other words, points to the desire to crush together all individuated matter, such that human is fused into human, humanity into trees, trees into earth, and so on, until we are left without form and shape in one undifferentiated mass of material. In such a state the cosmos would be unintelligible as matter can only be grasped by thought when it is individuated into particular shapes. Intrinsic in our experience of sexuality, therefore, is pain at and perhaps even rebellion against an intelligible universe. One might be tempted to say that for Nietzsche, sexuality is inherently anti-rational.

Nietzsche claims that the suffering Dionysus was for a long time the only character beyond the satyr chorus to be represented on the tragic stage. Yet, in later periods, other tragic heroes make their way into the tragic drama. Characterized by Nietzsche as simply particular "masks" of the god Dionysus himself, these tragic heroes are complex mixes of the Apollinian and Dionysian (*BT* 73). They are Apollinian in the sense that they are visual and verbal images of Dionysus, but Dionysian in the sense that behind this visual and verbal mask they are the god himself. The two most celebrated of these heroes in Greek tragedy are Aeschylus' Prometheus and Sophocles' Oedipus. Nietzsche first addresses the character of Oedipus. In his brief analysis, Nietzsche focuses on the murder of his father, marriage to his mother, and Oedipus' ability to solve the riddle of the Sphinx, namely: what is a human being. Nietzsche then considers what "the mysterious triad of these fateful deeds tell us" (*BT* 68). According to Nietzsche:

[5] See Lampert for Nietzsche's embrace of the earth and the transience of all being. Lampert, 1993: 11-12. Also see Makus, 2007: 212.

> With the riddle-solving and mother-marrying Oedipus in mind, we must immediately interpret this to mean that where prophetic and magical powers have broken the spell of present and future, the rigid law of individuation, and the real magic of nature, some enormously unnatural event—such as incest—must have occurred earlier, as a cause. How else could one compel nature to surrender her secrets if not by triumphantly resisting her, that is, by means of something unnatural' (*BT* 68-69).

Incest, according to Nietzsche, is an unnatural violation of the law of individuation. Oedipus violates this law by attempting, albeit unintentionally, to become his own creator; by sleeping with his mother he acts as if he were his own father, or if parent and child could become one. Yet, as Nietzsche argues, such violation of nature actually gives Oedipus knowledge of nature. Oedipus discovers that after the cosmos comes into being he cannot, as he attempted, become one with his father; after creation individuation is our second nature, as it were. Oedipus is specifically a Dionysian hero because, through sexuality, he tries to become his own father and thus overcome the physical individuation between parent and child. Through such Dionysian rebellion Oedipus learns that what can be called the tragedy of the body—its intrinsic longing for the destruction of individuation—is the tragedy of life—the body is that which is most particular and thus, paradoxically, that which most prevents the overcoming of individuation (but see Church, 2011: 334-35).

After discussing Sophocles' Oedipus, Nietzsche provides a brief analysis of Aeschylus' Prometheus. According to Greek myth Prometheus was a Titan who, at war with the Olympian gods, steals fire from them and gives it to human beings. For this he is punished by Zeus who chains him to the side of a mountain and has a vulture perpetually eat out his liver. Fire is such a prized possession, according to Nietzsche, because it carries with it the power of the sun, which is the source of life, and the destructive power of lightning, which can end life (*BT* 71). In having the power to give life and take it away, fire represents the power of the gods and is also symbolic of sexuality. Sex is creative of life and, in its longing for the fusion of matter such that individuation would be overcome, sex actually longs for the destruction of life. Prometheus is Dionysian when he steals fire from the gods and gives it to human beings because in doing so he tries to overcome the individuation or separation between god and man (but see Church, 2011: 334-36). By putting the power to give and take life into the hands of human beings, Prometheus allows them to become gods, as it were.

Nietzsche claims that the Greeks viewed Prometheus' attempt to close the gap between god and human as a sacrilege (*BT* 71). Greek tragedy,

however, under the hand of Aeschylus, dignifies this sin and provides what Nietzsche characterizes as a "justification of human evil" (*BT* 71). In other words, such prideful rebellion against the gods is indeed sinful but also necessary for human elevation and civilization. Moreover, Nietzsche contrasts this Greek tragic myth of Prometheus with the Biblical story of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Both are stories of rebellion against god or the attempt to close the gap between the human and the divine. Yet, as Nietzsche points out, Greek tragedy views this sin "as something masculine" whereas the Bible understands it "as feminine" (*BT* 71). Thus, for the Greeks, "the original sacrilege is committed by a man," for the Hebrews "the original sin [is committed] by a woman" (*BT* 72). Nietzsche suggests that in placing the original sin against god in a man the Greeks sought to justify it, whereas in placing it in a woman the Hebrews meant to condemn it. Nietzsche indicates that he prefers the Greek Promethean myth because, unlike the Biblical story, it glorifies the human rather than the divine (also see Lampert, 1996: 119, 126). In doing so it glorifies sexuality and the desire to overcome individuation, especially between god and human, at its core.

The Mind and the Death of Tragedy

Greek tragedy, Nietzsche argues, is confronted by and eventually dies under the glare of the "Socratism […] of the theoretical man" (*BT* 18). Two such Socratic theorists who were especially important to the demise of Dionysian tragedy, according to Nietzsche, are Plato and Euripides. Plato, Nietzsche suggests, transforms the undifferentiated matter of Dionysus that can only be felt into the universal idea that can only be thought (*BT* 73). Yet, Plato does preserve the tragic art form in his dialogues, but nonetheless makes this art form subservient to Socratic rationalism (*BT* 90-91). It is Euripides, according to Nietzsche, another student of Socrates and himself a tragic poet, who destroys the Dionysian entirely.

Nietzsche provides both a "provisional" explanation and a final explanation for how Euripides, paradoxically, caused Greek tragedy to disappear. The problem with Euripides from the point of view of tragedy is that he "brought the *spectator* onto the stage" (*BT* 77). Provisionally, Nietzsche means that Euripides portrayed the *demos*, or the common "everyday man" with his common, everyday reality, in the drama. Thus, according to Nietzsche, "civic mediocrity, on which Euripides built all his political hopes, was now given a voice, while heretofore the demigod in tragedy and the drunken satyr […] had determined the language" (*BT* 77-

78). Moreover, Nietzsche argues that "if the entire populace now philosophized, managed land and goods, and conducted lawsuits with unheard-of circumspection, [Euripides] deserved the credit, for this was the result of the wisdom he had inculcated in the people" (*BT* 78). Euripides, therefore, does not merely portray democratic man on the tragic stage, but also produces an art form that grounds the democratic regime that serves his interests. In other words, Euripides is too democratic. It seems that for Nietzsche Dionysian tragedy is inherently aristocratic, representing not democratic man but noble human beings and the god himself as tragic heroes.

Euripides' democratic tendencies as that which causes the death of tragedy is only Nietzsche's provisional explanation, however. Penetrating more deeply into Euripides' tendencies Nietzsche claims that he finds two additional "spectators" brought on to the tragic stage. The first of these is "Euripides himself, [but] Euripides as *thinker*, not as poet" (*BT* 80). An indication of what Nietzsche means by this can be gleaned from his statement that "somebody, I do not know who, has claimed that all individuals, taken as individuals, are comic and hence untragic—from which it can be inferred that the Greeks [prior to Euripides] simply *could* not suffer individuals on the tragic stage" (*BT* 73). Nietzsche, therefore, suggests that Euripides, using his mind as a thinker rather than his passions as a poet, puts the human individual as an individuated piece of matter which speaks, or has *logos*, onto to the stage. This individual is separated and completely cut off from its god, which is the universal, undifferentiated matter that the tragic hero was a "mask" for in earlier tragedy. In Euripides, the tragic hero represents an individual human being as an individual human being, and nothing deeper. In other words, the Euripidean tragic hero is completely Apollinian without any connection to the Dionysian from which the Apollinian originated. Euripides puts this solely Apollinian individual at the center of his drama because, according to Nietzsche:

> [Euripides] […] often […] felt as if he had to bring to life for drama the beginning of the essay of Anaxagoras: 'In the beginning all things were mixed together; then came the understanding and created order'. […] As long as the sole ruler and disposer of the universe, the *nous*, remained excluded from artistic activity, things were all mixed together in a primeval chaos: this is what Euripides must have thought. […] Sophocles said of Aeschylus that he did what was right, though he did it unconsciously. This was surely not how Euripides saw it. He might have said that Aeschylus, *because* he created unconsciously, did what was wrong' (*BT* 85).

Euripides, in other words, insisted that art be rationally comprehended by *nous*, or the intellect. He therefore celebrates the unadorned individual because only the individual is accessible to reason. Since there are no "ideas" in the Platonic sense for Euripides, it is only individuated pieces of matter with *logos* which can be thought or comprehended. The undifferentiated matter of Dionysus, or the primeval chaos that exists prior to *nous*, is completely unintelligible; it cannot be thought but only felt through sexuality.

Euripides desired to make tragedy completely rational, thereby causing its demise, because Socrates was the second of the two additional spectators brought to bear on the tragic stage by Euripides (*BT* 86). Nietzsche suggests that Euripides wanted Socrates' approval for his dramatic productions. Yet, since his "logical nature" was excessively over-developed, Socrates, according to Nietzsche, held that "to be good everything must be conscious" (*BT* 86, 88). Arising out of the sense of the primeval, material chaos that existed prior to creation, "Old Tragedy" could not be comprehended completely by reason and thus was not esteemed by the abnormally logical Socrates (*BT* 86). In order to win the approval of this master logician Euripides had to initiate a new art form in his tragedies, an art form, Nietzsche claims, in which "to be beautiful everything must be conscious" (*BT* 86). Since the body and its deepest longings cannot be brought fully into rational consciousness, that aspect of the older tragedy, the Dionysian aspect, had to disappear. Moreover, because it is as a follower of Socrates that Euripides banishes the Dionysian from the tragic stage, Nietzsche claims that is Socrates who is the true opponent of Dionysus (see Makus, 2007: 212).

In identifying Socrates as the driving force behind the fall of Greek tragedy, Nietzsche provides his readers with an account of the confrontation between the Dionysian and the Apollinian. The Apollinian begins as the visual and verbal appearance of the god Dionysus, either as the god himself or instantiated through a tragic hero as one of his masks. Thus, the dialogue of tragedy, or its Apollinian aspect, was originally meant to give voice to the body or speech to sexuality and the undifferentiated material being that was felt to lie behind it. Reason, Nietzsche suggests, arises from matter. The problem with Socrates and the theoretical-scientific individuals who take Socrates' lead, is that for these individuals reason and speech become separated from their origins in the body and the sexual, and eventually turn against both (*BT* 94-96). Such separation between mind and body, speech and sexuality pushes Euripides, according to Nietzsche, to "separate this original and all powerful Dionysian element from

tragedy, and to reconstruct tragedy purely on the basis of an un-Dionysian art, morality and world view" (*BT* 81).

The about-face, as it were, that reason does against the body and all things material is, according to Nietzsche, not only the downfall of Old Tragedy, but at the origin of western civilization and forms the spirit of Christianity (*BT* 23). Yet, to the extent that Nietzsche views the body and sexuality as the hidden source of rationality and the scientific worldview, it would seem that he is not opposed to science altogether. Rather, as Lampert argues, Nietzsche would approve of a science that delighted in the body and celebrated the earth as the material, albeit transient, home and haven of human life. This new science that aimed neither at the Socratic-Platonic transcendence of nature nor the modern attempt at mastery of nature, would be brought into being by a new art that, like Dionysian tragedy, brought those it touched into an appreciation of their bodies and its deepest longings. The challenge would be negotiating between this new art and the science it brings forth and the egalitarian and individualist commitments of contemporary liberal democracy.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

NIETZSCHE AND THE SOCRATIC ART OF NARRATIVE SELF-CARE: AN APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN SYNTHESIS

ANNE-MARIE SCHULTZ

> "Theory and practice are unified as a disharmony that is the not so secret interior of the philosopher's daydreams" (Rosen 2009: 143).
>
> "The true Dionysiac is not the enemy of philosophy; it is philosophy, the divine passion of intelligence that unites us with divinity" (Gould 1990: 237).
>
> "Old man. You've not disgraced Apollo with your words, and by honouring this Dionysus, a great god, you show your moderation" (Euripides 2003: 419).

This paper unfolds in the following manner. In the first section, I briefly characterize Nietzsche's understanding of early Greek culture as one that is highly sensitive to the Dionysian and Apollonian elements of human experience, by looking at *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and *Birth of Tragedy*. I then outline the salient features of Nietzsche's portrait of Plato's Socrates. I will focus primarily on *Birth of Tragedy* and *Twilight of the Idols*. I argue that Nietzsche's primary charge against Socrates is that he abandons the Dionysian elements of experience in favour of the Apollonian. These first two sections will be brief in that they cover ground well established in the scholarly literature. Nonetheless, they provide a basis for the analysis I offer in this paper. Like many scholars, I argue that Nietzsche mischaracterizes Plato's presentation of Socrates, but I focus on a different aspect of the Platonic portrait of Socrates to make this case. Here, I explore three autobiographical narratives that Plato's Socrates tells: his account of his testing of the Delphic Oracle in the *Apology* (Plato 2002a: 21a–23a), his report of his lessons of love

from Diotima in the *Symposium* (Plato 1989: 199c–212b), and his description of his turn from naturalistic philosophy to his own method of inquiry in the *Phaedo* (Plato, 2002b: 96a–100b). Like the five dialogues that Socrates narrates, these three autobiographical narratives are part of Socrates' narrative practice of philosophy as Plato depicts it in the dialogues. As such, it is not surprising that they illustrate a profound sensitivity to the role of emotional experience in philosophical inquiry just as the other dialogues that Socrates narrates do. In Nietzsche's terms, I argue that these three autobiographical passages offer a synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian modes of existence because they uphold the importance of rational inquiry. They recognize that rational inquiry occurs alongside and even depends upon epistemic and existential ambiguity that we experience in moments of Dionysian ex-stasis. As such, these three narratives provide a therapeutic model of self-knowledge as self-care that Socrates exhibits in the dialogues that he narrates. In the fourth section, I draw upon this analysis and my work elsewhere, to describe what I mean by a Socratic narrative art of self-care and suggest that Nietzsche himself imitates this model of narrative self-care in his own autobiography *Ecce Homo*. In doing so, Nietzsche illustrates just how much he regarded Socrates as "a great *erotic*" (Nietzsche 2005: 165).

I. Nietzsche on the Tragic Greeks

> "The Activity of the older philosophers tended toward the healing and the purification of the whole" (Nietzsche 1962: 35).

Nietzsche catapulted himself onto the world stage of classical philology with the publication of *On the Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* in 1872. In that work, Nietzsche advances a view about Greek culture that plays upon a distinction between the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of human experience. Put briefly, the Apollonian is associated with reason and rationality, intellectual vision, healing and dreams. Nietzsche describes the god in this way, "Apollo, the god of all plastic energies, is at the same time the soothsaying god. He, who as the etymology of the name indicates, is the 'shining one,' the deity of light, is also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy" (Nietzsche 1967: 35). A little later Nietzsche adds, "We must keep in mind that measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder emotions, that calm of the sculptor god" (Nietzsche 1967: 35). He asserts, "We might call Apollo himself the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*" (Nietzsche 1967: 36).

The Dionysian, in contrast, exists at the limits of experience defined by this principle of individuation. In those liminal spaces, "we steal a glimpse into the nature of the Dionysian, where is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication" (Nietzsche 1967: 36). Nietzsche defines the insight of intoxication; "These Dionysian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness" (Nietzsche 1967: 36). Differently put, the Dionysian resides in the disruption of everyday experience. The Dionysian exists in ecstatic moments where one loses a sense of self in communal experience. Years later in 1888, Nietzsche affirms the importance of the Dionysian for the early Greeks. In the section of *Twilight* titled, "What I Owe the Ancients," he writes, "The fundamental fact of the Hellenic instinct—its 'will to life'—expresses itself only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state. What did the Hellenes guarantee for themselves with these mysteries? Eternal life, the eternal return of life; the future promised by the past and the past consecrated to the future; the triumphal yes to life over and above all death and change" (Nietzsche 2005: 228). Early Greek culture was a healthy culture because it allowed a space for both of these modes of human experience and expression. As Greek culture "progresses," it turns its back on the Dionysian element of experience and embraces the Apollonian. The figure that Nietzsche locates as the primary culprit for this turn is Euripides on the dramatic front and Plato's Socrates on the philosophic front. He muses, "Might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of weariness, of infection, of the anarchical dissolution of the instincts?" (Nietzsche 1967: 18). In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche returns to the same question asking, "With Socrates, Greek taste suddenly changed in favour of dialectics: what really happened here?" (Nietzsche 2005: 163). Though *Birth of Tragedy* was the first book Nietzsche published, many of the ideas in it are present in his other early writings. For example, *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks* is filled with laudatory language about the early Greek philosophers. While Nietzsche does not employ the terms of Apollonian and Dionysian in this work, he does use the metaphors of health, sickness, and artistic creation. Some examples follow. Nietzsche describes the aim of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*: "It is meant to be a beginning, by means of a comparative approach, toward the recovery and re-creation of certain ancient names, so that the polyphony of Greek nature at long last may resound once more" (Nietzsche 1962: 24). The polyphony that Nietzsche wishes to bring out emphasizes, "The Greeks, with their truly healthy culture, have once and for all justified philosophy simply by having engaged in it, and engaged in it more fully than any other people"

(Nietzsche 1962: 28). With typical hyperbole, Nietzsche claims, "For what they invented was the archetypes of philosophic thought. All posterity has not made an essential contribution to them since" (Nietzsche 1962: 31). Interestingly, in this work, Nietzsche casts Socrates in fairly positive terms. He along with the rest, i.e., Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Democritus "possessed that virtuous energy of the ancients" (Nietzsche 1962: 31). In the early formulation of Nietzsche's thesis about the decline of Greek culture, Plato is the culprit. Nietzsche writes, "With Plato, something entirely new has its beginning. Or it might be said with equal justice, from Plato on there is something essentially amiss with philosophers when one compares them to that 'republic of creative minds' from Thales to Socrates" (Nietzsche 1962: 34). However, in *Birth of Tragedy*, as we will see, Socrates becomes the target of Nietzsche's philosophical indignation.

II Nietzsche on Plato's Socrates

> "He is the new Orpheus who rose against Dionysus, and although he is destined to be torn to pieces by the Maenads of the Athenian court, he still put to flight the powerful god himself" (Nietzsche 1967: 86).

Though Nietzsche admires Socrates for his intense dedication to the philosophical life and for his commitment to living the philosophical life on his own terms, much of Nietzsche's earliest published work, *On the Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, is a pointed critique of the philosopher he holds so close to his heart. Nietzsche's view of Socrates is admittedly complex. Despite his claim that "I am so close to Socrates that I am always doing battle with him," the intensity of the battle often overshadows the closeness. What are the main points of contention? First, he is ugly: "Socrates was descended from the lowest segment of society: Socrates was plebian. We know, we can still see how ugly he was. But ugliness, an objection in itself, was almost a refutation for the Greeks" (Nietzsche 2005: 163). Aesthetic considerations aside, Nietzsche regards Socrates as the beginning of the turn away from a healthy culture rooted in an instinctual appreciation of the Dionysian. He writes, "I recognize Socrates and Plato as symptoms of decay, as agents of Greek disintegration" (Nietzsche 2005: 162). Socrates promotes life-denying values that undercut the health of the earlier Greek culture. In Nietzsche's eyes, Socrates abandons what he knows to be the Dionysian roots of authentic experience and turns toward the pristine rational comfort of Apollonian insight into the nature of reality. Nietzsche sees Socrates as the cultural

legacy of Anaximander who, in contrast to his philosophical forebears, "flees into a metaphysical fortress from which he leans out, letting his gaze sweep the horizon. At last, after long pensive silence, he puts a question to all creatures: 'what is your existence worth? And if it is worthless, why are you here?'" (Nietzsche 1962: 48). According to Nietzsche, Socrates is "full of resistance to life." He is a "symptom of decay. He is "of the rabble" and vengeful in spirit (Nietzsche 2005: 162–163).

Most importantly from Nietzsche's perspective, Socrates is decadent, a decadent who valorizes reason. This worship of reason decays the moral center of himself and by extension his society. Nietzsche writes, "We see signs of Socrates' decadence not only in the admitted chaos and anarchy of his instincts, but in the hypertrophy of logic as well as in his emblematic rachitic spirit" (Nietzsche 2005: 163). Nietzsche suggests how this turn to reason becomes dangerous to oneself and to others: "When people need reason to act as a tyrant, which was the case with Socrates, the danger cannot be small that something else might start acting as a tyrant" (Nietzsche 2005: 165). To explain further, the overvaluation of reason is connected with the undervaluation of certain emotions that promote what Nietzsche calls life affirmation. To the extent that Socrates embraces reason as the primary mode of philosophical experience, he becomes in Nietzsche's eyes, a decadent. Differently put, Nietzsche's description of Socrates as a "tyrant of reason" illustrates how Nietzsche saw Socrates as an advocate of Apollo over Dionysius and hence the beginning of the movement away from the traditional Greek understanding of the overlap and interrelationality between the two domains of experience that the two gods represent (Nietzsche 2005: 165).

Nietzsche makes clear that Socrates exemplifies a larger cultural turn as well: "A profound illusion that first saw the light of the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of correcting it" (Nietzsche 1967: 95). Nietzsche reaffirms this point in *Twilight of the Idols* writing, "Basically, his case was only the most extreme and eye-catching example of what was turning into a universal affliction; people had stopped being masters of themselves and the instincts had turned against each other" (Nietzsche 2005: 165). Socrates' love of reason fosters a kind of decadence that in turn leads him to become a hater of life. Nietzsche's early formulation of this interrelationship between decadence, reason and hatred of life occurs through *Birth of Tragedy*. One example follows: "Wherever Socratism turns its searching eyes it sees lack of insight and the power of illusion; and from this lack it infers the essential perversity and

reprehensibility of what exists" (Nietzsche 1967: 87). We see the same insight in *Twilight of the Idols* as well. "To have to fight the instincts—hat is the formula for decadence: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness is equal to instinct" (Nietzsche 2005: 166). Nietzsche allows that Socrates may have seen that things were not as straightforward. He ends the section of *Twilight*, titled "The Problem of Socrates," with the following queries: "Did he understand this, that cleverest of all self-deceivers? Did he say this to himself in the end, in the wisdom of his death-bed courage?" (Nietzsche 2005: 166). He imagines a repentant Socrates, a Socrates who realizes his turn from Dionysius to Apollo was not without great cost.

To be sure, there is much that is correct in Nietzsche's characterization of Socrates, particularly if one regards Socrates as an intellectualist, one who "seems to identify virtue with knowledge and therefore appears to consider the affective side of our nature irrelevant to our virtue, to what counts as a good life" (Nehamas 1992: 280). Ironically, it is possible to trace the contemporary view of Socrates as an intellectualist directly back to Nietzsche's critique of him. The question of Nietzsche's view of the historical Socrates versus the Platonic Socrates or to what extent Nietzsche would uphold what is termed a developmental thesis with respect to the dialogues is a vexed one. Though Porter makes clear that Nietzsche was quite aware of the difference between them. His notebooks from the 1870s are filled with observations about "the Platonic Socrates" (Porter 2009: 418). Nietzsche clearly distinguishes between Socrates and Plato but it often seems that by Socrates he means the historical figure Socrates. Nietzsche was an astute reader of nuanced texts such as the Platonic dialogues and he no doubt recognized that the Socrates of the dialogues was Plato's dramatic creation, but he seems to ignore this and treat Plato's Socrates as "the historical Socrates." Differently put, Nietzsche makes Plato's Socrates into Nietzsche's Socrates, and treats his own creation as the historical Socrates. In the following section, I will explore to what extent a particular manifestation of Plato's Socrates, namely the autobiographical telling Socrates, conforms to and to what extent challenges Nietzsche's creation of his historical Socrates.

Section III: The Three Autobiographical Accounts of Plato's Socrates

> "The dying Socrates became the new ideal, never seen before, of noble Greek youths: above all, the typical Hellenic youth, Plato, prostrated himself before this image with all the ardent devotion of his enthusiastic soul" (Nietzsche 1967: 89).

In her book *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues*, Catherine Zuckert offers a reading of the dialogues in terms of their dramatic coherence. She assigns an order to them based on the dramatic dates of the dialogues rather than an order based on when Plato wrote the dialogues. She regards the dialogues taken together as a cohesive corpus that imparts a philosophical biography of Socrates. The account begins with the earliest reports of his activity in dialogues like the *Protagoras*, and ends with the account of his last day in the *Phaedo* and continues on after his death in the *Theaetetus*. As Zuckert's story unfolds, she acknowledges the special status of three early stories of Socrates, stories that the figure Socrates himself tells about his intellectual journey. Following Zuckert's lead, I will explore these accounts with an eye toward uncovering their Apollonian and Dionysian dimensions. I will start with the story that Socrates tells his jurors where Socrates appears primarily to be an Apollonian figure, but even in this account, there are clear elements of the Dionysian aspects of experience in his account of testing the oracle. I then turn to the account of Socrates' fellow symposiasts in the *Symposium* where there are abundant Dionysian themes in the dialogue itself and in Socrates' account of what he learns from Diotima. Finally, I consider the *Phaedo*.

A. The Apology

References to Apollo permeate the *Apology*. Indeed, this is the dialogue where Socrates says that his entire life can be seen as one lived in service to the god. He is thrust into the public spotlight with Chaerephon's visit to the Oracle at Delphi, who spoke the divine word of Apollo. In this case, a single word, "No," in answer to Chaerephon's question if any man were wiser than Socrates. Nietzsche makes the affinity between the oracle, Apollo, and Socrates' own commitment to self-knowledge clear. He writes, "Apollo, as ethical deity, exacts measure of his disciples, and, to be able to maintain it, he requires self-knowledge. And so, side by side with the aesthetic necessity for beauty, there occur the demands 'know thyself' and 'nothing in excess'" (Nietzsche 1967: 47). Socrates attests to his allegiance to Apollo with his last word in the dialogue, "God." The god he refers to is Apollo. Nonetheless, to read Socrates as an Apollonian figure in any simplistic way would be to miss much of the nuance of Plato's portrait of him. First, there is the fact that Socrates questions the oracular statements of Apollo. Second, there is the complex nature of the site of Delphi itself, which was sacred to both Apollo and Dionysus. Third, Plato's portrait of Chaerephon in the *Charmides* attests to a strongly

Dionysian dimension of his character. Finally, there are other Dionysian elements that surround the story that Socrates tells that indicate the disruptive nature of his speech which he gives to illustrate his service to Apollo. I will consider each of these in turn.

As Socrates begins the story, he mentions the Oracle, "for the story I shall tell does not originate with me, but I will refer you to a trustworthy source. I shall call upon the god at Delphi as witness to the existence and nature of my wisdom, if it be such" (Plato 2002a: 20e). Socrates demonstrates nothing like blind allegiance to Apollo. While he is eager to understand what the oracle means by her cryptic claim, he does not simply accept the state of affairs. Socrates reports his own internal questioning of the oracle's pronouncement. In doing so, he clearly illustrates an allegiance to Apollo, "When I heard of this reply I asked myself: Whatever does the god mean? What is his riddle? I am very conscious that I am not wise at all; what then does he mean by saying that I am the wisest? For surely he does not lie. It is not legitimate for him to do so" (Plato 2002a: 21b). Socrates describes his inner state of mind, "For a long time, I was at a loss" (Plato 2002a: 21b). Socrates emerges out of this aporetic state by beginning to question those who have a reputation for wisdom, the politicians, the poets, and the craftspeople. Socrates then gives an account of his life, centered on the quest to find out how Apollo could be right about him, right about an individual who mingled amongst the everyday people just as Dionysus himself did. As Socrates recounts his quest for understanding, his quest via questioning, he mentions his growing unpopularity several times. It is almost as if Socrates is the madman from Nietzsche's *Gay Science* going around looking for god. Perhaps Nietzsche modeled this image on Socrates (Nietzsche 2001: 119).

Socrates concludes his autobiographical account of his quest to understand human wisdom by showing his allegiance to the Apollonian, attesting that "the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing" (Plato 2002a: 23b). In the end, Socrates characterizes his wisdom as a "human wisdom." However, by describing his wisdom in this way, Socrates also expresses allegiance to Dionysius. To explain, Dionysus is the more human god. He is the god who is born and the god who dies. Other aspects of Socrates' account illustrate this intertwining of Apollonian and Dionysian. For example, the continual reference to the Oracle, though sacred to Apollo, is not without Dionysian overtones. The site of Delphi itself was home to both Apollo and Dionysus. In fact, Dionysius worship may predate Apollo worship at the site (See Nilsson 1957). Euripides' *Bacchae* attests to this dual affinity. Tiresias says: "You will see him on the rocks of Delphi, and

leaping with torches over the twin-headed mountain, striking and shaking the Bacchic branch" (Euripides 2003: 306). One peak of Parnassus, the mountain above Delphi, was sacred to Apollo, one to Dionysus. Dionysius even resided there during the winter while Apollo visited the far northlands. Dionysian revelry frequently occurred in the mountains surrounding the city complex. To receive the pure insight of Apollo, the priestess went into what can only be described as a Dionysian frenzy. In fact, the priestess, who utters the very insight of Apollo, in all likelihood, had Dionysian origins (Williamson 1922: 206).

Third, the immediate mention of Chaerephon brings up associations with the Dionysian. Chaerephon is an exuberant character, acting much like a Dionysian follower. It is he who enthusiastically greets Socrates upon the return from Potidaea in the *Charmides*. Socrates describes him in these terms, "When they saw me coming in unexpectedly, I was immediately hailed at a distance by people coming up from all directions and Chaerephon, like the wild man he is, sprang up from the midst of a group of people and ran towards me and seizing me by the hand, exclaimed, 'Socrates, how did you come off in the battle?'" (Plato 1997: 153b). It is he who turns the conversation toward the bodily concerns. He tells the auditor that, "Chaerephon called to me and said, 'Well, Socrates, what do you think of the young man? Hasn't he a splendid face?'" (Plato 1997: 154d). Socrates answers favourably. He agrees that Charmides' face is "extraordinary" (Plato 1997: 154d). After securing Socrates' agreement, Chaerephon makes an even more immoderate comment: "If he were willing to strip, you would hardly notice his face, his body is so perfect" (Plato 1997: 154d). Socrates then notes: "Everyone else said the same things as Chaerephon" (Plato 1997: 154d). This Dionysian figure went to Delphi, the sacred site of Apollo, to ask the oracle if anyone is wiser than Socrates. The answer Chaerephon receives is "no."

As Socrates recounts Chaerephon's tale, a disruption occurs. This reference to Apollo is preceded by a disturbance, perhaps a Dionysian outcry in the courtroom, an outcry that perhaps suggests Dionysius needs to be recognized as well. Socrates cautions them: "Do not create a disturbance, gentlemen" (Plato 2002a: 20e). When Socrates recounts this reference to the Oracle, again, there is a Dionysian uproar. Again, Socrates must tell the jury not to create a disturbance (Plato 2002a: 21a). Even the authority of Apollo cannot keep the Dionysian at bay. Even in this most Apollonian of Socratic self-portraits, there are clear allusions to the Dionysian. These dual dimensions of Socrates' self-portraits are even more clearly present in the other autobiographical accounts.

B. The Symposium

At first glance, Socrates appears as a wholly Apollonian figure in this dialogue. We learn that he is unaffected by the influence of alcohol. Eryximachus attests to it (Plato 1989: 176c) as does Alcibiades (Plato 1989: 214a and 220a). Similarly, he seems uninterested in the attractions of the flesh so often associated with Dionysian revelry as Alcibiades makes abundantly clear (Plato 1989: 217b–219e). Socrates initially appears like an Apollonian statue. He stands stark still as some insight comes to him on the porch of Agathon's neighbor (Plato 1989: 174e). We hear reports of this behaviour from Alcibiades as well (Plato 1989: 220a). Socrates himself reinforces some of this Apollonian affinity in his recounting of the lessons he heard from Diotima about the process of achieving immortality through the pursuit of the beautiful itself. The lover must move from the domain of the Dionysian, i.e., the love of beautiful boys and their beautiful bodies, to beauty of soul, laws, knowledge and ideas to the shimmering pristine vision of the beautiful itself, described in rather Parmenidean terms; that which "always is and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes" (Plato 1989: 211a). Nietzsche regards Parmenides as undergoing a sea change. While aspects of his early philosophy were more in keeping with the earlier age of Greek philosophy, as he develops, he becomes a paradigmatic Apollonian philosopher. Nietzsche describes him in this way, "Once in his life Parmenides, probably at a fairly advanced age, had a moment of purest absolutely bloodless abstraction, unclouded by any reality" (Nietzsche 1962: 69). He continues, "when Parmenides was seized by that icy tremor of abstraction and came face to face with his utterly simple proposition as to being and nonbeing, his own previous teachings joined the rubbish-heap of the older doctrines" (Nietzsche 1962: 70).

A superficial reading of the passage suggests that though we may initially find beauty in the Dionysian revelry of the body, the beautiful itself is found in Apollo's realm of the sun. However, as was the case in the *Apology*, things are not so straightforward. First, I will discuss the opening of the dialogue itself, which is saturated with Dionysian elements. Second, I will argue many aspects of Socrates' own speech are Dionysian. Third, the appearance of Alcibiades at the end of the dialogue intensifies the Dionysian dimensions of the dialogue and undercuts much of the Apollonian presentation of Socrates. I will consider each of these in turn.

I begin with the Dionysian elements of the dialogic setting. The dinner party that so interests Apollodorus' friends at the beginning of the dialogue takes place the day after Agathon won the prize for tragedy in Athens. Tragic festivals were celebrated in honor of the god Dionysus.

Indeed, Agathon probably saw his party as a continuation of the festival of the preceding evening as his remark, "Well, eat your dinner. Dionysus will soon enough be the judge of our claims to wisdom!" makes clear (Plato 1989: 175e). However, many of the guests at Agathon's party were still feeling the after effects of Dionysian indulgence. Pausanias intervenes to keep this gathering from turning to "serious drinking" (Plato 1989: 176a). Aristophanes, Eryximachus, and Agathon all agree with his suggestion. Eryximachus then cautions them about the dangers of overindulgence. Following his suggestion they agree to drink "only as much as pleases them" (Plato 1989: 176e). Emboldened by his success, Eryximachus suggests that they turn their attention to giving speeches in praise of love.

Socrates' own speech is filled with Dionysian imagery. He tells the symposiasts how he came to learn about "ta erotica" from a priestess, Diotima (Plato 1989: 201d). The erotic arts that Diotima imparts were clearly associated with Dionysian practices as was her femininity more clearly associated with Dionysius than Apollo. This interplay of feminine and the Dionysian occurs early in the dialogue when Eryximachus banishes the flute-girl shortly after his proposal to banish serious drinking met with approval (Plato 1989: 176e). By casting Diotima as the major character in his account, Socrates symbolically brings the previously banished feminine into the party. He brings the Dionysian feminine back into the pristine Apollonian gathering. This is not to say that Diotima is without Apollonian elements. She has many of them. For example, Socrates references her expertise at healing (Plato 1989: 201d). She, like Socrates, embodies that important intersection where both the Dionysian and Apollonian co-exist. However, in attempting to bring out the Dionysian aspects, I will focus on those.

Diotima's speech has three basic parts. Diotima begins by questioning Socrates about what he really believes about love. Socrates reports, "you see I had told her almost the same things Agathon told me just now: that Love is a great god and that he belongs to beautiful things" (Plato 1989: 201e). I would classify this as an Apollonian vision of Love. Through her questioning Socrates is forced to concede, "love is neither beautiful nor good" (Plato 1989: 201e). She offers Socrates an alternative vision of love, calling it something "in between." Certainly, this is more Dionysian as Dionysius himself was a god who existed between the realms of human and divine. She describes love as a great daimon, an intermediary between gods and men. Apollo was a god of messages, signs and symbols, but Dionysius was the god who lived amongst both worlds. Dionysius himself is an unusual god. He is a god who dies, a god who is reborn, a god who participates in the mortal realm as humans do. Temples and theatres at

most sacred sites in the Greek world attest to his power, but he is also worshipped in the fields and forests. He is associated also with the mystery religions, which Diotima references to describe Socrates' philosophical initiation (Plato 1989: 210a).

In the second section of Diotima's speech, as she relates the story of the birth of eros, there are numerous Dionysian images. For example, it takes place at a party, where much nectar was shared. Aphrodite's birthday is celebrated in Dionysian rather than Apollonian spirit. Furthermore, the birth of Love takes place out of Dionysian indulgence of both sex and nectar, the precursor of Dionysius' wine. But even more telling, when Diotima describes the things that Love receives from his parents, Penia and Poros son of Metis, she may as well be describing Dionysius himself. Diotima explains, "In the first place, he is always poor, and he's far from being delicate and beautiful (as ordinary people think he is) instead, he is tough and shriveled and shoeless and homeless, always lying on the dirt without a bed, sleeping at people's doorsteps and in roadsides under the sky, having his mother's nature always living in Need" (Plato 1989: 203d). Compare this to the descriptions of Dionysius in the *Bacchae*. What Love gets from his father seems a bit more Apollonian; he is a "schemer after the beautiful and the good, brave, impetuous and intense, a lover of wisdom" (Plato 1989: 203d). However, Metis, the mother of Poros, brings up an indirect association with Dionysus. Hesiod's *Theogony* tells us that Zeus swallowed Metis, who was pregnant with Athena at the time and he allows Athena to be born out of his own head. Similarly, Semele had sex with Zeus. Hera found out. To avoid the harm that would come to Dionysius as a result of her wrath, Zeus placed the embryonic Dionysius in his thigh and carried him to term. There are other Dionysian elements in Diotima's description of Eros: "He is by nature neither immortal nor mortal. But now he springs to life when he gets his way; now he dies—all in the very same day" (Plato 1989: 203e). Dionysius, not Apollo, is the god who dies.

The third main section of Diotima's speech is the ascent passage. Here, we seem on solidly Apollonian ground. The ascent itself is an account of Apollonian insight into the good and yet the ascent begins with a love of beautiful boys. Our philosophical journey begins quite solidly in the Dionysian domain. However, even the Apollonian vision that Socrates presents is presented as a communal practice not the solitary vision of the soul turning inward, as Peter Kingsley tells us was indicative of Apollo worship. Kingsley argues that followers of Apollo regularly practiced a practice of incubation, a form of meditation, which leads to a deep contemplative state, similar to samadhi states in the Indian tradition. He

argues further that Parmenides was a priest of Apollo and used these practices regularly. (See Kingsley 1995 and Kingsley 1999 and Kingsley 2003).

Furthermore, immediately after the Apollonian vision, Dionysius comes calling at the gate. That Alcibiades is a Dionysian figure is clear from the moment of his entrance. Alcibiades' appearance at the party intensifies the Dionysian elements. He breaks in with a large drunken party, "accompanied by the shrieks of some flute-girl. The image is of revelry replete with the Maenads who surround Dionysius (Plato 1989: 211d). Alcibiades, "very drunk and very loud," demands to see Agathon. Apollodorus reports that "he was half carried into the house by the flute-girl and some other companions" (Plato 1989: 212d). He is wearing a crown. He makes clear that the crown symbolizes the judgement of Dionysius: "I wanted this crown to come directly from my head to the head that belongs" (Plato 1989: 212e). He implores them to drink with him and the symposiasts "begged him to take a seat" (Plato 1989: 213a). Socrates, who has just reported a vision of splendid Apollonian beauty, moves over to make room for this emissary of Dionysius. Alcibiades does not see Socrates immediately, but when he does, there's a rather animated exchange between them that culminates in Alcibiades placing some of the ribbons of the crown of Dionysius on Socrates' head as well (Plato 1989: 213e).

Alcibiades' actions at the party and his description of Socrates draw out the Dionysian elements of Socrates even more. Many of these aspects of the dialogue have been well attested to in the abundant scholarly literature (Porter 2000: 112–19). I will list a few salient ones here. At Alcibiades' insistence, the symposiasts simply start to drink to get drunk until an enraged Eryximachus intervenes (Plato 1989: 214b) and suggests that Alcibiades give a speech in praise of Socrates (Plato 1989: 214d). In this speech, Alcibiades compares Socrates to a statue of Silenus and the satyr Marsyas, both images with strong Dionysian associations. In "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," Nietzsche muses, "What experience of himself, what urge compelled the Greek to conceive the Dionysian enthusiast and primeval man as a satyr?" (Nietzsche 1967: 21). He answers this question a little later in the essay, "the satyr, the fictitious natural being bears the same relation to the man of culture that Dionysian music bears to civilization" (Nietzsche 1967: 39). In fact, those who play the tunes of Marsyas, like Olympos bring out cathartic release in the listeners (Plato 1989: 215c). Alcibiades compares Socrates' words, his arguments and enchantments to this powerful music. Alcibiades claims, "you need no instruments; you do exactly what he does, but with words

alone" (Plato 1989: 215d). Alcibiades describes the effect that the Dionysian Socrates has on him. He is more ecstatic than "the frenzied Corybantes" (Plato 1989: 215e). Alcibiades confesses, "This Marsyas here at my side . . . makes it seem that my life isn't worth living!" (Plato 1989: 216a). Still the Dionysian imagery continues. He wants to "tear myself away from him, for like the sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die" (Plato 1989: 216b). Before Alcibiades relates his attempted seduction of Socrates (Plato 1989: 220a), he remarks, "That's the effect of this satyr's music—on me and many others. He's like these creatures in all sorts of other ways; his powers are really extraordinary" (Plato 1989: 216c). Alcibiades again compares Socrates to Silenus, with respect to his eros, his ignorance, and his inner beauty (Plato 1989: 217a). Alcibiades mentions at several junctures in the *Symposium* that he is almost taken against his will (see Plato 1989: 215d, 216a, 217a, and 219e). This is often how Dionysian followers felt: Pentheus for example, no longer had a choice about worshipping Dionysius.

Alcibiades returns to these images again at the end of his account. "The best you can do is not to compare him to anything human, but to liken him, as I do, to Silenus and the satyrs, and the same goes for his ideas and arguments" (Plato 1989: 221d). Even Socrates' words are infused with the Dionysian though their inner beauty shines brightly with Apollonian insight: "they're truly worthy of a god, bursting with figures of virtue inside" (Plato 1989: 222a). Though Alcibiades implores him to at several junctures, Socrates challenges not a word of his story (see Plato 1989: 214e, 215a, 216a, and 217b). Socrates lets Dionysus speak. Socrates' silence is suggestive. By allowing this symbol of Dionysus to speak, perhaps Socrates is illustrating allegiance to both Apollo and Dionysus, a dual allegiance to which Nietzsche would be proud. Socrates also expresses this dual allegiance when he discusses whether the same man can write both tragedy and comedy, i.e., be a servant to both gods. He ends the evening talking only to himself, as his main interlocutors, Aristophanes and Agathon, have fallen asleep. So, he leaves this Dionysian domain just as the sun rises. He returns to the realm of Apollo. In Alcibiades' speech, he gives a detailed account of one of Socrates' trance states and mentions that he only finishes when the sun rises and he makes "his prayers to the new day" (Plato 1989: 220e). How fascinating then that we have an image of Socrates at the beginning of the dialogue in a trance and an ending reference to him leaving with the sun. There is a reverse relationship between the entirety of the party and the realm of the Dionysian, and Socrates' own Apollonian visions.

C. The Phaedo

Like the *Apology*, the Apollonian overtones of the setting of the *Phaedo* are fairly obvious. In many ways this is not surprising in that the *Phaedo* along with the *Crito* is a continuation of the action of the trial. So it is not surprising that this dialogue about Socrates' death would also take place under the auspices of Apollo. Socrates' death has been delayed because of the trip to Delos, the birthplace of Apollo. This trip commemorated the travel of Theseus from Athens to Crete to slay the Minotaur. As Phaedo tells the story, Apollo it seems has granted Socrates a small stay of execution. There are other Apollonian elements as well. For example, Socrates' movements are directly tied to the movements of the sun. As Apollo draws the chariot around the sun, Socrates' body marks stages of the journey. There is the obvious composing of hymns to Apollo at the beginning. His last words also are strongly Apollinian. Apollo was also the God of Healing and Asclepius was his son. In "The Problem of Socrates," Nietzsche remarks, "The wisest men in every age have reached the same conclusion about life. It's no good … Always and everywhere, you hear the same sound from their mouths, — a sound full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of exhaustion with life, full of resistance to life. Even Socrates said as he died; 'living— that means being sick for a long time: I owe Asclepius the Saviour a rooster.' Even Socrates had had enough" (Nietzsche 2005: 162). Nietzsche uses these words as an illustration of Socrates' weakness; his ultimate lack of affirmation of life. His last words are "Crito, we owe a rooster to Asclepius see that it is paid" (Plato 2002b: 118e). To sacrifice to Asclepius would ultimately require a trip to Epidaurus. Like Delphi, this site also had strong Dionysian dimensions. There is a beautiful theatre right next to the Aesclepion. Attending performances there played an important role in the healing practices that took place. So perhaps it is not surprising that even in this seemingly impenetrable fortress of the Apollonian, inside of the conversations that make up Socrates' last days, we find the Dionysian. Socrates reminds them, "it is likely that those who established the mystic rites for us were not inferior persons but were speaking in riddles long ago when they said that whoever arrives in the underworld uninitiated and unsanctified will wallow in the mire, whereas he who arrives there purified and initiated will dwell with the gods. There are indeed, as those concerned with the mysteries say, many who carry the thyrsus but the Bacchants are few. These latter are, in my opinion, no other than those who have practiced philosophy in the right way" (Plato 2002b: 69c–d). Socrates explains this to Cebes and Simmias about the ultimate fate of the soul after the death of the body. Katherine Zoller has written a very compelling article that draws

upon the distinction about different followers of Dionysius. Zoller argues that Socrates is one of the true followers, one who worships Dionysius through the practice of philosophy not just one who is along for the party, i.e. the thyrsus carriers. Zoller remarks, "the choice to emphasize the Bacchants is not at all arbitrary" (Zoller 2007: 34).

I argue that this emphasis on the Dionysian is present in the autobiographical account that Socrates tells in the *Phaedo* as well (Plato 2002b: 99a and following). Again on first glance, it might seem like Socrates is recounting his quest for Apollonian certainty. He studies the natural philosophers and the writings of Anaxagoras, who represents the pinnacle of the naturalistic tradition. Nietzsche describes Anaxagoras in this way, though he was challenging Parmenides, for as "far as Parmenides' main doctrine goes, he kept Anaxagoras in submission to it, as he did all subsequent philosophers and nature investigators" (Nietzsche 1962: 90). Viewed in this light, Socrates' turn away from Anaxagoras is a turn away from the Apollonian orientation of the quest for truth. Socrates does indeed turn away. He says, "My great hope was dashed." Socrates explains his disillusionment with Anaxagoras' conception of mind: "I saw that the man made no use of Mind, nor gave it any responsibility for the management of things, but mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other strange things" (Plato 2002b: 98c). Nietzsche shares Socrates' view about the lack of value in this philosopher of mind. Nietzsche writes, "He forgot the brain, its astonishingly elaborate refinement, the delicacy and convolutedness of its labyrinths, and instead decreed the 'spirit as such'" (1962, 101). Socrates explains, "I had wearied of investigating things" (Plato 2002b: 99e). Socrates explains his state of mind at this point: "I feared that my soul would be altogether blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with each of my senses" (Plato 2002b: 99e). What does Socrates do instead? He "takes refuge in discussions and investigates the truth of things by means of words" (Plato 2002b: 100b). When it is clear that his interlocutors do not understand, Socrates becomes more emphatic. "I assume the existence of a Beautiful, itself by itself, of a Good and a Great and all the rest. If you grant me these and agree that they exist, I hope to show you the cause as a result, and to find the soul to be immortal" (Plato 2002b: 100b). That is quite an assumption. It is not quite, "I, Plato, am the truth" (Nietzsche 2005: 171). But it is "I, Socrates, posit the truth." So in a way that Nietzsche would certainly admire, Socrates becomes his own legislator of meaning; he creates his own meaning. Socrates is forging his own ground for valuation and for the reevaluation of philosophical practice. He is the legislator of values that Nietzsche so admires. He is the creative free spirit

of *Gay Science*. He is the first disciple of the philosopher Dionysius. Nietzsche was the last.

Section IV: The Socratic Art of Narrative Self-Care

> "O Socrates, Socrates, was that perhaps *your* secret: O enigmatic ironist, was that perhaps your—irony?" (Nietzsche 1967: 18).

At the beginning of *Technologies of the Self*, Michel Foucault observes, "When one is asked 'What is the most important moral principle in ancient philosophy?' the immediate answer is not, 'Take care of oneself' but the Delphic principle, *gnothi sauton* ('Know yourself')" (Foucault 1988: 19). He then suggests, "Perhaps our philosophical tradition has overemphasized the latter and forgotten the former" (Foucault 1988: 19). Foucault is right to point out this emphasis on self-knowledge over self-care. Elsewhere, I have argued that careful attention to the five Platonic dialogues that Socrates narrates tells a different story with respect to Socrates' understanding of the importance of emotional experience in philosophical practice (See Schultz 2013). Through his narrative commentary, Plato's Socrates illustrates a profound sensitivity to the positive value of emotional experience in self-understanding, in philosophical exchanges with others, and in our attempts to apprehend the nature of the Good itself. By telling narratives about himself and his philosophical experience, Socrates models a form of self-care that is more encompassing than the intellectualist emphasis on self-knowledge. In telling these stories, Plato's Socrates practices a similarly sophisticated narrative art. His autobiographical tapestry shows how he presents himself and his philosophical activities to others. In the stories that Socrates tells his interlocutors about himself, he presents himself as a figure that incorporates a broad range of human experiences. He is the relentless seeker after truth, questioner of the oracle, student of love, appreciator of priestesses, a student of natural philosophy, a philosopher of the marketplace, and one who studied the depths of his inmost psychic experience.

The sustained regard that Socrates shows for the emotions is an important part of how he cares for his own soul. While some might want a definite answer to what this Socratic self-care looks like, quite simply, there is no one answer to this question. As Christopher Taylor aptly observes, "Every age has to recreate its own Socrates" (Taylor 2002: 44). The Stoics viewed him as a proto-Stoic; Christians regarded him as a Christ-like martyr, willing to die for his beliefs. Neo-Platonists saw him as a representative of Plato's own metaphysical claims. The renewed interest in the ancients during the Renaissance led to a view of Socrates as a model

of humanism. So too, the Enlightenment took him as a hero of liberation and Mill viewed him as sympathetic to his own views on individual human worth. These autobiographical narrative portraits of Socrates enable us to see Plato's Socrates as the first Socrates to recast Socrates in his own image. Plato shows us Socrates reforming and reshaping himself and his practice before the eyes and ears of his auditors. This reshaping of Socrates is an act of philosophical care on Plato's part to be sure. But it is also crucial to recognize that Plato depicts it as an ongoing act of self-care on the part of Socrates. Socrates forms and fashions versions of himself to better care for himself. Plato depicts Socrates as perpetuating his own immortality of soul, an immortality of words that capture his deeds in their beautiful web.

Even Nietzsche, Nietzsche who labels Socrates as "the cleverest of all self-deceivers," models himself after Socrates (Nietzsche 2005: 166). I suggest that Nietzsche used this autobiographical Socrates as a model for his own autobiographical acts of self-care. Nietzsche used Socrates' model to create his own immortality of soul. He titles the sections of his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, with evocative reversals of Socratic maxims: "Why I Am So Wise," Why I Am So Clever," and "Why I Write Such Good Books" (See Nietzsche 2005). The references to Socrates and Nietzsche's possible use of a Socratic narrative model for his own self-narrative are most clear in the preface and in the first section, "Why I Am So Wise." I will offer a few examples for consideration. In the Preface to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's beginning tone is oddly like he is putting himself and his life work on trial, much like Socrates is doing in the *Apology*. He begins, "In the expectation that soon I will have to confront humanity with the most difficult demand it has ever, faced, it seems imperative for me to say *who I am*" (Nietzsche 2005: 71). Like Socrates, he is not "without testimony." At times Nietzsche employs a Socratic reference as a direct point of contrast. For example, whereas Socrates describes himself as a "gift of Apollo," Nietzsche describes himself as "a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus;" (Nietzsche 2005: 71). Immediately after this comment, Nietzsche remarks, "I would rather be a satyr than a saint" this reference is evocative of Alcibiades' description of Socrates as a satyr (Plato 1989: 215c). Nietzsche is thirty-five as he tells the story of his life. Socrates is nearly seventy as he faces trial for his. Midway on his life journey, Nietzsche proclaims, "And so I will tell myself the story of my life" (Nietzsche 2005: 74). Nietzsche explicitly claims himself as his first narrative audience, but then he specifically mentions Socrates as he expands his conception of audience. He writes, "My readers might know the extent to which I see dialectics as a symptom of decadence, in the most

famous case of all, for instance: the case of Socrates" (Nietzsche 2005: 75). Nietzsche identifies himself as a decadent, like Socrates, and then in good dialectical fashion he claims, "I am the opposite as well" (Nietzsche 2005: 75).

Porter does well to remind us that 'Socrates' is not a fixed entity in Nietzsche's eyes but is a constantly moving and changing target" (Porter 2009: 407). Porter reminds us too that "Nietzsche's portrait of Socrates is also shot through with ironies that remain to be explored" (Porter 2009: 411). Of course, the ironic dimensions of Nietzsche portrait of Socrates themselves illustrate the extent to which Nietzsche models himself on Socrates the great ironist. But Nietzsche was not ironic all the way down any more than Socrates was, any more than Nietzsche's Socratic persona is. Porter writes, "It is this extraordinary availability, not to say generative productivity, of character and spirit that is arguably Socrates' most compelling 'feature' in Nietzsche's eyes, and again, arguably, the single most characteristic feature of Nietzsche's own personality—or rather persona—in his own writing as well" (Porter 2009: 416). Nietzsche well knew that Socrates upheld the legacy of the early Greeks, those comfortable in both domains of experience, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. To the extent that he holds onto Socrates, he, this last disciple of Dionysius also remains in service to both gods. Nietzsche ends *Birth of Tragedy* imagining a stranger visiting Athens and walking along the glorious colonnades. The stranger remarks that Dionysian madness must have been strong if Apollinian beauty had to appear with such force. Nietzsche imagines an old Athenian responding, in essence, "beauty is harsh." Nietzsche attributes the last words of *Birth of Tragedy* to this old Athenian. His response is an invitation to the visitor, a summons, a call to action for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. The Athenian beckons, "but now follow me to witness a tragedy, and sacrifice with me in the temple of both deities!" (Nietzsche 1967: 144). Surely few have followed his advice better than Nietzsche himself.

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CHAPTER NINE

THE ROLE OF AESTHETIC VALUES, ART, AND THE ARTISTIC GENIUS IN SCHELER'S ETHICAL PERSONALISM[1]

SUSAN GOTTLÖBER

The phenomenologist Max Scheler (1874-1928) was characterized posthumously by the young Heidegger in 1928 as "the greatest philosophical force of our time."[2] As Heidegger asserted, Scheler can indeed be seen as one of the most influential powers in early 20th century phenomenology. Scheler was, like many of his generation of phenomenologists, fascinated with the question of "the person". The person stands at the core of his ethical value theory. But when Heidegger, despite his admiration for the "catholic Nietzsche," rang the death bell for Continental value theory, Scheler's personalist ethics seemed also to disappear from philosophical discourse. Therefore, if the name Scheler is mentioned in scholarship today, he tends not to be mentioned so much in ethics or other philosophical disciplines but rather in sociology, and more specifically, the sociology of knowledge. Fragmenting Scheler's philosophy in this way, however, loses sight of what was most important for him and misses what drove his philosophical motivation, as Scheler states: "The questions of: what is man, and what is his position in Being? have

[1] I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Haydn Gurmin for his assistance in proofreading this text.

[2] "Max Scheler war—vom Ausmaß und der Art seiner Produktivität ganz abgesehen—die stärkste philosophische Kraft im heutigen Deutschland, nein, im heutigen Europa—sogar in der gegenwärtigen Philosophie überhaupt.' Martin Heidegger, 'Andenken an Max Scheler', in: Paul Good (ed.), *Max Scheler im Gegenwartsgeschehen der Philosophie* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1975), p. 9.

concerned me more than any other philosophical question ever since the awakening of my philosophical consciousness.'[3]

This focus of Scheler on philosophical anthropology has to be kept in mind when we now turn to the question of art, aesthetic values and the artist in Scheler's thought. This is important because when Scheler talks about art, he is *not* interested in an autonomous theory of aesthetics but rather: what can art or the artist tell us about the person and the human being? Scheler normally uses the example of art, the artist, or the artistic genius as exemplar (*Vorbild*) to clarify something about his value theory, more specifically about the so-called spiritual values (*geistige Werte*) to which we will return again below. To bring together the scattered remarks on art and the artist and investigate the role of those ideas in the overall personalist value theory is the aim of the following paper. It will be argued that in doing so we can gain valuable insights into Scheler's value theory, because the special appeal of art to the senses supports, for example through visualization, the understanding of Scheler's often very abstract arguments and concepts. At all times, we must keep Scheler's personalism in mind (and this is something which needs to be clarified first in our discussion) in order not to lose sight of the fact that Scheler always aims at an all-integrating approach. This was also quite characteristic for other philosophical approaches of his time such as Dilthey or Cassirer. They all aimed at overcoming the tendency in the sciences and also philosophy to fragment into specific areas of specialization, expediency and specifics. Rather, Scheler was interested once more to raise questions of foundations (Frings in Scheler 1987, XII).

While there have been a number of publications in Scheler-scholarship addressing different aspects of the actual value theory,[4] nothing has been done specifically on the question of art, aesthetic values, and the artistic genius in the thought of Max Scheler.[5] This is somewhat unfortunate, because the benefits of engaging with the concepts of art, aesthetic values, and the artistic genius might not only give rise to a deeper understanding of Scheler's thought, but also make his work interesting for a broader

[3] 'Die Fragen: Was ist der Mensch, und was ist seine Stellung im Sein? Haben mich seit dem ersten Erwachen meines philosophischen Bewußtseins wesentlicher beschäftigt als jede andere philosophische Frage.' Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos*, in: *Späte Schriften*, ed. by Manfred S. Frings (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1995), pp. 9-71, p. 9.

[4] Among them Henckmann, Frings, and Sander.

[5] An exception is Frings who touches upon the specific characteristics of Scheler's conception of art in *Person und Dasein. Zur Frage der Ontologie des Wertseins* (Den Haag: Nijhoff 1969).

audience, given that his reflections on these topics can provide insight to aid answering the question of how it might be possible to gain understanding of previous historical epochs, the other culture, or the other person.

So we must ask, what can be found concerning these questions of art in the writings of Scheler? Where do aesthetic values, art as value bearer, and the artistic genius (or true artist) stand within Scheler's value theory? In order to gain the best possible understanding of Scheler's theory, we need to address three problems separately. Given that aesthetic values (as will be shown below) belong to a specific value sphere of the personalist value cosmos—that is, the spiritual values, we first need to address the question of the specific nature of the spirit and (1a) its relationship to the person. Secondly, the importance of the artist, or more precisely the artistic genius, as an exemplar needs to be discussed. The third problem is related to the artist, the role of the artwork as a good (*Gut*) that bears values (3a) and the specific characteristics of spiritual values (3b) which make up the general rank in which the aesthetic values are placed.

Person, Spirit and the Value Sphere

Even though the concept of a materialist value theory itself will not be a familiar concept in most contemporary philosophical debates, I will confine myself to only a few introductory remarks, which will help to clarify the position of art and the exemplar of the artistic genius within Scheler's materialist and personalist value theory. As with most philosophical ideas in the work of Scheler, the main problem we encounter, when trying to construct a coherent theory by gathering remarks on art and the artist, is that Scheler himself in the development of his thought is not consistent. Thus, for example, Scheler would divide the value hierarchy in different levels; sometimes he would talk of four, sometimes five different value ranks (*Wertstufen*). These inconsistencies do not, however, impede on the actual argument in any way. Thus, this inconsistency, which is largely due to the constant and very rapid development of Scheler's thinking, can be disregarded at this point.

The key terms in Scheler's value ethics are the person, man as *ens amans*, and the *ordo amoris*. For Scheler, any kind of perspective on the world is a personal perspective. Scheler's understanding of the person is thereby quite specific. The person, according to Scheler, is the concrete

unity of acts, which founds all intentional acts (Scheler 1980, 382).[6] This means that both the judgement of values and acting according to values can only stem from this personal unity of experience, which must not be understood as some kind of an empty starting point of acts but rather their concrete being. Scheler thus develops a first argument against subjectivism à la Hume, as according to Scheler only the person can be the foundation of all acts and ethical preferences. This person, however, is not identical with the "psychological ego" or "self." The latter, being identical with the empirical ego can still be an object of reflection. Not so the person. Since he *is and lives only in the performance of the acts* he always escapes being grasped. In order to know anything about the person (which can also have a collective meaning, the *Gesamtperson*) we must look at how he acts and what he values. If the person *is* only in the acts he performs (those might be the acts of love and hate but also acts of cognition (*Erkenntnisakte*)) we have to look at those acts to understand anything about the person performing them.

Scheler's value theory is at the same time personal (i.e., centred on the person) and absolute and objective. Furthermore, Scheler's philosophy has to be seen as being informed of a particular philosophical approach which is situated "between" the philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*) and dualistic life/nature-spirit-philosophies. This becomes clear in the way Scheler defines the person: "'Person,' as applied to man therefore, must be envisaged as the centre of acts raised beyond the interaction and contrast between organism and environment" (Scheler 1995, 36).[7] Scheler tries an integrative approach. Human beings participate in life in the same way as other life forms do. But man is also characterized by a particular force which he calls *Geist* and for which the term spirit is only an insufficient translation as the latter has almost religious or esoteric connotations. As Scheler states:

> It [the spirit] is *pure actuality*. It has its being only *in and through the execution of its acts*. The centre of spirit, the 'person', is not an object or a substantial kind of being, but a continuously self-executing, *ordered structure of acts*. The person is only in and *through* his acts. The psychic act is not self-contained. It is an event 'in' time which, in principle, we can

[6] This is a shorter version of the definition he gives in *Formalism in Ethics and Material Value Ethics*. 'Person ist die konkrete selbst wesenhafte Seinseinheit von Akten verschiedenartigen Wesens'. Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus* (Bern/München: Francke Verlag, 1980), p. 382.

[7] 'Die "Person" im Menschen muß dabei als das Zentrum gedacht werden, das über dem Gegensatz von Organismus und Umwelt erhaben ist.'

> observe from the centre of spirit and which we can objectify through introspection (Scheler 1995, 59).[8]

In this way, Scheler tries to overcome with this approach the dominating dualistic philosophies, probably most strongly represented by the neo-Cartesian and neo-Kantian concepts of his time.[9] While *Geist* or spirit and life are essentially interconnected, they are also in some way opposed to each other. For Scheler, *Geist* is the ability to objectify the world. This is why, according to Scheler, humans are able to say "no" (i.e., not to be determined by their environment) and to have a world, or in other words, humans can overcome their drives of life (*Lebenstriebe*) and the related values. That the spiritual values are stronger than life values is mirrored, as we will see, in the hierarchy of values. Nevertheless, both (and with this Scheler tries to overcome the mentioned dualistic approaches without falling back into monisms which he perceives to be too simplistic) are dependent on each other: life without spirit is aimless in Scheler's eyes while spirit without life is lifeless in the most literal sense, meaning it has no drive to become active (Scheler 1995, 46-56). While life is not so much to be debated the term *Geist* is much more complicated. The person is for Scheler the "place" where the two forces *life* and *spirit* interact; and though this "meeting point" cannot be grasped (Scheler 1999, 168), it can be seen in acts of the person. Thus, the person stands not "behind" or "above" these acts but rather performs his existence in the experience (*Erleben*) of possible experiences (*Erlebnisse*) (Scheler 1980, 383/384). Moreover, to every person corresponds a world which is the world of the person (Scheler 1980, 390). It is in this context that the question of values begins to unfold.

For Scheler, values are not rationally known, rather, we grasp them by what we might call nowadays loosely emotional intelligence. Values appear in an "in between," i.e., *between* the loving/hating act of the person and the object. Nevertheless the values have some kind of objective

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[8] '(E)r [der Geist] ist reine, *pure Aktualität*, hat sein Sein nur im freien Vollzug seiner Akte. Das Zentrum des Geistes, die 'Person', ist also weder gegenständliches noch dingliches Sein, sondern nur ein stetig sich selbst vollziehendes […] *Ordnungsgefüge von Akten.* Die Person ist nur *in* ihren Akten und *durch* sie. Seelisches vollzieht 'sich selbst' *nicht*: es ist eine Ereignisreihe 'in' der Zeit, der wir eben aus dem Zentrum des Geistes heraus noch prinzipiell zuzuschauen vermögen, die wir in der inneren Wahrnehmung und Beobachtung noch gegenständlich machen können.'

[9] The question if Scheler is actually successful in this can be debated. To my mind, he is not able to solve the problem he indicates (i.e., to overcome dualistic approaches) but here is not the time not discuss this matter further.

quality. If that were not the case we could not recognize them at all (Gadamer 1990, 311).[10] Just as we share as natural living beings a natural world, the different value worlds can be shared in mutual recognition. Since the value of beauty (for which the artistic genius will become the role model) belongs to the sphere of spiritual values it can only be recognized by beings that have spirit—i.e., the human being.

This, however, does not mean that all values that make up a particular world can be recognized by everybody at all times. But if values (or at least certain values) have some kind of objective quality in them, i.e., they can be known from outside of the person (or in this case, the subject) then we can move to the next step and ask ourselves about the value preferences which different people have and according to which each person chooses to act. Since for Scheler, certain value levels bear certain characteristics, he can develop a value hierarchy which I will outline briefly below.

The person is characterized by a specific value, the value of the person (*Personenwert*) which not only becomes real in the person but is also the carrier (*Träger*) for all other values of virtue (*Tugendwerte*). As mentioned earlier, Scheler is not completely clear on the number of ranks in which he divides the value hierarchy. But the general idea stays the same: Scheler's value theory is constructed as a complex system that consists in each rank being composed of an opposing set of value pairs (with the exception of the value of the person, which stands at the top and has no opposite) with a corresponding feeling, a form of social organization and an exemplar. Scheler aims to develop a theory which establishes the place of man within the universe and more specifically with life. Thus, the "lowest" values, those of the pleasant and unpleasant (*angenehm* and *unangenehm*) are shared by all life forms. These values are essentially related to our sensual and more specifically our physical nature. Already with the next level we step into a value sphere that belongs to the personal and thus human value universe. We are talking about the level of vital feelings. Here we find the value modalities of the noble and the ignoble (*edel* and *gemein*) and sometimes also the modalities of the useful and the useless. With the third level we step into the sphere of spiritual (*geistig*) values. Aesthetic (beauty and ugliness (*schön* and *hässlich*)) and judicial values (right and wrong (*richtig* and *falsch*)) can be found here. The final one is again a different

[10] This line of argument reminds us again of the hermeneutical principles employed by Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Gadamer, and others who all emphasised the fact that some objective quality must be recognized in order to understand something, or as Gadamer phrases it: Understanding must take place between the foreign and the familiar.

level and here we find the values of the holy and the profane (*heilig* and *unheilig*) (Scheler 1980, 122ff).

For Scheler, all these values have an objective quality to them. Scheler grounds his idea in a phenomenological approach in the wider sense: A particular value is experienced by different persons *as valuable*, e.g., the feeling of pleasure is always recognized as valuable and what is not pleasant as the opposite. Scheler calls those opposites "negative values." This is important insofar as the negative values are not just an absence of values (such as e.g., evil would have been traditionally interpreted as a lack of goodness, ugliness as a lack of beauty etc.), but form an essential counterpart. In the act of hating, as Scheler highlights, one does not just deny the presence of positive values but focuses on the presence of negative values, thus making them "appear." In addition Scheler argues that ethical or any type of value preferences are *a priori*, meaning that the recognition of these values is not dependent on knowledge deduced from experience.[11] Rather, having recognized the value intuitively, i.e., having "seen" it once, a starting point is created from the person who gains access to the whole value sphere. Therefore, all other values unfold in a structured hierarchical way from the value of the person (*Personenwert*) as foundation, creating a "value universe." That the value universe is a *personal* value universe only is of uttermost importance and needs to be emphasised: this "universe" neither belongs to the natural world nor is it in any way abstracted from the natural world. Rather, the value cosmos is essentially founded and grounded in the person alone.

The explanations from the previous passage hint as to where to place aesthetic values: They (that is, the aesthetic values) belong to the realm of the so-called spiritual values which can only be felt by beings that have spirit. With this characterization another indication has been given: How to gain access to this particular value sphere. A value exists only when it realizes itself with the thing, with a state of affairs, or with a person, i.e., the value enters into a functional relationship with these or other factors in order to exist. The existence of a value is therefore a functional existence. Just as thoughts are given in thinking, colours in perception, values are given in feeling in an "in between," i.e., *between* the loving/ hating act of the person and the object (Frings in Scheler 1987, XXVII), e. g., aesthetic values are given to the spiritual part of the person aiming at beauty (or ugliness).

[11] Kant had argued in a similar way against Hume, claiming that Hume is using *a priori* concepts such as time and space in order to structure experience.

This is why, for Scheler, the human being is a loving being (*ens amans*) before he is anything else; all acts of cognition, willing etc. are essentially grounded in value-feeling. We can assume from the statements above, that since spiritual values can only be felt by beings who have spirit, then for Scheler an animal can neither create art nor value aesthetic values in any way. The spirit does not serve life (which is an essential difference to thinkers such as William James of whom Scheler was very critical in many ways).[12] The value sphere we are interested in can be seen in different aspects. Always, however, we have to follow the pattern that sees that the values can appear in pairs: right and wrong, true and false, beautiful and ugly. For all of them it is true that they can only be felt by beings who have spirit.

The Artistic Genius as Exemplar and his Role in Value Recognition

Remarks on art and the artist are scattered throughout Scheler's work but can be found mainly in his main work *Ethics and Material Value Ethics* (*Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*) and in some passages in *Exemplars and Leaders* (*Vorbilder und Führer*) which was published posthumously in *Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, vol 10. In the latter we find most of the detailed ideas concerning Scheler's concept of the artist, especially chapter four, which is dedicated to the type of the genius, which represents the value categories of the spiritual values. Within this value sphere we see a further distinction of different values such as right and wrong, true and false and beautiful and ugly, represented by the lawgiver (aiming at the pure idea of rightness), the philosopher (aiming at the pure idea of knowledge) and the artist (aiming at the pure idea of beauty) (Scheler, 1986a: 288). All share the main characteristics of a genius, who, according to Scheler, is a human being who produces something original or exemplary.

The artist is the role model for a certain type of spiritual values, unsurprisingly classified as beauty and its counterpart, ugliness. Scheler claims that the general opinion is that it is seen to be more difficult to define a type of person than it is to define a subject area (Scheler 2000, 64/65). But, in fact, for Scheler, this is not true. Is it not easier, he asks, to

[12] This, by the way, is not a matter of intelligence either as Scheler would argue that there is only a quantitative difference between man and animal. *Geist*, however, is a matter of a qualitative difference which can be seen in the above mentioned ability of objectification.

agree upon somebody being a true artist and then conclude from that that what the person is doing must be true art? Within Scheler's value hierarchy, an exemplar and a particular type of social organization correspond to every pair of values, thus giving us an understanding of the value (and its realization e.g., in "true" art or philosophy) they represent. Understanding something about the artist will tell us something about the general way Scheler does phenomenology and approaches other topics such as morality or religion. They are closely connected to his value theory and thus the theory of the person: How can we know something about the person, the centre of acts? By looking at the values they hold. Just as knowing the crystal formula gives us the crystal, so the *ordo amoris*, the value structure of the person which is given to us in the act of feeling, gives us the person (Scheler, 1986b: 348). And it is here that art and the artist play an essential role in Scheler's thought.

It is generally thought that the artist is present in the work in the same way the origin is present in the actual object. But for Scheler, the work of art contains phenomenologically speaking something of the spiritual and individual essence of the artist, which means practically speaking: the person. And not only that, but furthermore the effect (which might not necessarily be intended or even foreseen by the artist) tells us something about the artist as well since he is present in those also. It is also in this context (e)valuation that Scheler places the question of exemplars, which have to be seen as distinct from leaders. "A theory of personal exemplars is of specific significance in ethics: it represents a first condition for any further valuations" (Scheler, 1986a: 262). But as an exemplar shows himself to be the quasi embodiment of a particular way of valuing, and since this can only be expressed in his actions, we now have to turn our attention to the role the artwork plays in discussion.

The Role of the Artwork as Value Bearer

As a good (*Gut*) the artwork has certain value properties which are given *a priori* and which are not the same as the objective properties of e.g., a picture such as colour, form etc. What values are preferred or where the value of beauty is discovered by a particular person or even a culture, people, or historical period tells us something about that person, period etc. This means that different values are "lifted up" by different people etc. This, however, does not mean in any way, that those values are created or put into the artwork; they are as Scheler puts it "discovered." This means that we should now take a closer look at the aesthetic values which are after all at the centre of these considerations. For Scheler there is an *a*

priori connection between the value and the bearer of these values (*Wertträger*) (Scheler 1980, 37ff., also 117), whereby the latter is not the same as the material conditions. For example, the beauty of a piece of music is neither in the music sheet nor in the violin but belongs to the played music alone (Frings 1969, 7). This means that only a certain bearer of values can be connected to specific values, e.g., only a person can be good or evil, that is, a person can never be useful or pleasant and therefore that an artwork can never be good or evil but beautiful or ugly. But how are these aesthetic values characterized?

First of all, aesthetic values are values of objects. Secondly, Scheler argues, reality must be suspended in some form, i.e., there is a created illusion or appearance (*Schein*). Scheler gives the following example: A play gets its beauty, he argues, not from the costumes but from what it represents. In this way, the appearance and character of reference (*Verweisungscharakter*) of beauty relies on the fact that it becomes detached from all "earthliness" (to borrow a term from Heidegger) (Frings 1969, 109). Thirdly, it has to be given in some form of an image (*Bildhaftigkeit*), which means it cannot only be thought. If it would be the latter, it would become philosophy which is concerned with the essence of things and focuses on the value pair true—false. If one were to focus on Scheler's value hierarchy one question that comes most readily to mind is: how can we know that some values are higher than others? Scheler establishes a number of characteristics such as: the higher the values the less divided they are when more participate in it, e.g., while money or bread is divided to be enjoyed a piece of art such as a statue or a painting cannot be divided but nevertheless be enjoyed by many. As a personal value and not belonging to the *res extensa* (Frings 1969, 33, also Scheler 1980, 113), the value of beauty can be enjoyed by many at the same time (which is true, one could say for most cultural objects). Furthermore, according to Scheler, the beauty of e.g., an artwork is fully evident, even though we might not necessarily be able to say "why," i.e., what natural facts (such as colour, composition etc.) contribute to the beauty that is felt (Frings 1969, 6). What we experience here, according to Scheler, is the phenomenon of fulfilment: it happens at a time, when we encounter in our experience a particular value in a good (the value) which we had only intended before. It might even be the case that the aesthetic value disappears when a rational analysis of e.g., the technique takes place. This disappearance might also happen the other way around, e.g., in an analysis of the aesthetic value the artistic value may disappear and so on. The question remains: How can we grasp the individual values? Scheler takes a similar approach to Moore in his *Principia Ethica*, i.e., the value is felt

intuitively and thus directly (Scheler 1980, 67/68).[13] This does not mean of course that everybody would recognize the same value content as valuable or even that one person would always feel particular values in the same way since our ability to feel a particular value may be limited in many ways. But it may be given to us by empathizing (*nachfühlen*) what another feels when e.g., looking at a particular painting. In this way the other may teach us to enhance our own value horizon and thus enrich our value universe.

But at the same time (if we remember the remarks from the beginning) looking at the values of the other teaches us something about the *ordo amoris* of the other person and thus, by performing the same act of valuing as the other, we get to know the other person. Thus, art is for Scheler the expression of the other person in which part of his world is given to us. This includes the external as well as the internal dimension (e.g., the soul). Seeing the art and feeling its value becomes a method of knowing the person/*Gesamtperson*. In this way, the history of art is a tracing of the development of the spiritual values of beauty and ugliness through history.

One additional fascinating aspect of Scheler's value theory is that in order to truly value the object, i.e., to love for example a piece of art *as art* the motivation must not be anthropocentric. Here we experience an interesting tension in Scheler's approach: while Scheler's main interest is of anthropological nature (meaning in this case, how do his reflections on art enhance our understanding of his material value ethics), the motivation of experiencing a particular value *must not* be focused on oneself or the person but rather be directed at the object itself. According to Scheler, this is often not the case as certain feelings (such as romantic notions) get confused with the value. One example Scheler uses is that of nature: in order to truly love nature one must not love nature in an anthropocentric way (such as humanizing animals etc.) but for its own sake (Scheler 1999, 158/159). When we focus on something extra-human, then, Scheler holds that something elevates the human being qua the human being above himself and his experience. The ability to focus on something beyond oneself characterizes man as transcending; ultimately this is found in the God-seeker. This means that while others may open our eyes for e.g., the beauty of a picture (it may be a friend whose opinion we value or an expert who subsequently might make us aware of the beauty of the picture for different reasons), it *must not* be loved/valued because of the person who made us aware of the beauty (or indeed the artist himself) but for its own sake.

[13] Intuition in Scheler's philosophy is equal to *Anschauung*.

Art in Scheler's opinion must be more than mere imitation. It is creation, as well as a potentiality of bringing something new into the world. Through these reflections, one is reminded of Hegel who proclaims: "In sum, however, it must be said that, by mere imitation, art cannot stand in competition with nature, and if [art] tries, it looks like a worm trying to crawl after an elephant" (Hegel in Simpson 1884, 216). True art, therefore, for Scheler goes beyond what is already there. True art creates new expressions (Scheler, 1986a: 299), that show a new way of experience which again deepens and widens the value cosmos that is felt.

The impact of the genius (and that is true for all types, i.e., for the artist as well as for the philosopher or the law-giver) is given in his work and in his work alone, i.e., the spiritual person imprints himself on matter. Scheler thus chooses a different approach when it comes to understanding as the hermeneutical approaches in the tradition of e.g., Dilthey who argues that understanding can never go beyond the symbol (Dilthey in Mueller-Vollmer 1988, 148-164). In order to make the artwork come "alive," which means in order to see this imprint of the artist, philosopher etc., we have to leave all the symbols, expressions etc. behind to reveal the spiritual core, the individual spirit of the personality (Scheler, 1986a: 289). The genius, as the exemplar of the spiritual value rank, i.e., due to the "nature" of the values he aims to embody, is in his impact neither restricted to the natural side of man nor to the place he inhabits, but is cosmopolitan in such a way that one could say he aims at the realm of the spiritual person *per se*. This realm of spiritual values, due to the nature of the spirit (we need to remember that to have spirit means not to be restricted to a particular environment (*Umwelt*) but to have a world instead), is not restricted to a historical period but pervades world history as a whole. In this way, spiritual values enable us to gain access to what whole epochs valued which is a foundation for understanding them.

With his value theory Scheler offers an answer the question of whether (and how) we can understand what a piece of art (may it be a poem, a picture, a play or a song) meant to the artist who created them and the epochs in which they were created. Let's look at an example: If we appreciate the beauty of Botticelli's "La nascita di Venere" for its own sake, then we learn something about the person Sandro Botticelli—in seeing what he valued we gain a glimpse of his *ordo amoris*. But this is not only true for Botticelli's person. We also learn something about the society and the historical epoch in which the "Venus" was painted: what they valued, what inspired them etc. This, however, is not a cognitive understanding but rather an intuitive one that may be rationalized afterwards. Grasping these values is only possible in the first place

because even though a particular piece was created in a particular historical time, they bear timeless characteristics; they are of unending duration. This timelessness (which is due to the characteristics of the spirit to be neither confined to nor determined by a particular environment) means that the meaning of the artwork, its "truth" cannot be confined to its symbols or historical context.[14]

Scheler warns, however, that even though the spiritual person is present in the work of art, we do not have access to the person himself, but rather what is given is the *individuality of the person*. The artwork "bears testimony" to its creator and thus his essence (Scheler, 1986a: 291). In the artwork we catch a glimpse of a "whole of a world," which for Scheler is equal with the concept of the microcosm as is the case with Bruno or Leibnitz and—not mentioned by Scheler—Nicholas of Cusa. Even though the concept of the microcosm is much older than the Renaissance, Scheler connects his idea of the microcosm with the Renaissance and the notion of creativity as the expression of the human characteristics of the spirit. We may well ask, is this microcosm identical with the microcosm of the individual? Scheler doesn't say but one could assume so, since something of the essence is captured in the artwork. Another question needs to be addressed: What does Scheler mean by the distinction between the "individuality of the person" and the "spiritual person as a whole"? It is not, as one would assume, the "the body-environment of the genius" which is embedded in the physical, social, and historical environment. Rather, the spiritual individuality of the person has to be something embedded that can be recognized by persons from different cultural and individual contexts. Scheler is not clear on this nor does he develop the idea any further, so again we can only speculate. But if each person has his own unique value (which Scheler claims in *Formalismus* as well as in *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*) and the "who" for the person can only be seen in how (i.e., according to which values) he acts, then, necessarily it must be the case that we catch a glimpse of that side of the person which he reveals in this particular action.

As shown earlier, since the spiritual values are higher in the overall value order than e.g., utilitarian values, a work of art cannot and must not be interpreted just as part of a progress or as serving some other end such as being useful for society. It is also always a totality in itself (Scheler, 1986a: 293). But Scheler recognizes also an additional feature that

[14] Here Scheler clearly goes beyond Dilthey or Gadamer who see the only way to make a meaning 'available' to us in the expression (cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, 'Awareness, Reality, Time', pp. 151ff) or in understanding the historical context (though in a wider sense. Cf. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode,* pp. 310ff).

distinguishes art, or indeed all spiritual values, from the lower ones: Even if they, due to historical, social etc. developments, are not acknowledged during a particular time, they can be quasi "resurrected", i.e., they do not lose their value, while e.g., values of utility can become outdated. As an example: an old device used as a means of transportation becomes outdated while Botticelli's "Venus" has a timeless quality to it and can be experienced in terms of its full value (i.e., not just as a historical artefact) anew every time.

Conclusion

To speak of the role of art/the (true) artist (i.e., the artistic genius) in Scheler's philosophy only makes sense when placing such a role within the bigger context of his value theory. The way a certain piece of art is valued, or what kind of aesthetic values dominate can, for Scheler, tell us something about a) a person, b) a community and/or c) a historical period. This takes place independently of other abilities a certain person or people in a historical period might have. As an expression of human experiences and values a piece of art furthermore communicates something about all persons involved, i.e., about the person who values that particular work (the spectator) as well as about the person who created it (the artist). The value of the remarks Scheler makes about art has, in my opinion, been underestimated. Not only are they very illuminating examples of the relations between exemplar (and in a wider sense the creator of the object), value bearer and spectator but they may also inspire answers to the question: how, in a time of fragmentation and postmodern methodology, can we have any access to the meaning of texts, artworks etc.? The answer to the question "Can we know what an artwork meant to the author, composer, artist and their time?" has been "no" too often to be really satisfactory. For why then would people and scholars take an interest in the first place? Certainly, to understand what e.g., Botticelli's "Venus" means *for us* is also of importance and tells us something about our own values and thus our own person. But it seems like narcissistic navel-gazing to leave it at that.

Scheler's answer[15] relies on developing a new dimension of the common phrase "beauty is relative." Yes, beauty (as an example for a value) is relative but only insofar as it is related to the one discovering the values

[15] Against which the same objections can be raised as against all intuitive approaches to values. However, here is not the time to develop these in greater detail.

(the first person to "discover" the value of an artwork would normally be the artist). But the value is not, however, completely subjective since it is not "put into" the object nor does the value lie, as Heidegger would have it, in the process of creation. Essential to the reality of values (to avoid the term "existence") is that they become real by being perceived. Which means that values by themselves do not exist. Or as Scheler puts it: "The value *is* not at all" (Scheler 1971, 98). Rather: the human spirit grows towards the values it holds, thus making them true. And it is in this growing that we are able to recognize the other person through history as it is in the act of valuing that we "meet" the other and discover the world that has been created by the value person of the genius (Frings 1969, 109). Thus, when we value certain aesthetic aspects in a piece of art, these values do not only appear *for us* but we also understand the other person/people/time period better who values/ valued them as well. Through valuing (or performing the loving, affirmative act) we can get to know the *ordo amoris* of the person and thus get to know the person in the way they reveal themselves to us in their acts of preferring some values over others. In this way, for Scheler, even art contributes to his personalist value ethics.

Scheler died before writing his long announced *Philosophical Anthropology*. How much farther he would have developed his theory of art as an essential part of his "project of philosophical anthropology" must therefore remain mere speculation.

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CHAPTER TEN

FROM EXPLANATION TO UNDERSTANDING (AND BACK AGAIN): PAUL RICOEUR ON THE NATURAL SCIENCES

ROBERT PIERCEY

The essays in this volume are concerned with the "problem of science." They reflect on the complex interrelations among art, science, and philosophy, asking us to see the boundaries of these practices as fluid. They also suggest that this fluidity is a cause for celebration rather than concern. If art, science, and philosophy are not hermetically sealed, then science can be creative without being sheer fabrication; art can disclose reality without being science *manqué*; and philosophy can have a foot in both enterprises without renouncing its distinctness. My goal in this chapter is to ask what Paul Ricoeur can contribute to this rethinking. I have two reasons for singling out Ricoeur in this way. One is that his work contains rich resources for understanding the relations among these three spheres. He thinks science is creative in many of the ways characteristic of art, but at the same time, he thinks artworks offer explanations and general lessons of a sort usually associated with science. Ricoeur is therefore an important ally in the attempt to think through the problem of science. My other reason for focusing on Ricoeur is that despite this, his view of science is little discussed, and less understood. At best, he is thought to have nothing to say about natural science; at worst, he is accused of having naïve and outdated views of it. In what follows, I want to unpack Ricoeur's attitude toward science, in the hope of showing that it is more subtle than is sometimes supposed.

The rest of this chapter falls into three parts. In the first, I explicate Ricoeur's view of natural science against the backdrop of an influential criticism advanced by Brian Leiter. Leiter accuses Ricoeur of making two false assumptions about science. One is that "all causal explanations [must] conform to one model"—namely, one "drawn from some idealized

version of physics" (Leiter 2004, 77). The other is that if something is "laden with meaning" (Leiter 2004, 77)—as unconscious motives are, for example—then it cannot be a cause. Leiter's claims look damning, because most contemporary philosophers of science reject both assumptions. They do not think all causal explanations conform to a single model; they think different sciences explain in radically different ways. Nor do they think all causes must be describable by physics. Instead, they opt for "a plurality of logical forms and degrees of quantitative precision" (Leiter 2004, 77). My goal is to defend Ricoeur against Leiter's criticisms, and to show that he sees science as a thoroughly creative and interpretive enterprise—an enterprise that has much in common with artistic production. This view of science is not only less naïve than Leiter claims; it shares quite a bit with the pluralistic, hermeneutically sophisticated philosophy of science now ascendant in the academy.

In the chapter's second section, I argue that there is another side to the issue. Ricoeur does not merely claim that scientific explanation resembles artistic creation in key respects. His position is more subtle: while there is indeed a sense in which science is artistic, there is also a sense in which art is scientific. In Ricoeur's view, art is not random or capricious. Neither the creation nor the reception of works of art is an exercise in unbridled invention. Both activities are governed by general principles akin to scientific laws, and we will fail to understand the nature of art until we see how it is structured by these principles. To make this claim plausible, I examine Ricoeur's discussion of the psychoanalytic interpretation of works of art. The upshot of my reading is that for Ricoeur, the relation between art and science takes the form of an antinomy. Art conditions science, but at the same time, science conditions art.

Finally, in the third section, I ask how we should respond to this antinomy. I maintain that while Ricoeur thinks art and science are dialectically interrelated, this dialectic does not require the two to be on equal footing. Drawing on work by Boyd Blundell, I argue that Ricoeur sees the dialectic between art and science as asymmetrical. It is a genuine interrelation, but an interrelation in which one pole is more fundamental than the other.

Finally, a caveat. This chapter is concerned with Ricoeur's philosophy of science. It may sound odd to speak of Ricoeur's philosophy of science, since he has no explicit, developed philosophy of science of the sort advanced by Hempel or Kuhn. When he discusses science, it is usually social science rather than natural: the psychology of Freud, the critical social theory of the Frankfurt school, and so on. But the fact that Ricoeur says little about the philosophy of natural science does not mean that his

work is irrelevant to it. On the contrary, his discussions of other topics often have significant consequences for the philosophy of science, even if these consequences are far from Ricoeur's mind. I am less concerned with what Ricoeur says about science than with what his work implies about it. My goal is to give a sympathetic reconstruction of what Ricoeur is *entitled* to say about science. This sort of reconstruction requires a good deal of creativity and even some violence. But as Ricoeur has taught us, once an author has put his thoughts on paper, "what the text says … matters more than what the author meant to say" (Ricoeur 1991b, 148).

From Science to Art

Let me start with Leiter's criticism of Ricoeur. It appears in an essay on the hermeneutics of suspicion, in which Leiter asks how we should interpret Ricoeur's three "masters of suspicion"—Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud. He argues that these thinkers are "best read as primarily naturalistic thinkers, that is, thinkers who view philosophical inquiry as continuous with a sound empirical understanding of the natural world and the causal forces operative in it" (Leiter 2004, 77). As Leiter reads them, the masters of suspicion give causal explanations of human behavior, explanations that treat unconscious motives as causes like any other. While he credits Ricoeur with coining the term "hermeneutics of suspicion," he says that his own approach to this enterprise "would have seemed strange to Ricoeur, who was in the grips of a fairly crude philosophy of science. He thought the hermeneutics of suspicion stood in opposition to a 'scientific' understanding of phenomena" (Leiter 2004, 77). To substantiate this charge, Leiter quotes the following passage from Ricoeur's *Freud and Philosophy*:

> The statements of psychoanalysis are located neither within the causal discourse of the natural sciences nor within the motive discourse of phenomenology. Since it deals with a psychical reality, psychoanalysis speaks not of causes but of motives; but because the topographic field does not coincide with any conscious process of awareness, its explanations resemble causal explanations, without, however, being identically the same, for then psychoanalysis would reify all its notions and mystify interpretation itself. (Ricoeur 1970, 360)

Leiter sees two problems here. First, Ricoeur seems to assume in this passage that there is only one kind of causal explanation: the kind found in physics. The passage treats "cause" and "explanation" as monolithic concepts, speaking in sweeping terms of "*the* causal discourses of the natural sciences." Second, Ricoeur seems to assume without argument that

"psychical" phenomena can play no role in causal explanations, simply because they are "laden with meaning" (Leiter 2004, 77). As Leiter puts it, Ricoeur seems to assume that "a hermeneutic explanation, one that [takes] seriously the *meaningfulness* of certain mental states *qua* causes, [is] necessarily not part of the causal discourse of science" (Leiter 2004, 77). This assumption seems to arise from a conviction that the only things that can act as causes are things *not* laden with meaning. Presumably, these would be entities that inhabit the desert landscape of physics—or perhaps ones described by a science that can be reduced to physics. Only such a conviction could lead one to think that causes and meanings *must* be opposed.

The problem here is that most contemporary philosophers of science reject both assumptions. First, they do not think there is a single type of causal explanation shared by all natural sciences. Granted, during the heyday of logical positivism, it was widely assumed that the nomological-deductive model was properly used by all sciences—even social sciences. According to this model, to explain an event *just is* to subsume it under a general law, and this is as true in economics and history as it is in physics. Today, however, there is a consensus that "explanatory adequacy is essentially pragmatic and field-specific" (Miller 1987, 95). Nancy Cartwright summarizes this consensus nicely when she says that

> [w]e are used to thinking of *causality* as a single monolithic concept: causal relations all have one single feature in common that distinguishes them from mere association; and there is one single canonical mark of that feature. But we have a vast new project in philosophy of science once we recognize that there are a great variety of causal relations and a great variety of causal systems, and each may have its own way of testing. (Cartwright 2004, 243)

Contemporary philosophers of science also deny that causal explanations can contain only entities described by physics—or, perhaps, entities described by a science ultimately reducible to physics. This view would be plausible if the sciences formed "a tidy hierarchy with higher levels reducing to lower levels and ultimately to physics at the base" (Kitcher 2004, 214). But it now seems clear that there is no such hierarchy. Many successful sciences cannot be reduced to physics, even in principle, and they explain phenomena "in ways that look unfamiliar from the austere ontological and methodological repertoire of physics" (Leiter 2004, 78). Genetics is a good example. It is a successful science by any measure, but it cannot be reduced to the more basic science of molecular biology. Philip Kitcher explains as follows:

> Although there's no doubt that increased knowledge of the chemical reactions among biologically significant molecules has advanced our understanding of many aspects of genetics, it's not true that *every* significant genetic generalization can be derived and explained within molecular biology. Consider, for example, the principle that genes on different chromosomes assert independently at meiosis … This isn't derivable from principles of molecular biology, since there is no way of singling out, within the language of molecular biology, just those segments of nucleic acid that count as genes. (Kitcher 2004, 214)

If a science like genetics can give successful causal explanations without being reducible to physics, it cannot be necessary for causal explanations to contain only entities describable by physics. So there is nothing preventing psychical phenomena such as motives from figuring in causal explanations. When Ricoeur says that the presence of these phenomena prevents psychoanalysis from being a science, he seems to be working with a view of science that is defunct.

But does Ricoeur really accept the views Leiter attributes to him? First, does he really think that a single type of explanation is shared by all the natural sciences? To be sure, he sometimes treats *explanation* as a monolithic notion, opposing it to the equally monolithic *understanding*. But there are also texts where he expresses a subtler view. In *What Makes Us Think*, for example, he explicitly denies the unity of science, saying that "in science there isn't any methodological unity. There is perhaps a unity of aim, of wanting to know—a shared objective. But there is a plurality of referents, in the sense of the ultimate objects *on which* each science bears" (Changeux and Ricoeur 2000, 243). Similarly, in the essay "Explanation and Understanding," he argues that causality is not a monolithic concept, suggesting that "it was admitted too hastily that the word *cause* (causation) had only one meaning, that given to it by Hume" (Ricoeur 1991a, 133). However, isolated passages do not settle the issue. A critic such as Leiter might respond that regardless of what Ricoeur says in these passages, his discussion of psychoanalysis still presupposes monolithic views of causation and explanation. Is there any positive evidence that Ricoeur rejects the monolithic view?

In fact, there is. In a number of texts, Ricoeur articulates a view of explanation that is much more subtle than the one Leiter attributes to him. When he does so, it is usually while discussing Dilthey's distinction between explanation and understanding. For Dilthey, this is a distinction between the kind of thinking found in natural science and the kind found in humanistic enterprises such as literary criticism. Dilthey sees scientific thinking as general: it explains events in nature by subsuming them under universal laws. Humanistic thinking focuses on particulars: it understands

historical phenomena by reconstructing the specific circumstances or mental states that gave rise to them. When discussing Dilthey's distinction, Ricoeur qualifies it in several ways. For one thing, he makes clear that it does not presuppose a dualistic ontology committed to an "ultimate difference between the mode of being of nature and the mode of being of mind" (Ricoeur 1991a, 126). More interestingly for our purposes, Ricoeur insists that explanation and understanding are dialectically interrelated. We must, he says, "question the methodological dualism of explanation and understanding and … substitute a subtle dialectic for this clear-cut alternative" (Ricoeur 1991a, 126). To say that explanation and understanding are dialectically interrelated is to say that "rather than constituting mutually exclusive poles, [they are] relative moments in a complex process that could be termed interpretation" (Ricoeur 1991a, 126). This process has general and particular moments, but these moments are sides of a single enterprise, not different kinds of thinking. Moreover, they require and illuminate each other. Understanding a phenomenon helps us explain it, and *vice versa*.

Ricoeur gives several examples of this dialectic. One is the kind of thinking found in history. Historians typically see themselves as explaining past events. Theorists of history, however, disagree about what it means to explain past events. One view, associated with Hempel, says that historical explanation is just like explanation in physics, and that we have not explained an event until we have subsumed it under a general law. This view has the advantage of making history look as rigorous as physics. But it has the disadvantage of implying that historians rarely, if ever, explain anything fully. Hempel's position is that most historians give explanation sketches rather than real explanations, and that "it is the task of an ever more discriminating explanation to complete historical explanation, refine it, and carry it to a higher level of scientific rigor" (Ricoeur 1991a, 140). The other view originates in Dilthey but finds its fullest expression in Collingwood's work. It eschews general laws, insisting that history "concerns human actions governed by intentions, projects, and motives, which are to be understood by an *Einfühlung*, that is, through an empathy similar to that by which we understand the intentions and motives of others in everyday life" (Ricoeur 1991a, 139). The difficulty here is to account for history's critical dimension. "History," as Ricoeur says, "begins when one ceases to understand immediately and undertakes to reconstruct the series of antecedents in accordance with connections different from those of the motive and reasons alleged by the historical actors" (Ricoeur 1991a, 139). Ricoeur's position is that both camps reveal part of the truth, but only a part. Everything historians do revolves around

"a specific competence" (Ricoeur 1991a, 141). This competence is the ability to follow stories, and more specifically, the ability to recount and grasp true narratives about the past. This ability involves what Dilthey calls understanding, since "following a story is indeed understanding a series of actions, thoughts, and feelings presenting at once a certain orientation and offering surprises … [T]he conclusion of the story can never be deduced or predicted" (Ricoeur 1991a, 141) from general laws. But understanding is not enough. A narrative cannot be "disconnected: although not deducible, its outcome still has to be acceptable" (Ricoeur 1991a, 141). This "tie of logical continuity" (Ricoeur 1991a, 141) demands a grasp of general principles and of what they permit. Good history sprints back and forth between these two poles. It offers understanding, but an understanding that must pass through the sieve of general principles. It offers explanations, but explanations whose sole function is "to allow us to follow the story better when the first, spontaneous understanding fails" (Ricoeur 1991a, 142).

The crucial point is that while explanation and understanding are poles of the process of interpretation, this process is not a monolith either. It is, Ricoeur says, a specific competence found in one specific enterprise. The competence required by history is the ability to follow stories about the past. Other enterprises require other competences, and in those enterprises, explanation and understanding take very different forms. Ricoeur gives the example of "the theory of action" (Ricoeur 1991a, 132). The competence required here is the ability to read human actions by discerning the conditions that give rise to them. Some of these conditions appear "less rational" (Ricoeur 1991a, 134) and may be called causes. Discerning them is a type of explanation. Others appear "more rational" (Ricoeur 1991a, 134) and may be called motives. Discerning them is a type of understanding. But explanation and understanding mean very different things in the theory of action than they do in history. In both cases, they are the general and particular moments of a process of interpretation. But these processes are very different. History and the theory of action do not share the same method. They both explain, but in fundamentally different ways.

Ricoeur does not explicitly apply this insight to the natural sciences. But there is every reason to think it does apply to them. There is every reason to think that genetics, geology, and biochemistry involve different competences, different kinds of thinking. After all, if they did not—if they were instances of a single thing, Science, differing only in their degrees of specificity—then they could all be reduced to physics. But it seems clear they cannot. Accordingly, Ricoeur is entitled to say that causal explanations

in genetics are different in kind from those in geology or biochemistry. It is not clear that he *would* have said this, since he often stresses what he calls the "insurmountable" (Ricoeur 1991a, 143) discontinuity between the human and natural sciences. But regardless of what he says, his work is not only compatible with the existence of different kinds of causal explanation; it *entails* their existence.

Let me turn to Leiter's second charge: that according to Ricoeur, entities laden with meaning can play no role in causal explanations. Does Ricoeur really think this? It is tempting to give a very short reply here: Ricoeur cannot possibly think this, since he claims we have no access to anything that is *not* laden with meaning. In the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, Ricoeur insists that our experience is symbolic all the way down—that we have "from the start a symbolic structure to our existence" (Ricoeur 1986, 144). Since we have no access to meaning-free entities, it cannot be necessary for causal explanations to contain only such entities. But this response would not satisfy critics like Leiter, who could simply reply that Ricoeur's theory of symbols is incompatible with his view of science. We need positive evidence that considerations of meaning play a role in scientific explanation as Ricoeur understands it. Such evidence appears in the seventh study of *The Rule of Metaphor*. This study, entitled "Metaphor and Reference," examines what metaphors say about reality. In the course of doing so, it discusses scientific models—that is, concrete representations of specific scientific phenomena. Some models could be called "scale models" in that they offer an "enlargement of something very small … , a slow-motion sketch of a maneuver" (Ricoeur 1977, 240), and the like. Others, which might be called "theoretical models," "are not things at all; rather, they introduce a new language, like a dialect or an idiom, in which the original is described without being constructed. An example would be Maxwell's 'representation of an electrical field in terms of the properties of an imaginary incompressible fluid'" (Ricoeur 1977, 241). Ricoeur is struck by the parallels between debates about models and debates about metaphors. Some theorists of science dismiss models, seeing them as a dispensable "psychic aid" (Ricoeur 1977, 243) not essential to science. Similarly, some theorists of metaphor see it as a "mere decorative process" (Ricoeur 1977, 243) not essential to thought. Since Ricoeur thinks metaphor *is* essential to thought, he finds common cause with those who see models as essential to science. He particularly admires Mary Hesse, who thinks theoretical models are essential to scientific explanation. He approvingly quotes her claim that "the deductive model of scientific explanation should be modified and supplemented by a view of theoretical explanation as metaphoric redescription of the domain of the

explanandum" (Ricoeur 1977, 242). Like a metaphor, a model "introduces a new language," and "its description equals explanation" (Ricoeur 1977, 242). Ricoeur concludes that through the use of models, "[t]hings themselves … are *identified*, in a way that remains to be specified, with the descriptive character of the model. The *explanandum* as ultimate referent is itself changed by the adoption of the metaphor" (Ricoeur 1977, 243).

This is a remarkable assertion. Ricoeur is here identifying scientific explanation with the creative redescription of models. Even in physics, explanation is an exercise in scientific imagination. Crucially, he thinks the elements of an explanation are changed by the scientist's redescription of them. When we speak of an *explanandum* or *explanans*, we are speaking of something we have imagined, something constituted by the scientist's creative act. This does not make them mere fictions. They are as real as anything can be. But we must, Ricoeur says, carefully rethink "the implications for the verb *to be* itself of this affirmation that things *are* 'as' described by the model" (Ricoeur 1977, 243). These are not the words of someone who thinks causal explanations cannot contain entities laden with meaning. Far from drawing a bright line between the domain of physics and the domain of meaning, Ricoeur thinks the former depends on the latter.

From Art to Science

One way to characterize my argument so far is to say that in Ricoeur's view, science is under the sway of art. Explaining natural phenomena requires many of the same interpretive acts and many of the same imaginative leaps associated with our encounters with artworks. One might conclude that for Ricoeur, science is simply a species of art—that it is an inventive activity governed by no special standards of its own, and that like all art, it is defined by creativity and imagination. But this conclusion would be too hasty. Although Ricoeur does see scientific thinking as dependent on artistic invention, he does not think this dependence is entirely one-way. Scientific explanation presupposes artistic invention, but at the same time, the creation and interpretation of works of art are governed by universal principles—principles of the sort studied by natural scientists. We have already seen one sign of this in Ricoeur's claim that explanation and understanding are dialectically interrelated. They are not monoliths, but moments of a single activity. But Ricoeur's claim does not just arise at the level of abstract theorizing. It also surfaces in his discussions of particular artworks. According to Ricoeur, if we interpret

particular works of art, we will see that they are structured by general principles akin to scientific laws. To make these claims plausible, I will now turn to Ricoeur's remarks about art in his lecture "Psychoanalysis and the Work of Art."

In the course of writing *Freud and Philosophy*, Ricoeur had to come to terms with Freud's tendency to illustrate his claims with artistic examples. The references to Sophocles and to *Hamlet* in Freud's discussion of the Oedipus complex are well known, but he also uses many other examples drawn from the arts. Surprisingly, perhaps, Ricoeur sees Freud as a sensitive and responsible interpreter of artworks. "Far from psychoanalysis being constituted without any reference to works of art and then 'applied' to them later," he writes, "the comparison between dreams, symptoms, folktales, and myths is absolutely primitive and organically tied to the central demonstration of the *Traumdeutung*" (Ricoeur 2012, 160). Freud's use of artistic examples is not gratuitous, and it is not mere ornamentation. The psychoanalyst *has* to confront artistic examples and make sense of them, because they are an especially important route to the "subject matter" (Ricoeur 2012, 161) of psychoanalytic theory. The "content signified by the myth and that revealed by self-analysis," Ricoeur says, are "identical" (Ricoeur 2012, 161). And Ricoeur goes even further. He claims that Freud not only offers important insights into particular artworks, but that in doing so, helps clarify features of *all* artistic interpretation. What Freud reveals, in short, is that the interpretation of works of art is more scientific than one might suppose. For all of these reasons, the philosopher interested in Freud has no choice but to examine his writings on art.

When we consider Freud's interpretations of particular works, what do we see? First, Freud emphasizes the concrete and singular nature of the work of art. Every such work originates in some deeply personal complex, and seeks to elevate the details of that complex "to the level of poetic fiction" (Ricoeur 2012, 162). The story of Oedipus arises from highly specific psychological needs, and takes the form of a story of a particular man with a particular fate. Without this concreteness, there would be no difference between an artwork and a piece of abstract theorizing. But an artwork is not just a concrete particular. It is also universal, in two senses. First, the content of certain works has a universal significance. The reason some works rivet us is that their creation places "the seal of universality on what would otherwise remain particular, incommunicable, and ultimately silent" (Ricoeur 2012, 162). We find Oedipus's story compelling because we dimly see that it is our story too. We are appalled and fascinated that Oedipus has killed his father and married his mother because on some level, we desire to do the same. This "structural aspect" (Ricoeur 2012,

162) underlying the story explains its general significance. Second, and perhaps more interesting for our purposes, this general significance is uncovered by means of a general method: an *explanatory* method. We uncover the meaning of a particular work by using a method that could be applied to any artwork. This method involves paying "attention to unnoticed details," and requires a "separate treatment—analytic in the strict sense of the word—of each of these details taken in themselves, especially those that are disregarded or ignored" (Ricoeur 2012, 171). The emphasis on disregarded details often originates in a comparison. We might realize that a detail in a painting or a play is significant because it is missing from other artistic treatments of the same theme. Or we might notice the detail because it fails to appear in some psychic production related to the work, such as a dream or a clinical interaction. The process of discovering significant details through comparison is not just a device that might be helpful in certain cases. It is a feature of all artistic interpretation, because it goes to the heart of how art functions.

In "Psychoanalysis and the Work of Art," Ricoeur gives several examples of this process. One is Freud's discussion of the statue of Moses that Michelangelo sculpted for the church of San Pietro in Rome. The statue shows Moses returning from Mount Sinai, chastising the Israelites for their reversion to paganism. In an essay on this statue, Freud contrasts it with the way Moses is represented in the book of Exodus. Exodus depicts Moses as enraged at the Israelites, "a hero in the throes of violent anger" (Ricoeur 2012, 172). Michelangelo presents "a different Moses" who is "superior to the historical or traditional Moses" (Ricoeur 2012, 172). Through a series of details that might seem insignificant, Michelangelo portrays Moses as calm and controlled—a canny leader able to master his passions and lead his countrymen back to the proper path. These details include

> the position of Moses' right-hand finger in relation to the draping of his beard, the position of the tablets of the Law upside down and balancing on an edge. In this way, little by little, the figure of a compromise is drawn between opposing movements that took place the instant before and of which there remain only vestiges in the present position. (Ricoeur 2012, 171)

Compared to the fiery depiction of Moses in Exodus, Michelangelo's statue appears as "a fantasy objectified in stone" (Ricoeur 2012, 171). It urges onlookers to achieve self-mastery by rising above their passions. It is also a self-reproach: Michelangelo's reminder to himself of the importance of mastering his own passions.

Another example Ricoeur gives is Freud's discussion of the Mona Lisa. In his essay "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood," Freud interprets the Mona Lisa by contrasting it with an image Da Vinci mentions when recounting one of his childhood fantasies: that of a "vulture opening [an] infant's mouth with its tail" (Ricoeur 2012, 181). Freud takes the fantasy to be "a construction 'after the fact,' cast back into childhood" (Ricoeur 2012, 181) by the adult Da Vinci. He interprets the vulture as a maternal symbol caught up in a "system of pure equivalents" ranging from "Leonardo's 'memory,' to homosexual dreams, to the imaginative structure of the first infantile theories on sex, to the mythical representation of the phallic mother" (Ricoeur 2012, 182). Da Vinci's recollection of this symbol therefore invokes a complex set of themes concerning gender and sexuality. Freud then compares this set of themes with the Mona Lisa's depiction of femininity. Freud interprets her mysterious smile as the smile of Leonardo's mother, and thus as "interchangeable with the fantasy about the vulture" (Ricoeur 2012, 182). This interpretation would have remained unavailable were it not for the meanings unearthed by the story of the vulture. When compared to this story, however, the Mona Lisa is revealed as "a glorification of motherhood" (Ricoeur 2012, 183). The real significance of its details is "to be explained by reference to the most personal impressions in Leonardo's life" (Ricoeur 2012, 183).

Of course, these are Freud's examples, not Ricoeur's. But Ricoeur describes them as exemplary cases: models of how to interpret a work of art. They show that creativity and imaginative leaps play a major role in the interpretation of works of art—but not the only role. The secret of an artwork lies in its particular details, and those details are unlocked by means of a general method. Regardless of which work one interprets, it is crucial to compare and contrast the work with related ones and to pay careful attention to details that might first appear insignificant. And regardless of which work one interprets, the lessons to be unearthed are general ones, involving structural elements that go beyond any particular work. This does not mean that the artwork is a dispensable vehicle for lessons that could be learned in some other way. Its concreteness is essential. But according to Ricoeur, art does not simply privilege the concrete over the universal. It *fuses* concrete and universal in a highly specific way. Artistic creation and interpretation have to make use of structures and general methods. In this way, the universalistic thinking often associated with scientific explanation is an inescapable part of our dealings with works of art.

Dialectics Without Equality

It should now be clear that Ricoeur's views of science and art are complex and full of tensions. On the one hand, Ricoeur believes that scientific thinking has as its basis a kind of interpretation usually associated with the arts. To explain a natural phenomenon is, at bottom, to reimagine it, or to give a creative redescription of it. On the other hand, Ricoeur also believes that interpreting artworks involves applying a general method, uncovering structural features, and unearthing general lessons. Whenever we explain, we interpret; whenever we interpret, we explain.

Does this mean that art and science are equally fundamental? Does Ricoeur see them as equiprimordial, with neither having final authority over the other? Not exactly. Ricoeur does think science and art are mutually dependent and dialectically related. But it is not necessary for the moments of a dialectic to be equally fundamental. There is such a thing as an *asymmetrical* dialectic: a dialectic in which two poles mutually determine one another, but one pole enjoys a certain priority over the other. Boyd Blundell has argued that the notion of an asymmetrical dialectic is key to much of Ricoeur's work. Blundell notes that Ricoeur's reflections often follow a pattern of *detour* and *return*. Typically, Ricoeur's discussion of a topic begins with a pre-reflective, "naïve understanding" (Blundell 2010, 140) of that topic. Next, the naïve understanding is surpassed with the discovery that it necessary to "*detour* through objective explanation" (Blundell 2010, 140). Finally, the reflection "*returns* to a second naïveté in appropriation" (Blundell 2010, 140)—a naïveté that shares a content with the first, pre-reflective naïveté, but that has been enriched by its detour. Blundell comments:

> The titles of [Ricoeur's] books are notable for portraying this: narrative as a necessary detour from cosmological time to human time in *Time and Narrative*; text as a way of recounting action that also returns to action in *From Text to Action*; the other as an indispensable part of becoming a self in *Oneself as Another*; and most importantly, critique as a middle moment between naïve and sophisticated conviction in *Critique and Conviction*. (Blundell 2010, 140)

Each of these titles names a dialectical relationship in which two poles define each other. Time defines narrative, and *vice versa*; the same applies to the relation between text and action, between selfhood and otherness, and between conviction and critique. However, in each of these dialectics, one pole takes precedence over the other, in that it is the pole to which one returns after a detour. Time takes precedence over narrative, action over

text, selfhood over otherness, and conviction over critique. In none of these pairs is one term simply a special case of the other. Narrative is not a species of the genus time; on the contrary, narrative partly defines time. But the dependence of narrative on time is stronger than the dependence of time on narrative. There is a genuine dialectic here, but it is not a dialectic of equals.

I submit that in Ricoeur's view, art and science stand in precisely this relationship. Art and science define each other. Without the creative redescription constitutive of art, there could be no science; without the general procedures constitutive of science, there could be no art. However, this mutual dependence does not make art and science equals. Artistic imagining takes precedence over scientific explanation, in that the impulse toward creative redescription is more fundamental than the urge to explain by means of general principles. Granted, artistic creation is enriched by the detour it must take through scientific explanation. We might even speak of a first, "naïve" creation that is supplanted by a second, "sophisticated" creation, thanks to the mediation of science. But this does not put art and science on equal footing. Ricoeur is first and foremost a thinker of creation. Only secondarily, and derivatively, is he a thinker of explanation.

I began by suggesting that Ricoeur can help us rethink the complex interrelations among art, science, and philosophy. Perhaps the most important lesson he offers on this topic is that not all conceptual hierarchies are bad. It would be wrong to subordinate science to art in a simplistic way—as is done by the postmodern hordes who think science is just another type of writing. Even if we grant that science is less fundamental than art, it does not follow that science has no method or standards uniquely its own. It might be more accurate to say that the relationship between science and art is a partnership. Art is the senior partner, but science is by no means a silent one.

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PART FOUR:

PHILOSOPHY IN NOVEL AND FILM

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BEAUVOIR'S METAPHYSICAL NOVEL: LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, AND AMBIGUITY

ANNA MUDDE

> *For me, literature is an activity carried out by men, for men, in order to disclose the world to them, this disclosure being an action.*
>
> Simone de Beauvoir, "*Que peut la littérature*?"
> ("What can literature do?")

In one of Simone de Beauvoir's ruminations about the relationship between philosophically abstract subjectivity and the concrete and historical subject, she claims that the more attention a philosopher pays to the "role and value of subjectivity," the more he or she will be inclined (or perhaps required) to "describe the metaphysical experience in its singular and temporal form" (2004b, 274). This approach reflects Beauvoir's commitment to what she considers the inherent ambiguity of human experience. By "ambiguity" she means—for my purposes here—that the meaning of human life embodies a series of tensions—between being subject and object, universal and particular, selves and others, inwardly-focused and outwardly-facing, individuals and community members (see Beauvoir 1976). The meaning of such an existence thus requires constant tending and (re-)creation, though it is neither free nor open to every possibility.

In this essay, I explore the ways that Beauvoir's description of philosophical novels reveals her understanding of consciousness as a particular sort of ambiguity: that which not only gives the world meaning, but which also, necessarily, finds meaning in the world through the values, ideas, and objects given to it by others. It is through the philosophical (metaphysical) novel that Beauvoir finds a medium for the philosophical communication of ambiguity—that is, a medium for writing human being. More specifically, I consider the metaphysical stance Beauvoir is able to describe because of her commitment to philosophical literature. In writing, and in reading, fiction, what is manifest is both found and given, discovered and created; and the metaphysics of the novel offers a way to read

philosophy as *poiesis*, poetry in the sense of bringing-forth or revealing worldly meaning, in ways that are ambiguously particular and universal. While I do not aim, in this essay, to consider Beauvoir's novels for their philosophical import, the writing of fiction is an essential feature of Beauvoir's philosophical practice and indeed grounds her philosophical methodology. I therefore turn to a consideration of Beauvoir's novels before moving to discuss her theorization of the relationship between philosophy and literature.

It is Beauvoir's friend and collaborator, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who first analyzes the philosophical import of Beauvoir's novels. In his 1945 essay, "Metaphysics and the Novel," Merleau-Ponty reads Beauvoir's novel, *She Came to Stay*, as a philosophical text (Merleau-Ponty 1964). Merleau-Ponty argues that in the 20th century, the boundaries between philosophy and literature were blurring, suggesting new, "hybrid" modes of expression and opening a "new dimension of investigation" (1964, 27).[1] Such investigations arose from the recognition that intellectual work is aimed at "establishing a certain attitude toward the world," and drove the development of French existentialism (ibid.). Merleau-Ponty suggests that while "classical" metaphysics excludes literature because its purview is to understand the world and human life "on the basis of uncontested rationalism, convinced it could make the world and human life understood by an arrangement of [universal] concepts," Beauvoir's metaphysical approach challenges both philosophical universalism and the grounding of concepts in rational thought (ibid.). In Beauvoir's work, philosophy is grounded instead on the attempt to "formulat[e] an experience of the world, a contact with the world which precedes all thought about the world. After this, whatever is metaphysical in man cannot be credited to something outside his empirical being—to God, to Consciousness. Man is metaphysical in his very being, in his loves, his hates, in his individual and collective history" (1964, 27-28). In her 1946 essay, "Literature and Metaphysics," Beauvoir picks up and furthers Merleau-Ponty's analysis.

[1] In thinking about the relationship between existentialist novels and metaphysics, Iris Murdoch underscores their mutual grounding in the Hegelian idea of the subject: "In the Hegelian world reason has a history, that is the subject has a history, and is in a state of war with his environment and with other subjects. With Hegel the real subject enters philosophy. It is true that Hegel holds that 'all is ultimately reconciled in the Absolute'. But what interests Hegel, at any rate in the *Phenomenology*, is not the goal but the way … at any time before the end of history, there are contradictions that remain unresolved." See "The Novelist as Metaphysician," in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings in Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 103.

She argues for the value of what she calls metaphysical novels by first considering their denigration by readers.

The common critique of weaving philosophy into fiction that Beauvoir seeks to deal with in "Literature and Metaphysics" is the claim that the characteristic clarity of philosophy, its need to advance a universal thesis or a doctrine, to make a rationalistic, conceptual argument, gets played out through fictional means, and the "magical operation of bewitchment by the novel" is ruined (Beauvoir 2004b, 270-271). She writes of this worry:

> While the philosopher and the essayist give the reader an intellectual reconstruction of their experience, the novelist claims to reconstitute on an imaginary plane this experience itself as it appears, prior to any elucidation … We ask novelists to evoke this flesh-and-blood presence whose complexity and singular and infinite richness exceed any subjective interpretation. The theoretician wants to compel us to adhere to the ideas that the thing and the event suggested to him. (Beauvoir 2004b, 270)

On the one hand, there are those who prefer to read novels, and who might argue that reading theory provides only "intellectual docility" to the theorist's own metaphysics; such readers choose, instead "a story that imitates life's opacity, ambiguity, and impartiality" (Beauvoir 2004b, 270). On the other hand, the bewitchment of fiction is to be "taken in" by a novel, which we know must be a shift into a novelist's "own vision of the world," even when the author is so skilled as to make us forget his or her presence in the final product of his or her work (Beauvoir 2004b, 271). To read fiction is, in part, to engage with and be "taken in" by a metaphysics, by the author's ontological articulation of reality. It is to "live" the author's own particular metaphysics which is presented in fiction as "the world itself," universally accessible and inhabited by everyone.

In her 1947 paper, "New Heroes for Old," Beauvoir echoes this earlier argument, and joins others in critiquing the so-called "thesis novel," in which "the whole plot serves merely to illustrate a conclusion that has been determined in advance" (2011a, 118). *That*, she says, is not a "true novel." Readers of a true novel demand a complex and realistic story "whose fluctuating verity cannot be fitted into a formula" (Beauvoir 2011a, 118). Against critics of the "thesis novel," Beauvoir argues that philosophy—which the critics of the thesis novel conceive as metaphysical commitment—*is* problematically expressed in fiction, but *only if* one thinks that philosophy is necessarily a "fully constituted, self-sufficient system" (2004b, 272). In that case all a philosophical novel can do is express "frozen" instantiations, in which there is no free development (2004b, 272) of the characters or the world they inhabit. Thus, those who are wary of novels written by philosophers are not unjustified:

> Certainly, if one imagines that through the colorful and living paste of things [an author] sees only desiccated essences, one can fear that the author will hand over to us a dead universe, as foreign to the one we breathe in as an X-ray picture is different from a fleshed body. But this fear is well founded only in regard to philosophers who, separating essence from existence, disdain appearance in favour of the hidden reality; fortunately, they are not tempted to write novels. (2004b, 275)

But those who "are not tempted to write novels" are not coextensive with those who are philosophers. Beauvoir argues that while the genres of theory and fiction are often distinguished from one another with good reason, it is not clear that this distinction can rely on the propensities of a particular genre toward or away from metaphysical commitments or articulation.

By 1946, Beauvoir had already been writing novels precisely with the hope of expressing philosophical ideas, and she attributes the success of her novels in their public reception to their not being "thesis-novels." But it is not, she argues, that her fiction is absent of metaphysics. Instead, for Beauvoir, writing novels allows her to do philosophy in a way that is most appropriate to her view of human life—each instance of which inherently and necessarily implies a metaphysics. She writes, in "Literature and Metaphysics,"

> The child concretely discovers his presence in the world, his abandonment, his freedom, the opacity of things, and the resistance of foreign consicousnesses. Through his joys, sorrows, resignations, revolts, fears, and hopes, each man realizes a certain metaphysical situation that defines him more essentially than any of his psychological attitudes. (2004b, 272)

And, just as there are in psychology, Beauvoir argues that there are in philosophy two "divergent fashions" of making metaphysical reality explicit: by trying to "elucidate its universal meaning in an abstract language," making metaphysical theses "timeless and objective" (2004b, 273), or by trying to retain the "subjective, singular, and dramatic aspect of experience," and giving up any non-temporal system (2004b, 274). Indeed, we can see these two approaches even in the work of Plato, depending on the sort of point he is trying to make. Beauvoir writes,

> as long as Plato asserts the supreme reality of the Forms, which this world only mirrors in a deceptive, debased way, he has no use for poets; he banishes them from his republic. But, when he describes the dialectical movement that carries man toward the Forms, when he integrates man and the sensible world into reality, then Plato feels the need to make himself a poet. He situates his dialogues that show the path to an intelligible heaven

> amidst blooming fields, around a table, at a deathbed, that is, on earth. (2004b, 274)

For Beauvoir, however, the former approach, which "banishes" the poet, is not philosophically justifiable, and considering why can help explain her commitment to thinking carefully about the metaphysics found in the writing of fictional literature, which is so central to her philosophical practice and methodology.

Following Charles Péguy's assertion that "Everyone has a metaphysics—explicit or implicit—or he does not exist" (op. cit. Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 27), Beauvoir contends that authors are human beings, and human beings experience their presence in the world metaphysically, whether or not they are philosophers:

> Man cannot escape his own presence or that of the singular world that his presence reveals around him. His very effort to tear himself away from the earth only carves out his place there. Spinozism defines Spinoza, and Hegelianism defines Hegel. (2004a, 101-102)

For Beauvoir, if it is true that the world can only be experienced from a particular situation, then this is where philosophy must begin, that is, with concrete and particular descriptions of subjects' relations with the world and with other consciousnesses. Such relations, such metaphysical experiences of human reality, are what Beauvoir names the philosophical domain. To do metaphysics, to make reality explicit is, then, a matter of attending to one's "presence in the world," but indeed, by virtue of already being such presence one is always already a metaphysical being: "In reality, 'to do' metaphysics is 'to be' metaphysical; it is to realize oneself in the metaphysical attitude, which consists in positing oneself in one's totality before the totality of the world" (Beauvoir 2004b, 273). The most significant differences between philosophical writers of fiction is not, for Beauvoir, based on *whether* they advance a metaphysics, but on *the ways* in which they realize themselves in the metaphysical attitude.

There are, she argues, two sorts of philosopher who we might consider when we are thinking about philosophy in literature. One sort of philosopher would produce terrible philosophical fiction: those for whom truth is "timeless and objective," that is, ahistorical and absolute (2004b, 273)—the "classical" metaphysicians Merleau-Ponty describes, philosophers of "dessicated essences." One can hardly imagine, Beauvoir notes, an Aristotelian, Spinozan, or Leibnizian novel, "since neither subjectivity nor temporality have a real place in these metaphysics" (2004b, 273). Those who view truth as timeless and objective, and who seek to express this in literature, are bound to fail, at least as novelists. Yet there are other

philosophers, those who privilege subjectivity, historical situation, and factical conditions, whose metaphysics are at least conducive to the fictional articulation and to being explored through literary means.

We can see this when we consider some of Beauvoir's examples. Beauvoir suggests that readers miss the opportunity to find central elements of meaning in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, if they believe such authors are distinguishable based purely on their preference(s) for fictional representation over articulations of "truth." If Hegel is—at least in principle—interested in "dessicated essences," he is also well aware of the need to express the movement of such essences in their "flesh-and-blood presence"—for which he turns to literature (e.g., *Antigone*, *Don Juan*, and *Faust*). And it is not that Dostoyevsky's work, which privileges the expression of his vision through "the sensible, carnal evocation of the terrestrial domain" (2004b, 275), has no metaphysics. The particular metaphysics found in *The Brothers Karamazov* is inseparable from Dostoyevsky's self as singular and from his more general ways of seeing the world—the novel "unfold[s] within the framework of a Christian metaphysics" (2004b, 275).

> It is the Christian drama of good and evil that is built up and resolved in these works. One knows well that this hinders neither the protagonists' reactions nor the unfolding of the plot and that Dostoyevsky's world … is carnal and concrete. Good and evil are not abstract notions. They are grasped only in the good or bad acts accomplished by men … (2004b, 275-276).

Expressing metaphysical commitments in fiction allows authors—and readers—to find and disclose meaning in the world. The novel gives or offers to others what the author has found: a meaningful world. The philosophical novel does not, she writes, "[exploit] on a literary plane truths established beforehand on the philosophical plane" (2004b, 274); it is not "the pure exemplification of a theory" (2011a, 118). Rather, it is a product of a philosophical practice that allows the author's experiences with and imaginations of the world to arise through mechanisms that reveal metaphysical commitments without their prior explication. Such revelation of metaphysical engagements occurs without assuming the author's full control over the direction of the work or of its reception by others. And successful fiction, "bewitching" fiction, is that which does not contrive to control the world it describes: while every novelist must write from an experiential perspective, "the unity of his vision" cannot "injure the diversity of the world which he evokes," lest we feel too strongly his (or her) presence (2011a, 119).

Yet Beauvoir's insistence that good fiction cannot portray a world that is "whatever we want it to be," since its success is circumscribed by that world and by what worldly readers will believe, is apparent in her own works of fiction, written with an approach of seeing how the characters and their situations might react. Far from charting a course of action, her defense of writing metaphysical novels evinces a practice of taking a particular metaphysical stance—of "positing oneself in one's totality before the totality of the world" and, in a sense, seeing what will happen. And so, in her thinking about what it is like to write successful fiction is worth quoting at length:

> Just as a scientific truth finds its worth in the totality of the experiments that found it and are summed up by it, so the work of art comprises the singular experiment of which it is the fruit. The scientific experiment is the confrontation of the fact, that is, of the hypothesis considered as verified, with the new idea. In an analogous manner, the author must constantly confront his sketches with their realization, which is outlined by them and immediately reacts upon them. (2004b, 272)

While it is "absurd to claim that a novel's protagonist is free," since he or she is authored in the most precise sense of the term, still, "the opacity of the events he relates shows the resistance that he encounters during the creative act itself" (2004b, 271-272):

> If [the author] wants the reader to believe in the inventions he proposes, the novelist must first believe strongly enough in them himself to discover a meaning in them that will flow back into the original idea, a meaning that will suggest problems, new twists, and unforeseen developments. Thus, as the story unfolds, he sees truths appear that were previously unknown to him, questions whose solutions he does not possess. He questions himself, takes sides, and runs risks; and, at the end of his creation, he will consider the work he has accomplished with astonishment. (2004b, 272)

In fiction, for Beauvoir, the world must be allowed to unfold as it does in experience—for the reader as well as for the author. There is an "experimental" sensibility in her work on fiction. Any insistence beforehand about what an experience will mean, the construction of a story so as to illustrate a pre-existing philosophical or theoretical argument will be artless. The "classical" metaphysician, who not only searches for but insists on finding an organized set of concepts in worldly phenomena, will fail as a novelist because readers will find that such an author imposes him- or herself too much on the world. The magic of entering into another's metaphysical experience cannot happen in that case—any claims to universality fall flat, the writing appears artless and its claims will seem

to require rejection. Similarly, we might say that this artlessness is what often distinguishes, in philosophy, the example from the thought experiment: while I might solicit from my experience an example that could illustrate and help communicate to others the idea that I am trying to articulate (which, we might assume, has arisen from still other experiences), by creating a thought experiment I am constraining from the outset the conceptual order under which I allow my interlocutors to engage with the world. In the former case, if I have found a "good example," one that draws on an experience to which others can relate, they are able to bring something to their own understanding of what I am trying to say, and can even correct, reshape, or reject my example if it does not "fit" their experience, or if I insist that the world is in a way that for them it is not. In providing an example, I am—as the novelist does—"taking sides," but I am also opening spaces for "questioning myself" (2004b, 272). In the latter case, I foreclose any opportunity for such engagement with others; I insist that they direct their attention to concepts related to one another in a way which I have circumscribed for them, and I insist that they consider the world through the order that I have insisted it displays. In that case, objections about "fit" seem inappropriate and out of place, as though the objector is unwilling to play the game I have contrived in order to make my case.

The problem for the "thesis novel" is thus not that the author has a metaphysics or that he or she expresses metaphysical commitments; the problem is that the author's metaphysics is expressed in the form of a thesis, for which a story must be found. What the author will be required to do, in that case, is to force the world to "fit" his or her conceptual scheme, and—at least for those who love fiction—that produces intolerable reading material.

In this regard Beauvoir's work raises literary practice to the level of philosophical import, and it is an originating feature, as Merleau-Ponty notes, of French existentialist philosophy. But it is a practice that Merleau-Ponty also finds in much earlier French writing. In his reading of Michel de Montaigne's essays, Merleau-Ponty notes Montaigne's rejection of any self-description or identification in advance by appeal to his own "physics or metaphysics" (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 202). For Montaigne, human beings cannot accurately explain themselves by appeal to who they are or how they do things—e.g., by methodology or discipline, by interest, intention, or political affiliation; rather, they are *explained by* the physics and metaphysics *evinced in* their theoretical doings.

In Montaigne's essays, the form of writing so common in theoretical practice, is an activity of expression appealing to the world, asking it for assistance in judging the meaning of his experiences and of his expression

of them—it is, we might say, experimental in Beauvoir's sense. In a telling if paradoxical passage of his essay "Of quick or slow speech," devoted to spoken and written expression, Montaigne notices that his self-access is "always worst in [his] own possession and when wholly at [his] own disposal" (1870, 38). He claims that even in the fleeting passage of speech it is much easier to access himself through his habits than through his ideas: for Montaigne, speech—its patterns and intonation, considerations of its relation to "occasion" and "company"—seem more telling than his knowledge of himself through his ideas. This is so, he says, precisely because it is in speech that what is revealed relies more on what he calls "accident" than on "anything that comes from [his will]" (1870, 38). Moreover, of the translation of speech into writing, Montaigne finds that he does not display himself through writing with the immediacy available through speech. The happenstance of speech, and its being inherently for-others, appears to Montaigne somehow unlike the premeditation and considered weightiness, seemingly separable from himself and others, of written philosophy. He finds he is most clearly "in" his speech, which is fleeting, and is not where he might expect to find himself—in his writing. Yet if we take Beauvoir's theorization of writing seriously, while the sort of immediacy of self Montaigne is describing may well be absent, writing is no less expressive of the metaphysical attitude of the self who is writing.

When we consider what Beauvoir has to say about fiction, it becomes difficult not to notice that her philosophical work also illustrates her metaphysical stance. It moreover offers an opening for thinking about the metaphysics of books as objects, about non-"classical" metaphysical possibilities for philosophy, about risk-taking, question-asking theoretical-metaphysical practices. Striking about *The Second Sex*, for instance, is that although it is about the "situation of woman," it is more centrally about (and is also a) being in the world with others (humans and non-human things). Books are odd things: they can be the expression and embodiment of a subject in an object. And they are odd if one considers their origin, or asks "why write?" Beauvoir notices that acts, projections into the world, are like objects for others "that I make exist in the world" so as to communicate with others (2004a, 129). Books are literally objects for others in which a subject's instants are fixedly (and only ever partially) contained. In the case of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir's book is also *about* experience and knowledge, reasoning and privilege, subjects and objects, selves and others (and Others)[2].

[2] Beauvoir uses 'others' to denote other things, equally as immanent as the subject, and 'Other' to denote absolute otherness.

First, she finds she must acknowledge that she is a woman and that this way of being is a situation among others. But this is not done privately; it is not an intimately personal, solitary act; to engage in such an exercise, to try to articulate what a woman is and why being a woman might matter, she has to articulate this to and for others. She writes about being a woman for others to see—that is the nature of a published book. Moreover, as Nancy Bauer observes, Beauvoir is aware that she is bound to do this without any previous expertise on the subject, because she has none. Rather, and Bauer expresses this nicely, Beauvoir realizes that the response of readers will comprise her authority on the matter (Bauer 2006, 234). There is more: she is not just writing about woman's situation as Freud or Marx or Engels were able to do—she has experience of what it is to be a woman and, as she notes in the introduction, an interest in what she will find out, in the questions she asks and their answers. For example, she notices the "luxury of impartiality" is hers as a result of her good fortune of being one of the women who has "all the privileges of being human" (among them, education) and who is even able, because of this situatedness, to recognize its necessity (2011b, 15). She is educated, in philosophy no less, is privileged in relation to others, "and yet" she is also a woman, underprivileged in relation to (different) others. One might find a sort of intellectual inability to put these pieces together in her words: "… and yet." Moreover, she recognizes that she is privileged by one of her situations and somehow less privileged by another. That is to say, she recognizes that she is a subject in one of her situations when it is the one that matters, and yet she is also always an object for others a part of the situation of woman. She attempts to determine why and how such ambiguity is possible; how these two aspects of her being interact and affect what she can say, what she knows, what her "physics and metaphysics" are.

Perhaps even more subtly important is the metaphysical risk Beauvoir takes in writing such a book. She makes a risky call to others, for recognition that what she is describing, what she articulates of her experience, is somehow "true" to life. What if publishers think the book is awful? What if general readers think it is awful? Or perhaps worse, what if women think it is awful, but men think it is accurate? Beauvoir's view of being human, the capacity for subjectivity, is well read, I think, as *risking* ourselves in order to have a chance to, in Bauer's words, "create a world for ourselves with others" (Bauer 2006, 236). Being a subject, for Beauvoir, means undertaking this risk. To do so, on her reading, is to accept ambiguity as a necessary pre-condition of any ethically acceptable human self-consciousness: I must acknowledge my ambiguity in order to

acknowledge that I need the other to help me find/establish my self and to know.

All forms of literary writing—both fictional and theoretical—appear, in the Beauvoirean sense I am developing, to be a way of characterizing the simultaneity of finding and giving meaning, and of trying things out, creating worldly objects, under the inescapable gaze of others. As Beauvoir argues, such trying—that is, the trying of negotiating and articulating the world—is never simply for-oneself, nor is it only a momentary particular-something, which evaporates into a "universal" totality. The individual *is*, rather, a particular (physics and) metaphysics in relation with and distinguishable from others and the world. Moreover, the access that any particular knower can have to their (physics and) metaphysics is through the responses of others to their projects.

Writing metaphysical novels is a way of doing philosophy that does not foreclose worldly possibilities, of objects or subjects; it is, for Beauvoir, a way of doing philosophy that does not allow the philosopher free reign of interpretation over what the world means: a novel which advances a way of finding meaning in the world worked out ahead of time, will fail as a novel (Beauvoir 2004b, 271). Novels, she argues, cannot be philosophical if by philosophy we understand the advancement of a completed system, the full elucidation of (an) essential truth. But they are precisely philosophical if we understand philosophy to be an engagement with the world that is as much an attempt to describe what it is like to find it meaningful and intelligible as it is to give meaning and intelligibility to it.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

REFLECTED EROS: POLITICS, ART, AND THE MODERN DESIRE FOR SELF-COMPLETION IN MILAN KUNDERA'S *THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING*

PAUL HOWARD

Critics of modern liberal republics on both the left and the right may differ in their aspirations, but they are virtually unanimous on one key point: democratic capitalism (especially in its paradigmatic example, the United States) disdains the sacred or authentic domains of life in favour of utilitarian market transactions, leading to individual alienation and the erosion of "higher social" values.

On this account, the banality of democratic capitalism is among its most serious shortcomings. As one scholar of post-Communist Eastern Europe put it when discussing the continuing allure of nationalist and anti-Western political narratives: "[I]t is not simply capitalism that is challenged or denied but also the absence of an exhilarating vision that would preserve the connection with the sacred. The major weakness of liberalism is, according to this view, its coldness" (Tismaneanu 1998, 36).

Today, this criticism is echoed from Russia to Iran and China, where (at least among the elites) appeals to collectivism and traditional norms of governance are trumpeted as superior to democratic Western norms. Ironically, the indictment of Western liberal democracy on the grounds of its lack of authenticity has deep Western roots in the influential works of Rousseau, Nietzsche, Marx, and Heidegger, each of whom indicted modern republics for their inability to satisfy deeper spiritual longings. This raises the question of whether Western civilization—with its emphasis on individualism, the separation of church and state, and arms-length market transactions—is an inevitable breeding ground for antiliberal intellectual and political

movements. And if it is, how can defenders of liberal polities respond to such critiques?

In order to understand the challenge to liberalism and its deepest roots in Western civilization, one helpful place to turn is among the writers and philosophers who lived under the most serious challenge to liberal democracy to date: Communism. Dissidents from Jan Patočka to Václav Havel and Solzhenitsyn closely analyzed the phenomenon of Communism within the broader social and political currents of the twentieth century, enriching our understanding of totalitarian regimes while also combating them.[1]

One name less associated with dissident thought is that of the Franco-Czech novelist Milan Kundera. Indeed, Kundera has vigorously resisted any attempt to be labeled politically as a dissident (or any other type of political actor), and he even engaged in high-profile debates with Havel after the failure of the Prague Spring over the future and importance of dissidence in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Kundera's disagreement with Havel shouldn't be minimized or ignored. In that regard, Havel certainly got the better of their debate,[2] which Kundera seems to have acknowledged in later years.[3] Havel's work on behalf of democracy and human rights helped lead to the collapse of Communism and paved the road for a peaceful and largely successful transition from Communism to liberal democracy after 1989. Havel and Kundera seem to have achieved at least some reconciliation before Havel's death in 2011, and Havel even defended Kundera against charges in 2008 that he once turned in a suspected spy to the secret police (Essig 2011).

Nonetheless, we would argue that Kundera's works, especially his early novels set in Czechoslovakia or in the aftermath of the Prague Spring, deserve serious consideration not only within the canon of dissident literature but for political theorists trying to understand the attraction of totalitarian regimes such as Communism for many modern intellectuals.[4]

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[1] See, e.g., Havel's classic essays *The Power of the Powerless* and *Politics and Conscience*.

[2] As one observer put it, "Kundera turned out to be spectacularly wrong—and not just once, but twice" (Herman 2012).

[3] See Kundera's homage to Havel in *The New Republic* after the latter's election as president of the Czech Republic in 1990 (Kundera 1990, 16).

[4] E.g., Kundera's novels *The Joke*, *The Farewell Waltz*, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.*

Two Reflections of Modernity

Kundera advances a thoughtful critique of Communism and the problems of modern liberalism by reference to the permanent background of human life, dubbed by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl as the "life-world."[5] Close analysis of the life-world through the medium of Kundera's novels (and through his understanding of novel writing writ large) allows us to understand that the appeal of salvific politics for modern human beings is rooted in man's erotic nature—his desire for self-completion, self-mastery, and recognition. While these urges can be educated or tamed, in part through the moral imagination and dialogue between writer and reader that the best novels engender, they cannot be eradicated without recourse to dehumanizing tyranny and brutal coercion.

While Kundera eschews politics, he has argued repeatedly that the morality of the novel form is intrinsic to the development of the most cherished values of modern Western civilization—including individualism, political pluralism, philosophic rationalism, artistic freedom, and universal human rights. He has remarked:

> Creating the imaginary terrain where moral judgment is suspended was a move of enormous significance: only there could novelistic characters develop—that is, individuals conceived not as a function of some preexistent truth, as examples of good and evil, or as representations of objective laws in conflict, but as autonomous beings grounded in their own morality, in their own laws. Western society habitually presents itself as the society of the rights of man; but before a man could have rights, he had to constitute himself such and to be considered such; that could not happen without the long experience of the European arts and particularly of the art of the novel, which teaches the reader to be curious about others and to try to comprehend truths that differ from his own. (Kundera 1996b, 7–8)

Kundera (quoting E. M. Cioran) also refers to European society as the "society of the novel" and Europeans as "children of the novel" (1996b, 8).

Kundera places the roots of the novel in the wellspring of European civilization: ancient Greece. In *The Art of the Novel*, Kundera, borrowing from Husserl's 1935 Prague and Vienna lectures on the crisis of European humanity, notes that "European" denotes not (primarily) geographical space but a "spiritual identity" rooted in ancient Greek philosophy. Kundera cites Husserl to the effect that Greek philosophy "for the first time in history, apprehended the world (the world as a whole) as a question to be answered. It

[5] For a fuller discussion of the life-world (*die Lebenswelt*), see Husserl 1970, 110–11.

interrogated the world not in order to satisfy this or that practical need but because 'the passion to know had seized mankind'" (Kundera 1993, 3).

Husserl had returned to the origin of Europe's "spiritual identity" in order to understand the roots of its modern crisis. For Husserl, modern European humanity had lost its way as a result of the triumph of Western mathematical and empirical science. Kundera remarks: "The roots of the crisis lay for [Husserl] at the beginning of the modern era, in Galileo and Descartes, in the one-sided nature of the European sciences, which reduced the world to a mere object of technical and mathematical investigation and put the concrete world of life, *die Lebenswelt* [life-world] as he called it, beyond their horizon" (Kundera 1993, 3).

Kundera follows Husserl and Heidegger in accusing modernity of neglecting the permanent horizon of the human life-world in favour of objects that can be ordered and quantified. But Kundera also believes that the novel is the true heir of Western philosophy because it alone subjects the life-world to unremitting exploration and questioning. Indeed, Kundera remarks that all the "great existential themes" of modern philosophy had been "unveiled, displayed, illuminated by four centuries of the novel" (Kundera 1993, 5). In short, it means that the modern West's obsession with technical problems and the novelistic exploration of the life-world come from the same roots: the desire to know the world.

Modernity, Janus-like, has two faces. It represents the era of Galileo and Descartes but is also the era of the novel, the tradition created by Miguel Cervantes, which has continued to "scrutinize man's concrete life and protect it against 'the forgetting of being' " and to hold the "world of life" under a permanent light (Kundera 1993, 5).

If the horizons and potential of human life are permanent, the "forgetting of being" means the failure to take the most mundane situations and problems of human life seriously and to believe that they can be quantified as mere technical problems amenable to technical solutions. The art of the novel opens a different horizon. It shows us that the desire for mastery is rooted in mankind's natural alienation and incompleteness in the face of time and mortality. Coming to some accommodation with our alienation and the desire to master it is the perennial question facing both political philosophy and novelists.

Post-Postmodernism (or, the Return of the Socratic Injunction to Know Thyself)

In this sense, the art of the novel seems quintessentially postmodern in its hostility to what Jean-François Lyotard calls "legitimating narratives" of rationalism. But Kundera (like Havel) is unwilling to simply embrace the postmodern critique of rationalism.

If the rational exploration of the life-world is impossible, the history and art of the novel would devolve into solipsism. And Kundera insists that every novel reveals that there are certain permanent problems or questions associated with human life and that any attempt to evade these questions or stray beyond the limits imposed by them invites tragedy. As Kundera writes in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, "the only truly serious questions are ones that even a child can formulate. Only the most naive of questions are truly serious. They are questions with no answers. A question with no answer is a barrier that cannot be breached. In other words, it is questions with no answers that set the limits of human possibilities, describe the boundaries of human existence" (1999, 139).

The questions that the novel, as such, asks (What is an individual? Wherein does his identity reside? By what, exactly, is the self defined?) are apolitical in character but lead us to reflect deeply on the meaning of our "pursuit of happiness" and the rights of the individual that circumscribe the powers of the state. If the novel assumes anything, it is that we must preserve the pre-political sphere of private life in which we embark on our personal journeys of exploration and discovery. This distinction itself presupposes the goodness of individual rights and the distinction between public and private life that undergirds Western society.[6]

Modernity's unmatched material progress often distracts us from these permanent human questions, making it more difficult to understand ourselves—and why we often remain deeply dissatisfied in what is, by historical standards, a veritable Garden of Eden. By linking permanent questions with modern circumstances, the novel provides man with a map to his own being, a way of scaling the distance from the present into the past, and looking forward into possible futures.[7] It is also a reminder of the often tragic failures to transcend these permanent questions through ideologies of salvation. Like Heidegger, Kundera reminds us that to be human means to face the mystery of being-in-the-world—a mystery that can never be solved because it is not a thing but, as Kundera himself says, a possibility or a question.[8] It is the most serious question that we can face, and it cannot be avoided.

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[6] The logos of the novel reflects the logos of the world.

[7] Kundera says that for the poet (and presumably, for the novelist also), "writing means breaking through a wall behind which something immutable … lies hidden in darkness…. However, in a world of perpetual change, is the immutable not a mere illusion? No. Every situation is of man's making and can only contain what man contains; thus one can imagine that the situation (and all its metaphysical implications) has existed as a human possibility 'for a long long time' " (1993, 115).

[8] Heidegger and Kundera use similar language to describe human life as a possibility

Like ancient Greek philosophy, the elenchus of the novel drives us toward a quest for self-knowledge. If we are to take this quest seriously, we must reject the comforting illusions of Cartesian self-mastery or Rortean postmodernism that believes that the playfulness of poets is enough satisfaction for human beings. Neither approach explicates the kinds of beings that we are or justifies the liberal political order that both take for granted. Kundera's novels force us to confront the paradox of human embodiment: we are a soul within a body that is always trying to become either pure body or pure soul and thereby escape its own alienation.

The Role of the Novel in Modern Democracies

Premodern philosophers recognized that the longing to escape human alienation—to become either gods or animals—was impossible. But the longing itself could not be eradicated. Instead, it was the role of philosophers to (it was hoped) temper or educate that desire so that it did not lead to political tragedy.

At its best, the novel can provide a similar type of education in a society that believes that it is impossible (or perhaps just imprudent) to try to educate human desires. As such, the novel recognizes the peculiar goodness of an existence that must be lived in light of its own limitations.

For instance, in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera explores the theme of history as a horizon beyond which human beings become less than human. The main protagonist of this novel, Tamina, is in search of her journals, which are "love letters" not only to her dead husband but to a cherished lost era of her life. A Czech émigré, Tamina is set adrift in a European landscape where no one is in search of understanding any more, either of the world or of one's fellow citizens. Tamina's attempt to recover her journals is a metaphor for the attempt to recover the life-world in all its concreteness, a novel-like project that, for all its flaws, defines her as the novel's beloved heroine. Tamina's quest makes her an island of remembering in a sea of laughter and forgetting.

The problem of modern liberal regimes is not that they specifically produce alienation. But they make an implicit claim that alienation can be

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or, as Heidegger would say, a "clearing" where being can show itself. Kundera's language echoes Heideggerian themes: "A novel examines not reality but existence. And existence is not what has occurred, existence is the realm of human possibilities, everything that man can become, everything he's capable of. Novelists draw up *the map of existence* by discovering this or that human possibility. But again, to exist means: 'being-in-the world.' Thus *both* the character *and* his world must be understood as *possibilities*" (1993, 43; emphasis in original).

conquered in ways that it cannot. Because human beings cannot find escape from alienation in the purely private or material facets of their lives, democracies open themselves to criticism from illiberal regimes and movements that recognize the deep longing of citizens for an escape from alienation. In short, liberal regimes solve one political problem while opening themselves up to another. With that in mind, we now turn to Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, through a close reading of three of its most important chapters.

Reading Novels as Reading Ourselves

The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, like all of Kundera's novels, is extraordinarily thematic, projecting the sense that it was not so much written as orchestrated. It has seven parts; in the exact center of the novel, its fourth part, we are introduced to the character Tamina, for whom and to whom the novel is written. Kundera describes the work as "a novel in the form of variations": "The variations follow each other like the various stages of a voyage leading into the interior of a theme, the interior of a thought, the interior of a single, unique situation, the understanding of which recedes from my sight into the distance" (1996a, 227).[9]

Of its seven parts, four deal explicitly with "forgetting" of one kind or another (part 1, "Lost Letters"; part 2, "Mama"; part 4, "Lost Letters"; part 6, "The Angels"); the three remaining sections deal with laughter (part 3, "The Angels"; part 5, "Litost"; part 7, "The Border"). For the sake of brevity, we will concentrate on a close reading of three: parts 1, 4, and 7 (the beginning, middle, and end).

Throughout the novel, Kundera reflects on two different kinds of forgetting. One is the inability of the human mind to recall the past (or even fully understand the present) in all its complexity and depth. In this sense, life recedes from us even as we experience it. The second type of forgetting is not a failure of memory but a self-conscious act of setting horizons of meaning—what Nietzsche would call "living within a horizon," which Kundera depicts as a reflection of the inherent human drive for autonomy and self-mastery. The second type of forgetting is not merely a temptation but is a reaction and even denial of mortality.

The duality of forgetting is reflected in the novel's first part, Lost Letters, set in Communist Czechoslovakia. Communism imposes forgetting on Czechoslovakia through the overt manipulation of history, but Kundera also

[9] Unless otherwise noted, page numbers in parentheses refer to *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

shows how, through the central character of Mirek, the attempt to rewrite history into a closed horizon or linear narrative reflects our desire to control our own personal narratives. The most powerful attraction of Communism (or any salvific ideology) is that it flatters our own sense of self-importance, as its adherents are lionized as the angelic vanguard of utopia.

The tyranny of closed horizons becomes even more explicit in part 3, where Kundera explains the attempt to render the universe into a closed ideological system as the laughter of angels. Laughter in this sense is sublimely serious, an affirmation of being (including human thought and history) as wholly rational and self-justifying. Anything that rejects the teleology of divine laughter is non-being and can be eliminated without thought or regret—like dissidents relegated to the Gulag. Angelic laughter, Kundera warns us, sanctions the most barbaric atrocities.

Kundera also describes another form of laughter: the laughter of devils. Diabolic laughter rejects the premise that the universe is rational. This is an understandable response to the genocidal ideologies of the twentieth century and is a response taken by postmodern critics like Richard Rorty. Tyranny, according to many postmoderns, is a function of the claim to know absolute truth; so by deconstructing these claims, we can subvert the potential for political tyranny.

Kundera takes a different tack. The rejection of all horizons of meaning—the rational constructs upon which individual rights and Western democracy rest—makes us more, not less, vulnerable to totalitarian claims. Throughout the novel, we see that shame, modesty, and even pride allow us to defend ourselves from the pressures of public conformity. The distinction between public and private is both the precondition for the existence of the novel and the political precondition for liberalism.

The value of, and the need for, rational traditions that ground particular human beings in the West is displayed in part 7, "The Border." The main character in that chapter, Jan, lives in a depressing postmodern paradise where human beings no longer seek to understand themselves in light of the political, artistic, or religious traditions of Western civilization. In this sense, Eros has been completely privatized or liberated from its need to project itself into the deeper systems of meaning. But citizens in Jan's world echo Nietzsche's last men, who "no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man." They hide the meaning of death from themselves, "solving" the problem of alienation at the expense of depriving their lives of dignity and purpose.

Is there some way that human beings can avoid the temptation toward either angelic laughter or diabolic nihilism? This question is raised through the character of Tamina, who (as we noted earlier) appears in the novel's

central chapter (part 4), midway between forgetting (part 1) and laughter (part 7). Tamina's story represents the fragility and goodness of human life and self-understanding in the face of time and death—but also the diminishing space for such an existence in modern society.

In the imaginary terrain of the novel, we find compassion for human beings who are deeply flawed but still capable of surprising moments of self-discovery, moral reflection, love, and friendship. After reading *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, readers can reflect on the distinctions between chance and necessity, between reason and will, that are the hallmarks of human life but are often invisible to us in our engaged lives.

In that sense, the novel teaches us that "the good of the world" (as Kundera puts it) depends not on a triumph of the angels over the devils but on a balance between the desire for rational self-mastery or pure will (devils). Novel writing reflects this balance: novelists create a narrative that is both planned and surprising, rational and emergent. The novel stands as a work of meaning on its own because its meaning evolves in dialogue with its readers. And that meaning extends beyond the particular horizons of time and death. That reflection, along with the value of that reflection, is only visible in a society that celebrates the space in which the private exploration of the life-world is possible—a moderating education for Eros in liberal regimes that all too often celebrate the claims of Eros unbound.

Politics as Reflected Eros

In part 1, "Lost Letters," we meet Mirek, a dissident and former Communist living in Communist Czechoslovakia in 1971, only a few years after the Soviet invasion and collapse of the Prague Spring. Mirek is struggling to recover (and destroy) his old love letters to Zdena, a woman who remains faithful to her beloved Party.

Mirek's decision to recover his love letters is driven by his desire for political martyrdom: he faces imminent arrest by the secret police for his vocal attacks on the regime. That martyrdom would be undermined by his old love letters because Mirek wants to shape his life like a beautiful work of art, which entails not only loving the right ideals (and people) but *being seen* as loving them by a public audience. That Mirek wants to edit his own history is an irony, given the predilection of Communist regimes for deleting people and things that undermine the regime's narrative. Both Mirek and Communism seek to redefine the past and shape the future in service to a beautiful (but illusory) ideal.

Mirek knows that Communism is a regime based upon forgetting, and he proclaims to his friends, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of

memory against forgetting." Mirek's friends think that he uses this motto to justify his "carelessness": he keeps a meticulous journal of the minutes of all their political meetings. Mirek defends his behavior by emphasizing that nothing they are doing is illegal, at least according to the constitution, and that "to hide and feel guilty would be the beginning of defeat." In truth, Mirek is not trying to defend the rule of law. He is preserving his own historical role for a future audience, with little regard for how the discovery of his journals will affect his family and friends. Mirek will gladly sacrifice his present—the here and now of the life-world—in service to his self-image.

After a quarter-century, Mirek remembers very little of his affair with Zdena. When they first met, they were ardent young Communists, and their affair mingled love and politics. Mirek recalls two incidents in particular: the first was that Zdena once showed up for a date in histrionics over the death of a high-ranking Russian official whom she knew only by reputation. His other memory was of the first time they made love: afterward, Zdena accused him of making love like an "intellectual." The attraction of Communism is that it allows Mirek and Zdena to celebrate their own role in history. At the same time, it inverts lived human experience, as the most abstract relationships (the distant Communist official) become personalized, while the most intimate relationships (lovemaking) become abstract—all in service to an "idyll of justice for all" (11). (Communism understood that if a lie can be made beautiful enough, it will be believed.) Human beings, Kundera says, have always longed for a beautiful idyll where "everyone is a note" fused in seamless harmony, and "anyone who refuses to be one" can be crushed and tossed aside "like a flea."

Mirek may be a dissident, but hasn't liberated himself from his youthful desire to carve his likeness onto history's façade. As he drives to meet Zdena (to persuade her to give back the letters) and sees that the secret police are brazenly following him, he realizes that "his destiny was rapidly coming to its end and he must do everything to make it perfect and beautiful" (13).

Ironically, Mirek wants to expunge Zdena from his past not because she remains a Communist but because she has an excruciatingly large and ugly nose. Kundera says that after he left Zdena, Mirek married a beautiful woman "whose loveliness gave him self-confidence"; after her death left him a widower (another kind of martyrdom), beautiful women flocked to him. Mirek realized that this was because women didn't really yearn for handsome men but for men who had been with beautiful women. Loving Communism, with its beautiful ideals, is less damning for Mirek than loving an ugly woman. Mirek thinks that as long as he presents a beautiful façade, going from beauty to beauty, he will attract new admirers. The political parallel is

again instructive: many intellectuals who deplore Communism's crimes still celebrate and defend its beautiful ideals (justice and equality for all).

But what if the beautiful ideal is only a lie concealing an ugly truth? What if human beings cannot relate to their own lives, much less to history, the way that a "sculptor [relates] to his statue or a novelist to his novel"? If human lives cannot be arranged like notes in a symphony, then Communism's ideals are themselves deeply distorting and problematic. Their beauty masks a deep ugliness.

As Václav Havel noted in his classic essay *The Power of the Powerless*, Communism can never understand or present the truth of life on its own terms. The more it tries to make human beings at home in a beautiful lie, the more it reminds them that they are living within a lie. Similarly, Mirek's attempt to create a perfect destiny for himself by rewriting his erotic past fails because he understands neither himself nor Zdena.

As we might expect, Zdena refuses to give Mirek his old letters and practically begs him to publicly recant his dissident views, an effort he interprets as a ham-handed attempt by the secret police to record a confession. But Zdena begs him to save himself because she still loves him. In fact, Zdena's fidelity to the Party is only a pathetic attempt to show Mirek her capacity for undying faithfulness. While Mirek is willing to sacrifice his private life for his public destiny, Zdena uses her public life only as a symbol of her capacity for private attachment. However wrongheaded she may be, Zdena is really only an unrequited lover. At root, Mirek and Zdena are still repeating the errors of their youth: confusing the beautiful abstractions of history with the real satisfactions and challenges of ordinary human lives.

Driving home after his failed confrontation with Zdena, a red sports car cuts off the secret police car trailing Mirek's car, and he manages to lose his pursuers for several hours. Alone at last (separated from his imaginary future), Mirek experiences a profound sense of relief and starts, for the first and only time in his life, to observe his surroundings. As he does so, every aspect of the small town he is driving through leaps out in beautiful detail. When he pauses at a railroad station, it reminds him of a small white house where he and Zdena had once spent a summer vacation. He remembers walking up to that house, looking into its window, and seeing her. He remembers that, ugly as Zdena was, seeing her generated in him a feeling of "immense love." It is that ugliness—and his capacity for loving ugliness—that Mirek doesn't want anyone to know about and that he himself has forgotten.

A moment later, Mirek erases this memory from his mind and continues along his self-ordained route, until "the world's space was [again] merely an obstacle slowing down his activity" (31). When he finally arrives home,

Mirek discovers that the secret police have arrived ahead of him and have already searched his house. One of the officers, poring through Mirek's meticulous journals of his and his friends' political meetings, remarks that Mirek doesn't "have much consideration for [his] friends"—in other words, Mirek's journals will ensure long prison sentences for his friends.

Kundera's subtle depiction of Eros's role in politics reminds us that the will to forget is rooted in our desire to love and be seen as loving the beautiful, and thus to become beautiful and admirable ourselves. This desire, left unchecked, erases the real space of life and replaces it with ideological abstractions.

Kundera ends Mirek's story with this terse observation: "[The secret police] made Mirek sign the list of seized items and then asked him and his son to come along with them. The trial took place after a year of preventive detention. Mirek was sentenced to six years, his son to two years, and ten of their friends to one to six years in prison" (34).

Not only has Mirek sacrificed his friends and family to achieve his destiny, but that destiny is a failure: Mirek does not become a martyr, and is eventually released from prison to return to his more mundane existence. The irony of Kundera's ending to Mirek's story is that it is not an ending. Mirek is returned to his life, to the everyday space that he treats as an obstacle.

It is instructive to compare, on the one hand, the voice of Kundera in Mirek's story with, on the other hand, Mirek's story itself. Unlike Mirek (or Mirek's journals), Kundera's novelistic account of Mirek's life places politics in the context of the lives of those men and women whose passions and decisions created the tragic history of Communist Czechoslovakia. Our capacity for loving beautiful abstractions (that promise an escape from alienation) is revealed as vanity—and our capacity for loving the "ugly," the mundane space of everyday life, as the precondition for real happiness.

An Island in a Sea of Forgetting

As noted earlier, Tamina is the central character in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, and her story is told in the central chapter of the novel (part 4). She is a young widow and Czech émigré who lives in a West where love no longer seems possible because Eros has been turned completely inward.

Kundera illustrates Tamina's isolation by the fact that no one around her bothers to ask her about her life (she works as a waitress in a café). As he develops her narrative, Kundera attributes the disappearance of Eros in Western culture to graphomania, a phenomenon whereby individuals consider themselves to be authors surrounded by an unbreakable tower of their own words—an outgrowth, Kundera says, of the worst form of the will to power.

Unable to genuinely communicate or understand one another, citizens in Kundera's Western dystopia become increasingly lonely and bellicose.

Tamina and her husband, Pavel, fled Czechoslovakia for Western Europe shortly after the Russian invasion in 1968. A few years after their immigration, Pavel died. However, Tamina's love for her husband is so powerful that she tries to painstakingly reconstruct her memories of their life together. Unlike Mirek, Tamina recognizes that human memory is incapable of recording human life with complete fidelity, especially as her memories of the past dim and blur. And Tamina doesn't want to recover only the beautiful moments of her marriage—she wants to recover everything, warts and all.

Eros, in her case, drives her to try to reconstruct the life-world by retrieving the eleven journals that she kept during her marriage but was forced to leave behind when she emigrated with Pavel. The journals are with her mother-in-law in Prague. But Tamina has no desire to return to her homeland, so she wants to persuade someone to go to Prague and bring them back.

Kundera's account of Tamina's quest to retrieve her past is ultimately tragic because the past is not a realm in which we can live. Indeed, Tamina's plight—the inability to recover the past in all its concreteness—leads the reader to understand that the life-world always recedes from us to some degree. At the root of human experience is a longing for completion that cannot be satisfied—an erotic mystery. This realization provides a check on the pursuit of self-mastery and embrace of political idylls, insofar as we grow to understand that such a quest is the result of our denial of the reality of temporality and the finality of death and the real space in which we live. Love is the ground of both memory and forgetting.

Kundera writes that "everyone likes Tamina." Why? "Because she knows how to listen to people" (110). Tamina may be the only person who remembers how to listen in a society that is flooded with an endless stream of voices clamoring for attention. The characters who share her fictional journey don't evince any genuine interest in one another; and their indifference represents a retreat into pure but joyless subjectivity. Tamina only breaks her self-imposed silence when her friend Bibi mentions to her that she will be going to Prague on vacation, which Tamina sees as an opportunity for Bibi to retrieve her journals.

In an attempt to cement her friendship with Bibi, Tamina gets her to talk about herself (not a difficult task) and discovers that she is an aspiring writer. As a gesture of goodwill, Tamina arranges for Bibi to meet a local writer (albeit a very bad one) named Banaka at a small gathering in Tamina's apartment. There, Bibi is drawn into a discussion with Banaka and a philosophy professor on the nature of writing and the history of the novel.

Bibi at first asserts that she wants to write a novel about the world from her perspective. Banaka is annoyed by this idea and launches into a diatribe against novels in general. Banaka says to Bibi, "Just think about what the novel is. About the multitude of different characters. Are you trying to make us believe that you know all about them? That you know what they look like, what they think, how they are dressed, the kind of family they come from? Admit it, you're not interested in any of that" (123).

Actually, Banaka is right—Bibi really doesn't care about any of those things. She wants to write a book entirely in her own voice, a confessional tract. Banaka is merely encouraging her to drop the pretense that she is doing anything else. However, Banaka isn't just railing against novelistic verisimilitude. He categorically denies the ability of the writer (or anyone else) to empathize with or understand any other human being. He believes that any attempt to speak in the voice of the other, or to use the imagination to transcend subjectivity, is actually a Machiavellian power play. He says: "All anyone can do … is give a report on oneself. Anything else is an abuse of power. Anything else is a lie" (124).

Banaka expresses the underlying philosophy of a society that has forgotten how to listen. "Giving a report on oneself" eliminates the risk of being interrupted, challenged, or ridiculed. In the name of surrendering all power (refusing to speak in the name of the other), Banaka's stance actually creates a position of irrefutable subjectivity (no one else ever has the right to speak for me or on my behalf), denying the possibility of novel writing or democratic politics.

Banaka's "unmasking" of the novel form stems from a Romantic bifurcation between the internal experience of the subject and the external world. Stripped of external adventures, or commitments that transcend the private realm, human beings turn to writing to hold a mirror up to their own souls, since they lack the mirroring that other political or civic engagements could provide. In so doing, Banaka sets his own soul adrift from the world around it.

Echoing Banaka (but not understanding him), Bibi says that, "looked at from the outside, I haven't experienced anything. Looked at from the outside! But I have a feeling that my experience from the inside is worth writing about and could be interesting to anybody" (124). Bibi seems to think that writing is a way of displaying her inner life that would be "interesting to anybody." But, as Banaka describes it, writing is an expression of alienation.

Nonetheless, Kundera allows Bibi to accidentally hit the crux of the issue: if anyone could find Bibi's life interesting, he or she would have to do so "from the inside"—by adopting Bibi's point of view (as readers of novels do). This seeing—from the outside to the inside through the mediation of the

novel—is exactly what affirms the ability of the writer to articulate and readers to sympathize with perspectives other than their own. By implicitly laying bare the flaws in Banaka's and Bibi's understanding of novel writing, Kundera defends the assumptions undergirding novel writing and liberal democracy.

Bibi's desire to write and Banaka's despair that no one reads his books testify to the soul's erotic longing for both self-expression and true communication, which requires both speaking and listening. When this connection is severed, the external world (the body and its experiences) is alienated from internal experience (the soul), and the whole project of writing (and liberal politics) founders. Kundera illuminates this situation by observing that Bibi cannot bring herself to write, and Banaka only writes abysmally bad books.

Kundera's description of the earlier exchange between Banaka and the philosophy professor leads to a deeper explanation of them in terms of the modern phenomenon that he calls "graphomania." Kundera says that he once encountered a taxi driver in Paris who claimed that, due to a war injury, he had lost the ability to sleep and now spent all his extra time writing. Kundera asks him why he writes—perhaps to leave a chronicle for his children? As a family memento? The taxi driver replies, "For my children? They're not interested in that. I'm writing a book. I think it could help a lot of people" (126).

This conversation gives Kundera an insight into "the essence of the writer's occupation." He says, "We write books because our children aren't interested in us. We address ourselves to an anonymous world because our wives plug their ears when we try to speak to them" (126). Kundera agrees with Bibi that writing springs from an impulse for self-revelation and recognition; unfortunately, those who know us best (our wives and children) have little need of our written confessions. Consequently, we turn to a world of unknown readers who, we hope, are more receptive (or at least more curious) than our normal confidants.

However, Kundera says, some might call the taxi driver a "graphomaniac," not a writer. But what is a graphomaniac? Kundera says, "Graphomania is not a desire to write letters, personal diaries, or family chronicles (to write for oneself or one's close relations) but a desire to write books (to have a public of unknown readers). In that sense, the taxi driver and Goethe share the same passion. What distinguishes Goethe from the taxi driver is not a difference in passions but one passion's different results" (127).

The essential distinction Kundera seems to make here is that a lover, or a diarist, is someone who, when he writes, retains a fundamental distinction between public and private experiences. If he shares his experiences, it is only

within a limited circle where he expects to find sympathy and understanding. A graphomaniac, on the other hand, is someone who erases the distinction between public and private by sharing his experiences with a vast impersonal audience.

What are we to make of Kundera's comparison of Goethe and the taxi driver? In *The Art of the Novel*, Kundera describes graphomania as "the mania not to create a form but to impose oneself on others" and "the most grotesque expression of the will to power" (Kundera 1993, 131). Banaka's description of writing is best understood in those terms: an attempt to force one's voice into the ears of others without any reciprocity (hence it is the "most grotesque expression of the will to power"). Goethe shares the same passion as the graphomaniac, but the difference between them is that of form or, as Kundera says, "one passion's different results."

Kundera thereby makes a distinction not only in the intended audience of an author's works but in the form or result that a passion takes. Every author (whether lover or graphomaniac) desires recognition. The lover writes in the first-person voice but for a private (and reciprocal) audience. This sets the lover apart. Goethe and the graphomaniac (say, Banaka or the taxi driver) share a passion very different from that of the lover because of their desire for public recognition, but each also produces very different results. We can see this when we consider the examples that Kundera uses. Goethe (as a novelist, poet, and playwright) cloaks his voice in the form of his art and therefore allows for understanding and recognition to occur that is not dictated solely by the voice of the author; it is dialogic. Graphomaniacs write only to impose their voice on the public—to "capture the ear of the other." Modernity breeds graphomania because of the increasing individual isolation and narcissism that modern society fosters.

Is Kundera a graphomaniac? Kundera playfully puts himself in the same camp but also reveals that he is a "lover" and a reader of Goethe. He admits to graphomania in a novel that decries graphomaniacs. Unlike the graphomaniac, the novelist's universe is not a universe of words but a particular vision of the life-world that can be shared and appreciated by countless other readers—without denying the validity of other ways of exploring and seeing the life-world. Without the reader's understanding of the true meaning of the novel, the novelist's erotic desire for recognition from his readers remains incomplete. It is love letter that never reaches the beloved—a lost letter. Placed in a particular tradition, and in dialogue with that tradition and his own readers (lovers), the isolation of graphomania is shattered.

Hugo, one of Tamina's companions, is secretly in love with her. After Bibi reneges on her promise to go to Prague and retrieve Tamina's journals, Hugo volunteers to make the journey. Eventually, Hugo tries to seduce

Tamina by showing her an article on politics that he has written and convincing her of its value, thus convincing her of his own value. Like Mirek and Zdena, Hugo lets the abstractions of ideology stand in for private emotions. By putting a wall of words between himself and Tamina, he tries to reduce his own anxiety in the event of rejection. In contrast to Tamina's silence, which is really an invitation for someone to ask her a question about her life and enter into a dialogue, Hugo tries to overwhelm Tamina with a cannonade of words. Rather than acknowledge that he is facing a woman with a unique history and personality of her own, Kundera says that Hugo tries to "imprison [Tamina] in the universe of his blood and thoughts," that is, what he already thinks he knows and understands (157).

Frustrated by her prolonged indifference, Hugo makes a last desperate feint to engage her attention, by refusing to go to Prague for her. Tamina, shattered, gives up any hope of ever regaining her notebooks, and returns to her life at the café in a shroud of silence.

Beyond the Last Border

In part 7, the last chapter, Kundera returns to the phenomenon of laughter and examines the fate of Western civilization after it has broken continuity with its great erotic roots in an attempt to reach "perfect agreement with being."

The two main characters in this section are Jan, an exile (probably from Czechoslovakia), and his friend and occasional lover, Edwige, who considers herself beyond good and evil and rejects the dichotomies of rationalized Western civilization—embracing a life free of guilt or the intimation of tragedy. By the end of Jan and Edwige's story, however, Kundera makes it clear that the absence of genuine erotic longings and attachments beyond the self is deeply dehumanizing.

Jan and Edwige's relationship is not "going anywhere." Their sex is without passion, and they certainly do not aspire to marriage or children. Freed of any constraints on their erotic activities, they are also cut off from the great questions that used to define Eros in Western history. (After an evening of passionate intellectual discussion, Edwige will fall silent, smile a blissful smile, and Jan will feel compelled to make love to her. He doesn't really want to make love to her but feels that they have established a pattern that he cannot escape.)

It is also far from evident that Edwige actually enjoys making love. Kundera tells us that Jan has always watched women's faces while making love to them. He imagines that their faces are the canvas on which their passions project a reel of riveting scenes: "turmoil, expectations, explosions,

pain, cries, emotion, and evil" (265). But Edwige's face remains a blank screen, reflecting neither pleasure nor distaste. Edwige's lack of erotic engagement signifies (for her) that she has attained (or believes that she has attained) perfect agreement with being. Her silence signals irony rather than desire because everything worthwhile has been said or done already. Kundera's lovers are merely playing out a drama from which all the drama has been exhausted.

Like Mirek and Zdena, Jan and Edwige never really understand each other, and Jan never feels the need to correct that misunderstanding because nothing is at stake. Whereas Mirek and Zdena misunderstood their relationship because they viewed it through the lens of history, Jan and Edwige live beyond history's border. Kundera thus suggests that true love and Eros are only possible within a tradition that provides Eros with meaning and direction (and also conflict). After noting that Jan and Edwige have reached "perfect agreement," Kundera tells a short parable on human history.

History, he says, is told from the perspective of humanity and therefore may ignore much that is more significant from the perspective of the planet as a whole. For instance, over the last two hundred years, "the blackbird has abandoned the woods to become a city bird" (267). Kundera says that this is incomparably more important than shifts in political borders because a "shift in the relationships among the various kinds of creation (fish, birds, humans, plants) is a shift of a higher order than changes in relations among various groups of the same kind…. [W]hen the blackbird betrayed nature to follow humans into their artificial, unnatural world, something changed in the organic structure of the planet" (268). To put this another way, the horizon that separates human beings from animals has gradually disappeared. Another way of articulating this—one that Edwige would undoubtedly embrace—is that human beings are just part of the natural world, animals with no special status.

Perhaps if human beings come to understand themselves merely as particularly clever animals, they will cease to be explicitly violent or tyrannical because they will no longer try to achieve anything beyond immediate gratification. Nonetheless, Kundera suggests that the absence of conflict or longing—the search for true understanding or communication—also ends the great dramas of religion, philosophy, and art that have traditionally illuminated human existence.

This is not an end to history so much as it is a return to prehistory. Kundera alludes to this by saying that Jan's favourite book at this time was the ancient novel *Daphnis and Chloe*. Daphnis and Chloe are two children who represent longing without sex (Eros before the intrusion of sexuality—that is, pure longing), before the advent of the grand drama of history in

Western civilization (269). Jan and Edwige, like Daphnis and Chloe, lack the metaphysical trappings of shame and modesty, good and evil, that once gave Eros purpose and form.

Ironically, when Eros is stripped from the constraints imposed on it by Western morality—when it loses the weight of shame and guilt—it becomes worse than evil: it becomes boring. Kundera shows this by discussing how, in the midst of Jan and Edwige's affair, European beaches were crowded with bare-breasted women, and the population was divided between "partisans and adversaries of bared breasts." On television, representatives of every intellectual camp debated the arguments for and against bared breasts (273).

The Clevises, Jan's friends, were progressives and therefore in favour of bared breasts because it symbolized "humanity shaking of the bonds of slavery." Still, Jan and Papa Clevis joke that bared breasts are not a problem if they are attractive ones. The Clevises' young daughter, though, objects to the distinction between attractive and unattractive breasts because it transforms women into sexual objects. She claims that women who choose to go topless do so for their own reasons. Although the Clevises are uncomfortable with such a young girl (aged fourteen) making such an argument (what does she know about sex?), she does make what appears to be the crucial argument in favour of going topless: she demands that men not react to bared breasts as if they were objects of men's longing. They should view all bodies as just bodies, that is, without erotic attraction. She believes that this asserts the fullest degree of women's autonomy, since women will decide when and where they wish to be thought of as sexual.

But the demand that men not find women's nude bodies arousing is, in fact, a demand that men view women as pure objects. To view naked bodies without judgment (ugly or beautiful) or attraction, we would have to pretend that they were in the same class of objects as cars or chairs—or blackbirds.

Shame and modesty reaffirm the linkage between the individual soul and the body—the body is clothed not because it is meaningless but because it is deeply meaningful. In the Old Testament, Adam and Eve hide their nakedness from God after they gain knowledge of good and evil, not before, presaging the expulsion from the Garden of Eden and mankind's loss of "perfect agreement with being." Clothing thus affirms individuality and the unique status of the human body and the soul it embodies. To view a naked body as "just a body" implies that all bodies (and thus all souls) are the same.

The assault on modesty and shame goes hand in hand with the growing invisibility of death. Jan's friend Passer (French, "to pass") is incurably ill, dying slowly. Everyone around him is amazed and pleased by how well he seems to accept the inevitable, without any remorse, anger, or fear. The irony, however, is that Passer doesn't know that he is dying because his doctors

have never told him that he has a fatal disease. In fact, they tell him "incredulous lies" about his illness. Indeed, what Passer's friends really admire about him is that he is dying without making anyone else around him uncomfortable—that is, in ways that might force them to confront their own mortality (277). The cost of perfect agreement with being—being at home in a body that is the same as any other body—is shameless narcissism.

Two seminal events conclude *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*: first, Jan's performance at an orgy; and second, his excursion to a topless beach, the last scene in the novel. Both events illustrate Kundera's observation that modern human beings—through a process of laugher and forgetting—are slowly crossing the border that separates human beings from animals.

The orgy is orchestrated by Jan's acquaintance Barbara, whose house is "famous for its collective sex entertainments." For years, Jan has declined Barbara's invitations to attend her Roman debaucheries because he "dreads malicious gossip," but, since he is leaving the country for a job in the United States, he accepts this time. The orgy at Barbara's house is conducted with deadly seriousness—and thus becomes all the more hilarious. Barbara darts about the house like a frenetic general, dispensing commands, making delicate adjustments to the positioning of her guests, trying to imbue the proceedings with a solemn air (304). Finally, Jan catches the eye of one of the other revelers who is also watching Barbara's ministrations with more than a little irony. The stranger comments to Jan that Barbara's plans never quite work, since "Barbara is like a clockmaker who has to keep moving the hands of his clock himself" (306).

Human beings, of course, do move by themselves. If we don't, it is because we lack the desire to move—in this case, Eros. And Eros is palpably lacking from Barbara's Prussian orgies because passion has been stripped away from sex. In the midst of his own sexual calisthenics, Jan sees that his new acquaintance is performing the exact same sexual maneuver. The two men lock eyes and cannot help but laugh, for each is able to see, as if in a mirror, the utter ridiculousness of what they are doing. Soon they are both shaking with repressed laughter. Kundera says that they both "knew that laughter was as sacrilegious here as it is in church when the priest is elevating the host. But from the moment that comparison passed though both their heads, their only desire was to laugh. They were too weak. Laughter was stronger. Their bodies were seized by irresistible convulsions" (307). Seconds later, Barbara asks Jan to leave.

Perfect agreement with being is risible because it takes most seriously what is most laughable. Kundera thus teaches us that freedom from alienation is sublimely ridiculous. Without laughter—at ourselves and at our own aspirations—we would be unable to see the tragic reality of Passer's non-

death and the ugly narcissism of the society around him. Laughter liberates us to see that we are at risk of becoming more like caricatures of animals than human beings. A little diabolic laughter may be just what our world, obsessed with angelic visions of the future, really needs.

Just before leaving for the United States, Jan takes Edwige to a nude beach. Standing on the beach, Edwige says that she does not accept any "tradition that burdened mankind" and that "[s]he refused to acknowledge that a naked face is innocent and a naked behind shameless"; in other words, Edwige demands that humans become shameless animals. Standing on the beach with Edwige and dozens of other naked bodies, Jan was "gripped by a strange sadness, and from that sadness as from a fog an even stranger thought emerged: it was in a crowd and naked that Jews went to the gas chambers. He neither understood why that image kept coming back to him nor just what it meant. Maybe it meant that at that moment, the Jews had also been on the other side of the border and thus that nakedness is the uniform worn by men and women on the other side. That nakedness is a shroud" (310). Nakedness is a shroud for individuality, the prelude to death.

Suddenly, Jan is struck with a yearning to go back to the origin of Eros, to Daphnis and Chloe lying next to each other, or "the mysterious, the incomprehensible and miraculous arousal of a man before a woman's body." And so he calls out, "Daphnis!" Once again, Edwige misunderstands him. She interprets his outcry to be a desire to return to "the time before Christianity crippled mankind." For the last time, he declines to correct her, and they remain in perfect but illusory agreement.

Between Angels and Devils

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera shows how human beings exist in a borderland between angels and devils, between longing for absolute meaning that crushes us beneath its weight and the unbearable lightness of being that drives us to despair. Our conceptions of individual dignity and human rights are balanced on an equally fragile border between the body and the soul. Laughter reminds us of the fragility of the conventions that define human existence but can also remind us of the things that we would rather forget. In a world without longing or laughter, the Forgetting of Being reigns supreme.

Indeed, it is remarkable how, throughout Kundera's novels, bad lovers almost inevitably become political fanatics because they are unable to manage the real satisfactions and disappointments that accompany erotic attachments. Consequently, they retreat into romantic utopianism and political romanticism. This is not to say that Kundera's prescription for moderate politics is simply to read novels and become a better lover. Genuine erotic recognition is too

fragile and fleeting an experience to guarantee, on its own, political moderation. Great novels hold up a mirror to our own democratic souls, tempering and educating citizens who bristle at the notion of moral instruction. Teaching us to laugh at Mirek and to love Tamina—and also see ourselves in both of them—is the political art of the novel, the philosophical education of Eros that inoculates us against illiberal temptations. Indeed, the best kind of "mirroring" that literature can provide for politics is an exploration of how the fundamental problems of individual life reflect, on a smaller scale, the permanent problems that face all political regimes. As such, the challenge of totalitarianism cannot ever be simply overcome because it is rooted in fundamental human longings.

Kundera's voyage into the private turmoil of lovers in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* brings us back to the public discussion of particular regimes because politics represents our collective aspirations for completion —or, to put it more simply but more profoundly, for our pursuit of happiness. That this question (of the justness of the regime and its capacity for fulfilling the longings of its citizens) repeatedly rises to the level of public discussion in the West is a powerful argument in favour of liberal democratic regimes and a rebuttal to critics who mask tyrannical claims behind beautiful idylls. By questioning our capacity for self-government individually and collectively, we reaffirm that the life-world is the ground of truly responsible politics—only as a question can the world be approached and understood.

The argument between Havel and Kundera on the importance of dissidence takes place on a different plane but is equally instructive. While Kundera left Czechoslovakia to pursue his own love of literature and dialogue with the great tradition of the Western novel, Havel remained to write and champion the rights of his fellow citizens in his everyday life. He loved what was ugly enough to try to make it a little more beautiful, while recognizing that it would never be perfect. Ultimately, this is the role of the statesman.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

REALISM AND REASONING: MACHIAVELLI AND DE SICA, A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

ANDREA CILIOTTA-RUBERY
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In the plastic and political arts, alike, there is the noted disposition of attributing a certain primacy to truth, searching tirelessly for it in all things, and consequently labeling those things which should be deemed truthful as the "real." It is as such then that realism, as an institution of this practice, finds itself participating in a collection of discourses, variously related, yet united in their aim to say something substantive about the world as it is believed to be. Italy holds the noteworthy distinction of being the place of origin for two important forms of this realism: the political realism of Niccolo Machiavelli and the later cinematic "neo-realism" of Vittorio De Sica. Despite being separated by nearly four and a half centuries, both ideologies share a strikingly similar understanding of the brutal inequities of our world, which result in the particular cases of each from the misrule of Italian leaders and an aggressive foreign presence on domestic soil. Whether it be the "defect as to arms" of Italian Renaissance princes (Machiavelli 1985, 96) or the limiting of personal freedoms under Mussolini's fascist state, both authors stand witness to the disorder of their world and employ a new found "realism" in their art as a means of addressing these troubles. Interestingly enough, these authors offer wildly disparate interpretations of realism, unique in both their presentations of the political climate and their proposed solutions to Italy's continued problems.

At its foundation, realism departs from other world-view paradigms in its fidelity to life's hardships and suffering, preserving them for a depiction that will expose them as they truly are in an effort to better understand the

human condition. To this end, Machiavelli recalls the actions of those men, both past and present, whose efforts served to either harm or benefit the state. By providing an honest recount of their deeds, Machiavelli writes with clear directive, hoping to inspire the capable into performing remarkable acts in an effort to save Italy. As such, it is in virtue of this desire that the realization of his goal becomes intimately tied to the effectiveness of his "realism." The efficacy of *The Prince* in communicating with its audience is enhanced by the stylistic qualities of Machiavelli's chosen "medium," a choice which employs an exacting account of historical events. Unlike those of the past, who "imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth," Machiavelli wishes to "depart from the order of others" and to "write something useful to whoever understands it" (Machiavelli 1985, 61). Without embellishment, Machiavelli offers an earnest companion to the actions of great men, whose acts, if studied through the lens of his particular mode of realism, can be taken by the extraordinary of a new generation so to bring about effective and lasting change in Italy.

Not surprisingly, De Sica, too, wishes to address an audience of unrealized potential. Taking advantage of a medium which is defined by its uncanny ability to transfer the actualities of the material world onto celluloid film, he strings images together, furnishing the cinema with a visual account of the trials of the present and the everyday. Much like Machiavelli, De Sica calls to attention the actions of men, as they exist in their environment, and asks his audience to observe how the characters confront trials of life. What is spectacular, however, is nothing in the figures themselves, but rather the director's decision to portray a reality that is honest and unashamed of its banality. Indeed, the neo-realism of De Sica functions not only as a means of depicting hardship but also as a special archaeology in which to find subtle truths. With that said, De Sica has significant expectations of his audience. He calls for the spectator to confront the quotidian, experience the duration of time, and out of loosely tied vignettes of the ordinary excavate meaning. Having done this, he believes, the filmgoer becomes well suited for action. Slightly removed from the world he inhabits, the cinema provides the spectator with the necessary distance from which to view his existence and its issues objectively.

As the realist works of Machiavelli and De Sica differ so greatly in their presentations of and solutions to the troubles facing Italy, it is precisely the authors' shared desire to bring about political action that unites them. As Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones note, "Neorealist directors hoped that, by identifying with victims of suffering and injustice,

they could instill in their viewers a positive response, a movement toward reform" (Celli and Cottino-Jones 2007, 44). Although De Sica admits that it is not his role to necessarily "supply solutions," he, like Machiavelli, hopes that the authenticity of the work will serve to motivate audiences into bringing about change (Curle and Snyder 2000, 5). This then begs the question—if Machiavelli and De Sica desire their work to have the same effect, why is it that they elicit such opposing reactions from their audiences?

Undertaking a close analysis of Machiavelli's *The Prince* along with De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* might provide several answers. This paper shall focus on the authors' differing presentations of central characters and the consequently diverse political solutions they might suggest. Approaching this task from the particular lens of character study and the authors' use of artistic media, we find intriguing differences in the subjects considered. Salient character features that will be of specific interest to this study will be the relationship between the subject and traditional concepts of moral order, the notion of heroism and heroics on a personal and societal scale, and the subject's participation in time as concerned with the interaction of the past, present and future. In *The Prince,* Machiavelli offers his reader studies of Cesare Borgia, an imperfect yet noteworthy near prototype for his ideal "new founder," and Agathocles the Sicilian, the criminal prince of Syracuse. The way in which these men respond to the moral parameters of their day, and are subsequently brought to action in attention to future consequences, is—for Machiavelli—the exemplar model for addressing Italy's prevailing social woes.

De Sica's brand of realism, however, differs radically from the Machiavellian use of character and artistic medium. Exploiting stylized filmic techniques such as mise-en-scene, montage, and staging, De Sica composes his subjects with greater subtlety, permitting the audience increased charge over the film's message but also freeing the film's principles of realism from certain temporal constraints. While De Sica, like Machiavelli, clearly wishes to elicit this productive political response from his audience, he also seems to imply that there is no longer a place for traditional heroics in Italian culture. What's more, in further opposition to the proposed model by Machiavelli, we find in De Sica's work figures who firmly exist in the now while standing in more complicated relationships to present, past and future propositions. Yet still, despite this disagreement, we maintain that heroism is at the heart of the prescription for both authors, even if the idea of heroics will manifest differently in each and cause diverse reactions amongst audiences.

Much of the effectiveness of Machiavelli's political realism rests in his presentation of characters who are willing to carry out heroic deeds without moral constraint, all the while in careful consideration of future consequences. Through the medium of historiography, Machiavelli recounts the exploits of men who have deceived and murdered, anointing their actions as fit for imitation by the eventual hero who is to save Italy. The Machiavellian heroic paradigm is not bound by the pacifism of Christian heroes, and nor is it directed exclusively by the mandates of immediate necessity. Machiavelli's heroes embody the cunning, amoral grandeur of a pagan Rome; they thirst for glory and honor. For Machiavelli, it is the promise of tangible reward that encourages men to engage in heroics, not, as De Sica would suggest, need (Hulliung 1983, 226-228).

Of the many characters discussed in Machiavelli's political works, Cesare Borgia proves an interesting, albeit imperfect, study of the heroic "new founder," as his successes and failures provide valuable lessons. Outlined in *The Prince*, the new founder is a leader who is complete in his understanding of how to attain and maintain power. It is his possession of *virtu* that enables him to mold and shape his environment according to his will. Unlike the ancient notion of "virtue," *virtu* as observed in the Machiavellian heroic bears no responsibility to orthodox moralities. In fact, it eschews Christian virtuosity and instead embodies a cunning, calculating, and masculine virility that refuses to accommodate for concerns beyond the jurisprudence of its possessor (Machiavelli 1985, 30-32). Despite the historical circumstances of Cesare's rise to power, Machiavelli believes that it was by the presence of his innate *virtu* and his political prowess that he was able to maintain fortune's gift of Romagna. Indeed, in further compliment to this fact, Machiavelli directly addresses his readership in Cesare's support, observing that his actions are "deserving of notice and of being imitated by others" (Machiavelli 1985, 29).

The first of Cesare's acts that Machiavelli reports to his readership occurs after Cesare is left unsatisfied by mercenary troops and needs to find an alternate means to stabilize the unruly Romagna. Noting that the lords who ruled the region were particularly cruel and impotent, he concluded that their actions would lead to eventual disunity and partition. It is from this observation then that Machiavelli decides that whoever rules the state should follow certain precautionary measures. For one, as noted in *The Discourses*, he must "presuppose that all men are evil and that they are always going to act according to the wickedness of their spirits" (Machiavelli 1985, 201). Cesare recognized the selfishness of the region's

lords, and understood that their behavior would not change so long as they had "free scope" to act, and so their removal would have been necessary. However, also aware of the disagreeable response this would inspire in his public, Cesare knew that complications accompanied whatever course of action he might take.

For Machiavelli, the strategy that Cesare would ultimately employ in the unruly Romagna is an extraordinary illustration of assessment and action. Willing to operate outside of traditional moral boundaries, but unwilling to suffer the political liability of his murderous acts, Cesare chooses to hire the notoriously cruel Remmirro 'de Orco to carry out his executions (Machiavelli 1985, 29). While it is certain that Cesare could have found another subject to act on his behalf, Machiavelli observes that it is precisely in his choice of Remmirro that Cesare's genius is revealed. Upholding expectations, Remmirro made use of excessive violence in completing his task, and as a result drew the contempt of the public. Not allowing for the public hatred towards Remmirro to spill over unto himself, Cesare has Remmirro arrested to account for his atrocities. However, the trial was largely a ruse. Cesare took it upon himself to kill Remmirro, cut his body in half, and place his corpse in the town square early in the morning, with a blood-soaked knife and a piece of wood by his side. As Machiavelli writes, "The ferocity of this spectacle left the people at once satisfied and stupefied" (Machiavelli 1985, 30).

What then is to be made of Machiavelli's realism and his solution for Italy as it is conveyed through the characterization of Cesare Borgia? Evidently, Machiavelli endorses Cesare's independent, self-interested actions to such a great degree that he ventures as far as to call for their imitation. As Strauss notes, "Not trust in God and self-denial but self-reliance and self-love is the root of human strength and greatness" (Strauss 1978, 190). By stepping outside of traditional moral order, Cesare was able to act in accordance with necessity and remove the corrupt lords of Romagna who ruled underneath him. And yet, simply denying the precedence of traditional moral systems is one thing, while actively defying their directives is entirely another. In employing Remmirro to carry out his murders, and then by killing Remmirro himself, Cesare completely breaks with the Christian image of heroism. For Machiavelli, however, it is precisely this clever manipulation of people and events that adds artistry to his actions and justifies his apotheosis to the heroic. By the heroic, Machiavelli once again discusses *virtu*, and refers to the quality held by those few men of action who posses this innate ability and who "become great when they overcome difficulties made for them and opposition made to them"(Machiavelli 1985, 85). By hiring someone else

to carry out these murderous acts, and knowing well the hatred that they would engender towards that person, Cesare was able to surmount cumbersome political obstacles while preserving his reputation. What's more, his link to this brand of heroism is made only more emphatic in Machiavelli's recount of the mysterious and brutal dismemberment of Remmirro's body. Indeed, with the decision to murder Remmirro in such an ostentatious manner, Cesare was able to meet necessary political ends and further gain power. He was able to distance himself from Remmirro's misdeeds, avoid creating a reputation for cruelty, and indirectly convey the unmistakable message that he is not a figure to be trifled with. His agile response to the various obstacles threatening his rule elevates him above his peers and becomes the champion of his heroic nature.

The heroism of Cesare Borgia is only made greater by his realistic assessment of human nature relative to the passing of time. In acknowledging a certain continuity of character amongst his peers, Cesare is able to determine with reasonable expectancy the motives of others, an ability which enables him to act now for the benefit of tomorrow. His keen awareness of time would eventually serve as the model for Machiavelli's own understanding of the relationship between time and events. In *The Time Motif in Machiavelli*, Robert Orr makes note: "the mental events with which Machiavelli is concerned are those that are responses to events that still lie in the future, i.e. to possibilities … It is foreknowledge that earns merit and brings such success as is deserved. Foreknowledge means perceiving the shape of events before they are upon you, in such a way as to recognize their eventual possibilities" (Orr 1972, 191, 193). Cesare's connection with the heroic is enhanced by this appreciation of time, as his concern for his future reputation caused him to enlist the service of Remirro de Orco to murder the lords of the Romagna. Had he committed these acts himself, in the present, he may have jeopardized his effectiveness as a leader in the future.

Cesare's concern for time is demonstrated again when he begins to think of his future security upon the death of his father, Pope Alexander VI. Knowing that his father's successor might rescind the oversight of Romagna that was given to him, Cesare took various measures to ensure the continuation of his rule. His first action was to eliminate the bloodlines of the lords he had despoiled, so that there would be no question over the legitimacy of his rule. Next, he curried favor with important persons in Rome, Vatican figures included, in order to keep the papacy in check. And finally, he sought to gather as many resources as he could before his father died, so that he would be able to resist an attack on his own should one meet him (Machiavelli 1985, 30-31). The degree to which Cesare made

provisions for speculative events and potentialities is an illustration of how Machiavelli believed his heroic "new founder" should stand next to time. The hero for a new Italy should constantly evaluate the future desires of others and make preparations to ensure the longevity of his rule. In all situations, the future must be considered first, before decisive action in the present.

If the imitation of the heroic actions of Cesare provides part of Machiavelli's solution to the problems faced by Italy, then the misdeeds of Agathocles the Sicilian bring greater resolution to his argument. Much like Cesare, Agathocles seems to have possessed the fortitude to carry out the acts necessary to secure order in the state. So, it is not without certain curiosity that Machiavelli's discussion of Agathocles would occur in a chapter titled "Of Those Who Have Attained a Principality through Crimes." If these two figures were so much alike, why would Machiavelli associate Agathocles's actions with "crimes" and not Cesare's? The answer to this seems to lie with Machiavelli's understanding of how society looked at these figures over time.

For the reader, Machiavelli's discussion of Agathocles is somewhat obtuse. At first, Machiavelli recounts the history of a young man whose life is defined by the use of violence and crime in an effort to affect his societal position. After joining the military, he uses this same type of behavior to attain the rank of Praetor of Syracuse and then, not much later, the title of prince by murdering the prominent members of the Senate (Machiavelli 1985, 34). Machiavelli condemns his acts with pronounced judgments, proclaiming that "his savage cruelty and inhumanity, together with is infinite crimes, do not allow him to be celebrated among the most excellent men" (Machiavelli 1985, 35). However, this condemnation is only to be immediately followed by a slight proviso. Machiavelli notes that if one were to consider solely Agathocles's spirit, cunning, and ability to overcome adversity, he would be a fine example of a man of action. Indeed, in his work *The Machiavellian Cosmos*, Anthony Parel seems to suggest that even "vicious tyrants" like Agathocles can possess Machiavelli's much admired *virtu* (Parel 1992, 87).

However, Machiavelli's decision to place the chapter concerning Agathocles after his discussion of Cesare serves to highlight a critical distinction between these two figures. Machiavelli's criticism of Agathocles lies not with his deeds but with the manner in which they are executed. What Agathocles seems to lack, and thus compromising his heroic potential, is a willingness to employ others to carry out unseemly acts and an ability to perceive future consequences. Or, to put it in Machiavelli's own words, the fact that he is too much of a "lion" and not enough of a

"fox"(Machiavelli 1985, 69). Indeed, Agathocles carried out almost every brutal act in full public view. By acting as the sole agent, without shield or cover, Agathocles earns himself the legacy of being a tyrant. Since he conducted himself without the consideration of public sentiment, he could only attain "empire, but not glory" (Machiavelli 1985, 35).

Machiavelli's realism enlists the use of a medium that relies on a candid depiction of events and characters whose deeds are meant to inspire others to act. Though Agathocles's deeds are "great" and in accordance with the dictates of political necessity, they do not offer an example worthy of imitation by others. An essential element to Machiavelli's conception of heroics is the attainment of glory, and Agathocles's overreaching desire denies him this reward. By giving no consideration to the potential effects his reputation might suffer as a result of his misdeeds, Machiavelli believes that Agathocles has lost the privilege of being ranked among the greatest of princes. His lack of prescience leaves Machiavelli no recourse but to look down upon his work, and judge his acts as cruel rather than noble.

De Sica's New Heroism Without Heroics

Although the realism of Italian cinema exemplified by Vittorio De Sica comments on similar political circumstances, it carries from its Machiavellian predecessor a drastically altered message. Filmed in 1948, *Bicycle Thieves* was made on the heels of WWII, only a few years after the birth of the new Italian Republic. With much of the country still ravaged by the atrocities of war, Italy's economy was left in shambles and its social structure stood ruinous and divided. Around the time that De Sica started producing his films, many of his countrymen found themselves unemployed and unable to provide for their families, and in light of this fact many of the neorealist works made during the period began to reflect the impoverished conditions of the common man. In more ways than one, the situations and events out of which De Sica found the inspiration for his films can be justified in their comparison to the inclement political environment which had inspired Machiavelli to write *The Prince*. Assuming a critical stance relative to De Sica's work, and with a thorough understanding of how his films situate themselves relative to the vicissitudes of history and structural changes of governance, the likeness of contexts becomes evident. For *The Prince*, the circumstances that inspired Machiavelli to write instructions on how to attain and maintain power four centuries earlier were the return of the Medici, the end of the Florentine Republic, and the continued division of Italy by meddling

foreign and Papal interests. As De Sica directs after World War II, Italy is again engaged in the process of recreating a national identity after the failures of Mussolini and Fascism, and the embarrassment of the Nazi Occupation. It is at the birth of neorealism that Italy lays bare, stripped of its wealth and former glory, and in desperate need of heroic guidance.

Central to De Sica's development of heroic figures in a ruined Italy is the motif of loss and material desire. In *Bicycle Thieves*, De Sica discloses the private tragedies of an Italian family, following father and son through the streets of Rome in pursuit of a stolen bicycle. The film opens to Antonio Ricci, an unskilled laborer, waiting in a crowd to hear whether the government is able to provide him with employment. In what may be counted as a stroke of luck, Antonio is one of two men presented with an offer that day, and he is asked to report to an advertising agency where he will be responsible for hanging foreign movie posters across the streets of Rome. To Antonio's misfortune, there a provision attached to the acceptance the job—the necessary ownership of a bicycle. Although he does not have one himself, Antonio is unwilling to let the opportunity for employment pass, as he is uncertain that another job will present itself in the near future. He accepts the offer and sets home immediately after to share the good news and to somehow secure the use of a bicycle.

Upon his return home, Antonio's wife Maria and his son Bruno greet him with celebrations of his premature success. Having already sold a wealth of household items, Antonio's newfound fortune is presented as a heroic moment in his family's history and as a concrete means of restoring the social stature that he perceives as having lost. Indeed, for a brief term after Antonio's promise of employment, *Bicycle Thieves* is joyous and provides its audience with a sense of assurance. After Maria and Antonio find the funds to purchase a new *Fides* bicycle frame, the scene that follows depicts the family in lighthearted preparation for Antonio's first day back at work. It is in this scene of making accommodations that we maintain the introduction of the heroic figure to De Sica's film. No more than eight-years-old, Bruno diligently labors over his father's new Bicycle before Antonio has even begun his morning preparations. Pouring over every detail to ensure that the Bicycle is fit to shoulder the wear of the day, Bruno exhibits precocious diligence for a boy his age. As early as the first scene that shows them together, De Sica develops a stark contrast in the characterization of the film's two protagonists, with Bruno immediately winning over the affection of the audience. The spirited tenor of this scene, however, is short-lived and the characters quickly fall into despair. While hanging posters of glamorous Rita Hayworth, the absent-minded Antonio

has his bicycle stolen from underneath him, setting the stage for the remaining trials of the film.

A step vital to the audience's appreciation of how the tragedy of De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* can operate as an argument for the positive role of heroism in the creation a new Italy is to develop an understanding of the film medium and the relationship that the directors saw themselves as having to it. Written by De Sica's screenwriter and most frequent collaborator Cesare Zavattini, *Some Ideas on the Cinema* furnishes the student of neorealism with greater insight into the various aims and ambitions of the genre. According to the author, the ontological role of the cinema is not to entertain its audience or to the present one director's variation of a reality over another, but rather to inspire filmgoers to act in a way that they would normally not. For Zavattini, the disorder of post-war Italy was hardly the most pressing issue faced by the men and women who would pay to see his films. Instead, he argues that the world is continually becoming worse, and that the problems encountered by society are not specific to the current political conditions of the age but rather the consequence of humanity's inability to perceive objective reality(Zavattini 2000, 51-53). It is this relationship, then, between film, material actuality, and the spectator that begins to formulate the ethos of Italian neorealism. Zavattini understands cinema to exist as a way of making the audience reflect on their actions and on the actions of others, not as a means to provide an allegorical escape from life's hardships. By elevating the physical conditions of existence to the level of the screen, he believes that man is better equipped to trace the problems faced in the present to the timeless symptoms of their underlying issue (Zavattini 2000, 53, 55).

Historically, much has been made of the camera's fidelity to the world it captures, its indifference to human desires, and its honest reproduction of the people, places, and events that it seeks to represent. Sharing a common language with photography, Bazin notes that the role of the camera is unique among the plastic arts, not requiring the intervention of the artist, and manufacturing its product with automatic objectivity (Bazin 2005, 13). For Bazin, this idea of mechanized production has a profound affect on the "psychology of the image." Although the spectator might disagree with the objects represented in the film, the absence of human influence ensures that their existence in time and space cannot be denied. When coupled with the mythos of neorealism, this formal interplay between the camera lens and physical actuality only escalates the psychological response of the moviegoer to an even greater degree.

Another quality inherent to the film medium as a result of its tie to photography is its capacity to draw attention to the parts of life that are

neglected and traditionally unseen. Discussed in his *Theory of Film* as the cinema's "revealing functions," Kracauer suggests that film carries the potential to unearth three "groups" of normally unattended phenomena: material things which are either very tiny or rather large, transient actions or circumstances, and the so-called "blind spots of the mind" (Kracauer 1974. 53). For the likes of De Sica and Zavattini, it is the latter two that are of particular importance to the development of heroics in the neorealist cinema. Zavattini claims, "I am bored to death with heroes more or less imaginary. I want to meet the protagonist of everyday life … . I am against 'exceptional' personages" (Zavattini 2000, 58). Examining the characters of *Bicycle Thieves*, a film which Zavattini wrote, one notes that there are no such "exceptional" figures present. In fact, the protagonists of the film are weak and unable to affect change on their environment. When compared to the subjects of *The Prince*, Bruno and Antonio fall short of Machiavelli's high expectations for the heroic "new founder." The shared inability to find the bicycle after hours of searching is a testimony to their naturally ordinary condition.

However, if Antonio and Bruno fail to meet the Machiavellian standards for heroic *virtu*, and if they remain subject to the authority of their environment throughout the course of the film, how should the audience understand their connection to the brand of heroism needed to inspire political action? Perhaps the best answer can be found by considering the ways in which the director makes use of the medium, relates his film to its spectator, and realizes the goals of the neorealist movement. Having already established that the primary characters of *Bicycle Thieves* are particularly ordinary in their command over the obstacles with which they are presented, it is acceptable to discount their actions in the film as being neither heroic nor telling of heroism. It is in the appreciation of this fact, then, that we propose that any evaluation of heroism relative to the *Bicycle Thieves* should not limit its study to the events of the film, but instead consider *a priori* factors such as the role of the spectator and the manipulation of the characters through cinematic techniques.

Returning to Zavattini's treatise on the cinema, an important aim of neorealism is to make the audience reflect on what they are currently doing, and what they have already done (Zavattini 2000, 51). In order for this to happen, the film and filmgoer must be oriented in such a way that images on the screen express enough truth to be recognized by the spectator as the world which he or she inhabits, but also enough distance so as to preserve the "revealing functions" described by Kracauer. In his essay, *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, Bazin distinguishes

between the aesthetic and psychological qualities of the photograph, a duality that is essential to understanding the ideal space of the audience as it related to the heroic argument of neorealist film (Bazin 2005, 11). Since we are concerned with the audience's role in De Sica's development of heroic characters, the aesthetic qualities of the shot will play a minor role to the psychological aspect of watching the film.

One set of "revealing functions" that Kracauer discusses and that is affected by Bazin's psychology of the photographic image is the cinema's ability to expose the "blind spots of the mind." Described by their relationship to the familiar and the everyday, Kracauer posits that these "blind spots" are objects so fundamental to the quotidian experience that they are either neglected in their ubiquity or ignored due to prejudices against them (Kracauer 1974, 53). At the time of the *Bicycle Thieves*' production, De Sica felt as if the war had created a number of these allegorical spots on the Italian social conscience, and that it was the duty of the film industry to start rebuilding the nation's lost morality(Cardullo 2009, 188). It was out of this desire for change, then, that De Sica made Bruno into a heroic figure and used his interplay with the formal qualities of the medium to inspire the audience into actions that the protagonists of the film could not complete themselves.

Bruno and Antonio's chase for the stolen bicycle quickly becomes a pursuit of Odyssean proportions. Beginning their search in the early morning, father and son scour the streets of Rome, desperately exploring every avenue for the lost *Fides* bicycle frame. Over the course of their journey, the audience is made to watch Antonio work himself into an increased frenzy while he drags Bruno into progressively more dangerous situations. For Antonio, the drive to reclaim his lost possessions takes precedence over the welfare of his child, the sanctity of the church, and the dignity of others. As he and Bruno meet new obstacles along their journey, Antonio variously embodies the qualities that Machiavelli attributes to his "new founder." However, Antonio is not an exceptional man, and instead of attaining power, his actions bring disastrous results for those who are closest to him.

While it can be said that Antonio's actions show signs of gross irresponsibility, it cannot be argued that he is an entirely unsympathetic character. The desperation that Antonio shows in the pursuit of his lost bicycle, along with the genuine concern he has over his inability to provide food for his family, makes his character accessible to broad filmgoing audiences. In each of the film's many confrontations, Antonio firmly believes that he is taking the necessary measures to receive his due. Antonio is not particularly greedy, instead he believes that he has been

slighted and that he is owed his due; it is not until the end of the film that he can appreciate his existence objectively.

As we previously suggested, but have yet to fully explain, it is Bruno who ascends to the role of hero in De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. Although he embodies none of the qualities typical of the Machiavellian conception of heroism, it is the fact of his existence that inspires audiences to reflect on their actions, to uncover an objective reality, and to make changes to the political environment that they encounter in the day-to-day. We argue that, throughout the course of the film, Bruno occupies a special intermediary position between the audience that sits in the cinema and the actions of that take place on the screen. In De Sica's development of the characters and the plot, we suggest that he chose to leave the figure of Bruno unembellished so that the mistakes of the father would stand in comparison to a more near state of innocence. What's more, we argue that the Bruno's noted lack of agency provides the spectator with an entry into the world of the film. Sitting in a dark theater, limited to the confines of a single chair, the moviegoer is stripped of his agency and forced to assent to a reality which is chosen by the camera. Likewise, Deleuze notes that, "in the adult world, the child is affected by a certain motor helplessness, but one which makes him capable of seeing and hearing" (Deleuze 1989, 1). In the end, it is in Bruno's "seeing and hearing" that we, the audience, begin to identify with his understated heroics of loyalty and love towards his father. Not only does this child forgive Antonio's transgressions but offers future promise, in the steadfast surety of his compassion and love. It is precisely Bruno's lack of "great enterprises" (Machiavelli 1985, 87) that makes him the inspiring hero of neo-realism and us, the fortunate beneficiaries of his identifiable heroics. For this reason, De Sica's realism presents a picture of heroism that proves far more accessible to audiences than Machiavelli's uncommon new founder.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE TRAGIC ARTIST ON SCREEN AS AN AESTHETIC THEODICY: A DIONYSIAN READING OF *MISHIMA*, *THE DOORS*, AND *BLACK SWAN*

A. ANDREAS WANSBROUGH

There are numerous films that portray artists who commit heinous acts, or behave in an impulsive, libidinous and violent manner. One may think of Ken Russell's *Savage Messiah* (1972), Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985), Oliver Stone's *The Doors* (1991), Philip Kaufman's *Quills* (2000), Tom Tykwer's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006), and Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (2010). Cultural theorist Bruce Barber argues that the dangerous artist is a recurrent myth in cinema that reflects social concerns regarding the artist in society (Barber 2009, 11). This essay examines three of these films, *Mishima*, *The Doors* and *Black Swan* from a Nietzschean optic, to argue that these films do not merely convey a social ambivalence, but express a desire to come to terms with what Nietzsche calls the "ugly, hard, and questionable" in life (Nietzsche 1976a, 529). Nina, as played by Natalie Portman in her Academy Award winning performance in *Black Swan*, enters a psychotic state in which she believes that she has murdered Lily, her ballet rival. Her brutality is released by her desire to artistically transform her world. In Oliver Stone's movie *The Doors*, Jim Morrison, played by Val Kilmer, takes drugs, abuses his girlfriend and acts in a thoroughly disreputable manner. Mishima, played by Ken Ogata in Paul Schrader's *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, commits seppuku in the presence of a restrained military commander. Nietzsche helps us to understand these artists and the affirmation of life that they bring to the audience. Through a Nietzschean prism, Dionysus signifies the continuance of life. These films have a Dionysian message where the tragic artist lives on through his creation. By

identifying with the protagonists of these films, the audience is delivered a message of hope amidst the terror of life's tumult.

With the term "tragic artist," I am collapsing two concepts; the artist who goes against social norms and perishes, and the Nietzschean conception of the tragedian as an image of how we can affirm life. In so doing, I hope to establish a dialogue between Nietzsche and cinema. Nina and Morrison are not tragedians, like Aeschylus and Sophocles, but they nevertheless fulfil some of the functions of the Nietzschean tragedian. (I do not mention Mishima because Mishima actually was a playwright and therefore has a greater likeness to the tragedians of Greece.) According to Nietzsche, a tragic artist is capable of affirming and transfiguring "evil" through his art. By affirming evil, Nietzsche meant that by elevating man to God, suffering and destruction can be viewed as a precondition for life. Such an optic, a Nietzschean god's-eye view of the world, is achieved through life becoming art and spectacle. Nietzsche observes in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* that that which is Dionysian "can turn every desert into a farmland" (Nietzsche 1976b, 670). This involves the fating of life and all that happens in life through perspective and experience. By transfiguring life, we see life as essential and experience it affirmatively. Nietzsche's work post-*The Birth of Tragedy* maintains that people must become poets in their perspectives and experiences, regardless of whether separate artforms are still viable. But art only emerges from excess, an excessive desire to transfigure and embrace the world. Life itself, from a certain perspective, is also an excess, for there is no divine necessity. The only necessity is an aesthetic one. Art thereby lets us view life as an excess and in so doing, ties art, the greatest possible excess, to the very notion of life itself, but in this respect, paradoxically renders art a necessity for life.

Bruce Barber's book, *Trans/Actions: art, film and death*, alleges a link between the supposed excesses, and resistance to intelligibility of modern and postmodern art, with the emergence of a perceived dangerous artist who places himself above and against society. Barber observes that "certain antagonisms exist over the value of art and culture" (Barber 2009, 11). Barber's thesis may be correct, but there does seem to be some degree of admiration within audiences for the figure of the destructive, subversive and transgressive artist. This is not only evident in cinema, but also in the mythic image of the rock star, haunted by inner conflict, rejected by social mores, dying young only to become revered after death. Cinema allows for this rock star-like persona to be transferred and transmitted to the screen. I do not here claim that rock stars are actually Dionysian, but rather that, in a Nietzschean sense, the myth is a Dionysian myth. Barber focuses on a different type of transgressive and dangerous artist to the Dionysian artist

– the quasi-artistic protagonists of Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) and Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960). However, the interest in the dark, tormented artist precedes the problematized role of the artist in society where demarcations for what is and what is not art become blurred with postmodern and modernist art practices. Instead, the image of the destructive creator that this essay examines, has a history that precedes even Nietzsche. Nietzsche becomes useful because he provides the most philosophical conception of the artist-destroyer. In this respect, the tragic, rampant artist is presumably different to Barber's criminal, rampant artist.

As more than one reviewer has observed with regard to *Black Swan*, the movie's engagement with the audience relates to the hyperbolic experience of ballet that the film offers. In a way, the image of the tragic artist that Nietzsche mythically evokes is one that is almost supernatural. The tragic artist is one image, amongst other mythical characters, figures and concepts, such as the Übermensch, that serves as a stand-in for God. Nietzsche's tragic artist seems capable of seeing the whole of life, and life's misery, for he says "Yes to everything questionable" (Nietzsche 1976a, 533). By creating an artistic spectacle around suffering, the tragic artist creates suffering in the audience. As Nietzsche states with some exaggeration in a note in his *Nachlass*, "he [the tragic artist] affirms the *large-scale economy* which justifies the *terrifying*, the *evil*, the *questionable*—and more than merely justifies them" (Nietzsche 1967, 451). This "more than merely justifies" suggests an inducement of suffering in the respondent. But the tragic artist also delivers us into a state beyond suffering. As Gilles Deleuze observes in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Nietzsche's conception of tragedy is "tragedy as an aesthetic form of joy" (Deleuze 2006, 17). What makes cinema a powerful and popular vehicle for an artist myth is its power to unite the audience in spectacle, and to offer the artist's perception and conception of the world. The very structure of the film *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* creates a narrative structured around Mishima's life as art. Further, *The Doors* engages us in spectacle as if we were at once up on stage with Morrison, and at the same time, energised amidst his audience. It is little wonder then that an early theorist of cinema, Ricciotto Canudo (1879-1923), drew heavily on Nietzsche when he formulated cinema as an artform that joyously united the audience.

In his essay, "The Birth of the Sixth Art," Canudo states that cinema has the power to achieve a "new joyous unanimity" within the audience (Canudo 1988a, 65). (The title of his essay is a reference to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.) The medium's capacity to achieve this unanimity comes through its "rapidity of presentation," in which distances in time

and place can be traversed (Canudo 1988a, 60). Canudo states that cinema, with its rapidity of images, "represents the whole of life in action" (Canudo 1988a, 61). Referencing Greek tragedy and Nietzsche's Dionysian prophet Zarathustra (Canudo 1988a, 64), Canudo intimates that cinema may be a Dionysian medium for a new constitution of "Dionysian theatre" (Canudo 1988a, 65). Nietzsche does not advocate anything resembling Canudo's modernist velocity as part of the tragic experience. Nietzsche does, however, talk of rapid becoming and representation. Canudo in this respect, conceives of cinema as a Nietzschean dissolution of the self through aesthetic experience, becoming and representation. Even is his later essay, "Reflections on the Seventh Art" (changing the term for cinema from the sixth art to the seventh art), Canudo states that cinema's "true charm–in its magical sense–is to possess the secret philtre of oblivion, of spiritual elevation, of deepest joy" (Canudo 1988b, 293). However, there are certain limitations with the thesis that the sixth/seventh art is a return to Nietzsche's vision of Greek tragedy. As Antonin Artaud argues in his book *The Theatre and its Double*, cinema lacks the magic of the stage because it is pre-recorded through a medium (Artaud 1976, 250). In this respect, no matter how visceral cinema may be, it cannot establish a direct relationship with the audience. One does not see the god Dionysus on stage possessing the tragic hero and becoming torn between the individuality of the protagonist and the universality of the world, as Nietzsche postulates in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche 1968a, 73).

Nevertheless, Nietzsche supplements and modifies his characterisation of the Dionysian in *Twilight of the Idols*. The Dionysian tends to blur artforms, as does cinema, and is characterised as involving the muscles (Nietzsche 1976a, 520). Despite being chair-bound, films do provoke physical reactions in the audience who may flinch or jump in their seats when scared or excited. It would be fair to suggest that there is something of a Dionysian work-out involved in watching a movie. *Black Swan* is the most prominent example of a film in recent years about a destructive artist who leads the audience into a confusion of emotions and physical reactions. Nina, frequently tearing her own flesh and abusing her body, is likely to make audience members squirm in their seats. But, when Nina comes onto the stage and gives a bravura performance, audience members would experience some of the thrill. It is this essay's intention to suggest that the power that cinema lends to the subject of the tragic artist is its ability to unite the audience in the tragic artist's terrifying transformations of self, life, and art. In a way, the tragic artist, like other destructive figures in the cinematic, televisual and literary collective imagination, becomes a hyperbolic site to *dramatically* play out concerns that occur within life:

namely pain, suffering, cruelty and death. This Dionysian promise of life involves continuance and rebirth, which according to Nietzsche, constitutes some sort of theodicy.

Nietzsche observes in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that both Christian monotheism and Greek paganism establish suffering as divinely ordained, and therefore sanction and justify suffering through imbuing it with meaning:

> What really arouses indignation against suffering is not suffering as such, but the senselessness of suffering: but neither for the Christian, who has interpreted a whole, mysterious machinery of salvation in suffering, nor for naïve man of more ancient times, who understood all suffering in relation to the spectator of it or the causer of it, was there any such *senseless* suffering (Nietzsche 1968b, 504).

Nietzsche longs for such a spectacle, with divine ordinance, "The gods conceived of as the friends of *cruel* spectacles" (Nietzsche 19968b, 505). Suffering as part of art is perfectly acceptable as a way for our bestial longings to find expression. He is aware that the notion of God itself may not necessarily be up to the job. Instead, we may have to use our artistic faculties to ascend to a god-like spectator, the tragedian. As one might guess, Nietzsche's supposed theodicy is unlike that of Leibniz who coined the phrase to refer to his argument that establishes God's compatibility and justice with the seeming injustices of life. Theodicies are often attacked as involving an implicit justification of suffering through God. This is because God allows suffering for some greater good, whether the greater good is free will, or the assured rational constancies of nature, or as a test of our faith that if we pass we will receive remuneration in an afterlife.

Nietzsche has no problem with the idea that some sort of higher perspective might affirm suffering, but he does take issue with the notion of an objective, non-experiential "good" or god by which life can be evaluated. The very notion of an objective vantage to the world irks Nietzsche. He states in *Twilight of the Idols* that "'objectivity' is bad taste" (Nietzsche 1976, 512). This raises a question as to whether Nietzsche is a philosophical optimist or pessimist. The sane Nietzsche does not literally believe in the existence of a supernatural deity (as opposed to the Nietzsche who lost his wits). Nietzsche does not attempt to justify God or to show God's justice, but rather to justify suffering and life without the Christian God, or a theoretically sound metaphysical system. Ironically, this involves a resurrection of a god, but not one as limited and limiting as the Christian deity of monotheism. Man no longer requires a God who is an objective arbiter, rather he needs to assume the role of a pagan deity in

order to justify and enjoy life. Nietzsche's solution is to advocate a type of aesthetic, rather than rational, justification of evil (suffering, pain, death) through assuming the role of God, which, he indicates, can only happen through art. The significance here is that art has to become part of life in a way not acknowledged by Christianity. Christian evaluation is always judgment, as Nietzsche states, "Christianity is the metaphysics of the hangman" (Nietzsche 1976a, 500). The Christian God is separated from life, except on the cross, which, for Nietzsche, is condemnation of man, man owing a debt to God.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, his first major work, Nietzsche argues that there are two types of art with two functions, both of which seem to go beyond Christian conceptions of goodness. These two types of art can come together in a way that can justify suffering, and both provide some sort of remedy to life's ills. The Apollonian form of art is imagistic and illusory, and through images and imagination we can bare the hardships of life. Apollo is also the god of individuation, and by separating ourselves from the world, the world ceases to be a scary place. The Dionysian offers another kind of relief. We lose ourselves through the Dionysian, we cease to be thinking agents and therefore can experience life without the pain of being an individual with concerns for the self. Moreover, we gain a larger sense and identification with the world as a whole. In tragedy, according to Nietzsche, the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses are reconciled, with the spectators participating in a divine activity of primordial becoming. In tragedy, the audience becomes one with Dionysus in a collective experience, and life can be glimpsed as a totality with the help of Apollo. However, as the loss of God becomes more pronounced in the nineteenth century, the idea that we can justify ourselves in a "purely aesthetic sphere" called art, begins to look improbable (Nietzsche 1968a, 141). Nietzsche dismisses his artist's metaphysics put forward in *The Birth of Tragedy* and instead turns to the idea that the art of Dionysus can find a new manifestation in life. The Dionysian is no longer separated from images. Dionysus is frenzy itself, total intoxication, the whole of experience. In line with this, Nietzsche attacks Christian theologians "who continue with the concept of a 'moral world-order' to infect the innocence of becoming by means of 'punishment' and 'guilt'" (Nietzsche 1976a, 500). In *The Birth of Tragedy* art is momentarily integrated with life in a way that would affirm life as a spectacle for *becoming* (Nietzsche 1968a, 52). Becoming is innocent of Christian judgements surrounding suffering, sexuality, the body and human origins (Nietzcshe 1976a, 561-562). Rather than imposing a soul that survives the terror of death, Nietzsche speculates that through annihilation, creation and destruction become married.

Cinema presents us with examples of artists who resemble Dionysian man in shaping life through fating destruction.

The film *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* connects artistic creation and transfiguration with suffering and annihilation by telling the life story of Hiraoka Kimitake, better known by his pseudonym Yukio Mishima. Mishima infamously established a personal army with which he forcefully detained a military commander in the military headquarters of Tokyo. From the balcony adjacent to the commander's office, Mishima preached to the military personnel about the need for Japan to regain its spirituality. After being booed, he recognised that his coup had failed and went inside and committed seppuku in front of the commander. What is interesting about the film is that Mishima's ritualistic suicide, an act involving great pain, is cinematically interpreted as being a part of his artistic expression. This notion of becoming through suffering, of figuration and re-figuration by a de-figuring, could easily be said to be the most prominent theme of the film. The movie's narrative is structured toward Mishima's self-realisation, which is also his self-destruction. Far from simply being a political protest against the vacuity of Western values, the act of suicide unites Mishima with the protagonists of his literary creations who all commit transgressive acts. The 1985 trailer for the film describes Mishima's death as follows, "on November 25, 1970, his life became the ultimate expression of his art" ("Trailer," 2009). Paul Schrader interprets Mishima's action to be "primarily ritualistic and artistic" (quoted in Jackson 2004, 182). As an ultimate expression of his art, Mishima's life continues. Mishima's death is then just one more stage in Mishima's becoming through suffering, or so Schrader's film suggests.

This sense of creation through destruction, life through death, is also present in the movie *Black Swan*. Nina is a troubled ballet dancer who desperately wants to play the Swan Queen in Swan Lake. She is very tense, and builds up an innocent, virginal façade to hide from the terror and anxiety that she is afraid will overcome her. Nina is aware that she has a darker side, and she sometimes thinks that she glimpses this side when looking in the mirror. This darker self takes on an embodied form. Whilst travelling on the train to go to her ballet training, Nina sees someone, dressed in black, who resembles her. She tries to track her double down but the darker Nina vanishes. It would be fair to assume that this doppelgänger is a more Dionysian version of Nina. The doppelgänger in folkloric mythology represents death and ill fortune, but in a way, by representing a different Nina, a darker, more powerful Nina, the doppelgänger also represents what Nina could be. In order to play the Swan Queen, Nina must be able to play the Black Swan. She discovers

that through embracing her darker de-figuring self, the image which signifies her death and loss of image, she can overcome death, and anxiety. In this respect, she can gain a sense of evil innocence, where pain does not disturb her in her exhilarated state. By accepting and welcoming the annihilation of her identity, Nina, in effect, embraces life in a way that is innocent of both shame and guilt, but which is also destructive. According to Nietzsche, "the will to life" beyond life is also "a will to annihilation," which signifies a type of eternal life (Nietzsche 1976c, 459). This drive for a "beyond" is clearly present in Mishima and Morrison as well, Morrison always pushing his body further through drugs and alcohol, contesting the limits of his reality. All three artists as presented by these films wish to reclaim an innocence from sin and shame, to be united with the world through art.

These artists seek to destroy themselves in order to tap into some sort of transformative process, where they are broken down and remade. This figuring, de-figuring and re-figuring involves destruction to accomplish a larger identification. Sarah Kofman explains the Nietzschean tragedian in *The Birth of Tragedy*,

> For the artist to symbolize Dionysus, however, he must himself be metamorphosed, be stripped of his individuality. He must be identified in kind with the very being of nature. In this state the artist can express unity with the whole: his "self" symbolizes totality. The artist becomes a metaphor for the world, and as such, he is a medium that reflects eternal being (Kofman 1985, 205).

Only by going beyond normal limits and returning to a state of creativity can there be new identifications with the world. It seems that Nietzsche's theodicy stages God and man as inherently shifting and impermanent, for there is no one God and no one man. Rather, life requires shifting vantages, new experiences and higher consummations. Life therefore also requires transformation; the artist has to change.

But the artists in these movies are not necessarily trying to symbolize Dionysus, and Nina, Mishima and Morrison are very different people from one another. The films are likewise divergent. A rock star, a ballet dancer, and a writer may seem to have nothing in common, and the narratives of these films are structured in ways that do not establish an obvious comparison. For example, Mishima and Morrison appear diametrically opposed. Mishima has a controlled, Apollonian façade. In the opening scene of *Mishima*, he is shown calmly preparing for the day in which he ends his life. He is shown against the backdrop of sculptures in a classical, Greco-Roman style. Only the score by Glass suggests that there is a dark,

destructive force at war within him. In contrast, there is nothing of this self-controlled perfection about Jim Morrison who appears to live a chaotic, self-absorbed life of abandonment. Nevertheless, each film depicts a need to go beyond the self to find new ways to affirm existence through identifying with the world, and in each case, the artist is stripped down to the primal. Jim Morrison, as depicted in Oliver Stone's film, is as concerned with religion, mysticism and the fate of man as Mishima. As with *Mishima*, *The Doors* depicts its protagonist constantly attempting to imbue his suffering with significance. For example, the film opens with Jim Morrison in a studio recording verses that explicitly reference "birth, life and death," "ceremony," "heart ache and the loss of God." The film then cuts to an early experience of Morrison as a child in the back seat of his parents' car. The car passes a dying Native American shaman. Morrison, we discover later, believes the spirit of this shaman inhabits him, and travels with him. In a subsequent scene, Morrison screens a film that he has made for his class at the UCLA film school. Morrison talks in his film of Nietzsche, myth, terror and the necessity for masks. Like Mishima, then, Morrison understands that art is tied to myth and ritual. More than that though, art becomes a mask for Morrison to transfigure, cope with, and transform the suffering he experienced as a child when he witnessed the dying Native American.

Biography features heavily in *Mishima* as well. There is a narration that runs throughout *Mishima*, using Mishima's own words, especially from his semi-autobiographical literary work, *Confessions of a Mask*, that provides insights into his intellectual development. These portions establish Mishima's setbacks and successes. For example, Mishima's drive to transform the world is connected to his sick Grandmother's prohibition on him playing outside. From the window, Mishima as a child watches the other boys playing, whilst he wants his world to change. In addition to using *Confessions of a Mask* as a stand-in for his biography, his works of literature are theatrically enacted, drawing parallels between his life and his literary creations. Each tale chosen, "Temple of the Golden Pavilion," "Kyoko"s House," "Runaway Horses" involves setbacks that spur on the protagonists' evermore daring feats. The stories taken from his literature emphasize Mishima's desire for more dramatic conquests of overcoming. In short, the film recognises that Mishima's life is part of his art and his art part of his life, and ties this problematic to suffering. There are intertitles that inform us that the film is divided into four sections, "Beauty," "Art," "Action," and his suicide section which is called "Harmony of Pen and Sword." Mishima's life fuses with his art as a way to cope with, and finally affirm his suffering, with his suicide, his last artistic act.

Nina is different in that her weakness is her excessive level of strength and control, a strength and control forced on her by her strange, possessive mother (not entirely unlike Mishima's Grandmother). More than that, Nina *is* initially more Apollonian than Dionysian. With her controlled façade, Nina, like Mishima, appears at first more Apollonian than Dionysian, but where Mishima sources his Apollonian control from his Dionysian drive, Nina has yet to realise her Dionysian, libidinous urges. Nina's level of artifice, control, and illusion is emphasised early on in the film. We see her room covered in shades of saccharine pink. Toys of ballerinas watchfully stand on the desk next to her bed. Although Nina and her surroundings may not conjure up the classicism associated with Apollo, or indeed Mishima, she is shown to be a control-freak suffering from individuation. This individuation is admittedly forced on her, and in some respects, she has yet to be a free agent. She is still controlled by her mother, and lacks a sense of self. But in Nietzsche, individuation is illusory. Moreover, Nina suffers from her seeming difference to the other ballet dancers. She emphasises illusion at the expense of reality and her body, harming herself based on an ideal. Nietzsche warns that the Apollonian when mistaken for reality itself becomes a pathology, "But we must also include in our image of Apollo that delicate boundary which the dream image must not overstep" (Nietzsche 1968a, 35). The Apollonian also induces suffering, for it separates us from our surroundings. Nina's desire to distinguish herself from the other ballet dancers, to take the lead in "Swan Lake," alienates her from the world. Instead of illusion serving to calm her, illusion holds her back from transfiguring reality. But as with Mishima, Nina's value "lies beyond the Apollonian" (Nietzsche 1968a, 143). She may be an Apollonian artist at first, but even the Apollonian emerges from a recognition of the Dionysian (Nietzsche 1968a, 46). When confronted with the desire to be perfect, Nina strives to become a tragic artist through embracing all that is considered imperfect, such as sensual experience, in order to go beyond her individual pain.

Nina may appear a "girly" figure that loves all that is pretty and pink, but inside her there is a monstrous black swan ready to tear herself apart, and sacrifice illusion for the destructive truth of nature. Like Mishima, Nina must destroy herself to become one with energy. In this, she also resembles Morrison who takes drug and swallows copious quantities of alcohol to escape his identity. These acts ensure his destruction and early death. In the case of Nina, destruction of image comes with a direct acquaintance with her body. The director of the dance company, Leroy, instructs Nina to masturbate. He even touches her inappropriately. Leroy tells Nina that in order to achieve perfection she cannot simply continue to

be controlled. She has to go further and transgress her limits. She has "to let go," as he says, and lose herself. The narrative, then, builds with her discovery of a repressed primal nature, a stripping away of cultivation. Once she is able to confront this primal nature through art, Nina is also able to affirm even her own destruction. Nina learns that her self-harm, her resistance to her darker self has thrust her into a psychotic state in which she has effectively committed suicide. She discovers this terrifying reality before she plays in the final act. Instead of being devastated, Nina is able to imbue her last performance with a tragic pathos, and remains strong even as she approaches death, convinced that she has achieved art, that the spectators of the ballet will remember her. Her suffering and error are therefore integrated into her art, and become aesthetically justified.

These artists' aesthetic justification of life involves more than an embracing of their darker selves, and their pain. They can only come to terms with their suffering through a sense of intoxication that encourages their transgressions. Mishima transgressively creates himself above and beyond moral and natural law, becoming a type of God-like figure with his suicide. Through the act of taking his life, Mishima transforms his life into a tragedy, where not only creation and destruction merge, but joy and agony. In this respect, the experience of life, like the experience of intoxication, merges pain with pleasure. Nietzsche claims that the tragedian sees joy as connected to suffering as well as triumphing over suffering. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he states that he guessed that "the bridge to the psychology" is to be "beyond all terror and pity" by "saying Yes to life" (Nietzsche 1976a, 562). Schrader's film seems to suggest as much. Mishima is depicted in a state of suffering as the blade enters his flesh. We, the audience, do not see the blade penetrate his skin, but we see Mishima's face contort, in slow-motion, in an expression of extreme agony and hear his protracted cry of suffering. Given the context, the cry clearly is an expression of pain, but the cry might also be a cry of pleasure, the act becoming a form of exultation. The music links this physical experience of pain to Mishima's creative experience in a way suggestive of joy. The film cuts from a freeze-frame of Mishima's face to a montage of images from Mishima's fiction, depicting his protagonists as they triumph. The music swells, bursting and soaring, displaying and celebrating the characters in his work, dying and triumphing. The last shot is of the sun and the earth, Mishima becoming like his characters, eternally one with the world. Life and his life are justified through this artistic theodicy that involves a return to nature, as well as an expression of the continuance of nature. We are left with a sense that Mishima's suffering is actually his joy, and that his struggle is "to be oneself the eternal joy of

becoming, beyond all terror and pity—that joy which includes even joy in destroying" (Nietzsche 1976a, 563).[1] Nietzsche describes a "joy even in the sacrifice of its [life's] highest types" (562), and the Schrader's film seems to provide such an example (Nietzsche 1976a, 562).

As we have seen, the Dionysian involves multiple births, transformations and becomings. Nietzsche sees Dionysian energy as being essential to the revaluation and revitalisation of life, so much so that he claims that still to think is nihilistic (Nietzsche 1976a, 471). Morrison in *The Doors* is incapable of sitting still in passive thought. Nietzsche describes the Dionysian as one who can "enter into any skin, into any affect." As Nietzsche concludes, the Dionysian artist "constantly transforms himself" (Nietzsche 1976a, 520). In concerts, Morrison morphs from friend of the crowd to enemy of the crowd, taunting them, declaring that they are "nothing but a bunch of slaves." Alcohol, drugs, music and sex facilitate these transformations. Through these states, to appropriate language from *Twilight of the Idols*, Morrison's "whole affective system is excited and enhanced: so that it discharges all its means of expression at once and drives forth simultaneously the power of representation, imitation, transfiguration, transformation, and every kind of mimicking and acting" (Nietzsche 1976a, 519). Morrison's whole body is energised and moving as he struts up on stage, shifting stances like a God. At times godlike with his booming voice, heroic and often demonic, he represents the extremes of existence itself. Nietzsche states that all art must come from intoxication, or *Rausch*:

> If there is to be art, if there is to be any aesthetic doing and seeing, one physiological condition is indispensable: intoxication. Intoxication must first have enhanced the excitability of the whole machine; else there is no art. All kinds of intoxication, however diversely conditioned, have the strength to accomplish this… (Nietzsche 1976a, 518)

Nietzsche then enumerates the various kinds of intoxication; the intoxication of sexual excitement, the intoxication that "follows all great cravings, all strong affects; the intoxication of feasts, contests, feats of daring, victory, all extreme movement; the intoxication of cruelty; the intoxication in destruction; the intoxication under certain meteorological influences," and "finally the intoxication of will, the intoxication of an overcharged and swollen will" (Nietzsche 1976a, 518).[2] Morrison is

[1] I modified the tense from 'included' to 'includes'.

[2] In these quotations I have altered the translation of *Rausch* to *intoxication* rather than Kaufmann's *frenzy*.

constantly shown in a state of Dionysian intoxication. Feats of daring, swollen will, even meteorological influences, certainly alcohol, drugs and sex motivate him. Further, there is a Dionysian delight in cruelty that takes him beyond good and evil, beyond suffering.

The Dionysian is a constant and complete intoxication that stimulates the body to issue forth new representations and expressions. This is connected to the problem of suffering. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysian *Rausch* entails oneness with the world, but this oneness involves identification with the world's destructive processes. At times, Morrison becomes one with his audience in a festive group experience. But this intoxication also takes him beyond the guilt and shame linked with morality. In one scene, Morrison is shown singing "Not to Touch the Earth" at an outdoor stadium. The scene becomes a montage in which we lose ourselves in the experience, cutting from Morrison performing at the stadium to sequences in which he acts in a bestial, almost subhuman way. He crashes his car into a police car, his vision obscured by a woman straddling him. In another sequence, Morrison is angry with his girlfriend Pamela. After arguing with her, he decides to lock her in a cupboard and set fire to it. But Morrison is not only a wild beast, he is also an uncontrollable force of nature. Like nature, he requires no moral justification, and just as nature obeys no moral laws, he violates any strictures. In this way, the tragic artist identifies with the world itself, going beyond the illusion of man's cultivated separation from it. The fluid camera movement creates a sense of intoxication, where Morrison's experience of *Rausch* permeates the crowd for whom he performs. No matter how abhorrent Morrison's deeds, we do not necessarily find ourselves judging him, in fact we enter into his state of intoxicated excitement, identifying with him and his crowd of worshippers.

There is a certain paradox within the Dionysian state of intoxication that allows for cruelty and an overcoming of suffering. Intoxication is at once a way to come to terms with pain, to heighten its experience, but also to forget pain, to lose oneself and ego in the experience. Nietzsche appears to approximate this when he sates in *The Birth of Tragedy* that "Dionysus possesses the dual nature of a cruel, barbarised demon and a mild, gentle ruler" (Nietzsche 1968a, 73). Morrison, as presented to us by Oliver Stone's film, embodies this problematic. His destructive urges seem to be a way for him to confront and affirm his suffering, to turn himself into a spectacle. But there is a further part of this dynamic. He becomes intoxicated to escape his suffering and to create a certain distance between himself and the world, achieving a sense of *ekstasis*. The lyrics themselves, brimming with delirium, intimate as much, "Not to touch the

earth./Not to see the sun./ Nothing left to do but run, run, run." In a way, Morrison is running away from life at the very moment that he is embracing it in a delirious state. Morrison threatens to acquaint Pamela with his "friend pain." But he says this after he has discovered her having an affair. Only then does he take out his rage and anger by locking her in the cupboard. Morrison may be revelling in his suffering, but he is also aspiring to overcome it, attempting to be one with nature. Nevertheless, he is constructing a spectacle around himself to do this, thus there is a strange sense of outside-one-self-ness to Morrison. Although making for a powerful spectacle, according to Ray Manzarek, the scene in which Stone's Morrison sets fire to the cupboard with Pam inside is an invention (quoted in Goldstein 1991). Such a sequence thereby serves an aesthetic rather than a truthful end and exaggerates Morrison into a myth. Strangely enough, this hyperbolic Morrison furthers a connection with his persona, he becomes an image, or a series of images of life as an intoxicated spectacle. According to Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a tragedy is a type of intoxicated dream (Nietzsche 1968a, 33). The fact that Ray Manzarek claims that Morrison was not always drunk and was not as brutal as the film suggests, confirms that the film is fulfilling a mythic purpose (quoted in Meek 2011).

Black Swan also serves a mythic purpose, but unlike *The Doors* and *Mishima*, it is not a biopic. Nevertheless, many British ballet dancers, asked for their opinions in "The Guardian," commented that they felt that *Black Swan* lacked accuracy. They tended to argue that the movie presented a caricatured image of ballet dancers, one which over-emphasised the suffering involved in their art (Mackrell 2011). Critical film reviewers of *Black Swan* lament the stylised and hyperbolic nature of the film, and the exaggerated fusion of genres used to convey Nina's experience. One critic on a blog went so far as to describe the film as an immoral work conveying nihilism (Dowrick 2011). The brutality with which Nina abuses herself for her art has lead some critics to accuse the film of misogyny, including Slavoj Žižek. Žižek even argues that Nina's death forms a reactionary narrative in which the woman has to die in order to take up a profession (quoted in Medeiros 2011). This destruction of the self, however, is a recurrent theme of cinematic portrayals of the artist. Barber asks why the destructive artist frequents the screen, but seldom exists in life. There is an obvious answer: cinema appeals to audiences through extremes. Most dramas that are dramatic are based on exceptional circumstances, not day-to-day life. In the case of *The Doors*, Morrison's appeal is not only due to the myth that surrounds him, but also the vicarious experience of his precariousness.

Black Swan, goes even further than *The Doors* by showing the violence necessary in art, and discloses the terror often concealed beneath "culture." In both *Mishima* and *The Doors*, physical suffering is shied away from, often implied rather than shown. We do not actually see the blade enter Mishima's flesh. Morrison may be psychically tormented, and his actions, even his music, may make us feel uncomfortable, but for all his provocative behaviour, the worst physical pain we ever witness him endure is when he is sprayed with mace by a police officer. He recovers shortly after and performs on stage. Nina, on the other hand, *is* shown suffering physical pain. We see her go to the lavatory to throw-up, obviously bulimic. We hear her toes crack. We see her develop a nasty rash. We see her nightmarish psychotic visions in which she peels the skin from her fingers. Nina's agony, however, is integrated into her art, through the overcoming power of intoxication. She realises the truth of what Thomas Leroy, the director of the production, tells her, namely that she has to lose herself in the experience. Nina comes to terms with her destructive energy through sexual stimulation and drugs, similar methods to Morrison. Intoxication helps her to acquaint herself with her body. But these states of intoxication come at a price.

Nina begins to let go with her performance, and improves as she learns to play the Black Swan. But she also loses her identity and her sanity. She becomes possessed by a type of divine or demonic madness. Nina has a series of psychotic episodes, and, as a result, is finally transformed into the Black Swan. In her most terrifying episode, Nina believes she has murdered her dance rival Lily, but has actually stabbed herself. Losing her Apollonian grasp of individuation, she fights with an imagined Lily that at once also resembles her dark doppelgänger, the two becoming fused in her mind. Nina, rejecting her doppelgänger, stabs her darker-self with broken glass. In her psychotic state, the body of the doppelgänger transforms back into Lily's corpse. (We learn in a subsequent scene that Lily is alive and well, and that there is no corpse.) This believed transgression liberates Nina. When on stage, she erupts with a subterranean energy that had previously been repressed by her Apollonian figuration. Her image of perfection is gone, exchanged for an experience of perfection that is dependent on a loss of self. There is no trace of the old Nina. Through the abandonment of form, Nina is able to return to a primal state, she becomes bestial and her body shakes as her arms transform into wings. The Dionysian involves a fusion with animal nature, and Nina enters this mythic state by letting go of reason. The power surges through her. Her eyes glow red, in a touch of what one critic describes as Darren Aronofsky's "expressionistic subjectivity" (José 2010). In this state of intoxication, she is both out of

control and completely in control. She impresses everyone with her performance, mastering imitation and representation in her energised state, believing herself to be the Black Swan. Nina goes beyond suffering. Art, in this way, liberates her from the pain of life. She is excess personified, her body convulsing in a state of overflowing will. Lily who had hoped to usurp Nina's part, congratulates her. Nina masters Leroy, violently kissing him, and leaving him speechless. She thereby achieves a oneness with energy itself, animal energy, and natural energy, exploding forth onto stage.

Even when she plays the final scene as the White Swan Queen who kills herself, Nina's performance is transformed, imbued with a pathos that had not previously existed. Before going on stage she realises that she has fatally wounded herself. Nevertheless, she succeeds in giving her perfect performance. Despite the blood that starts to soak through her costume, Nina is oblivious to all but her art. Like the Swan Queen, Nina is fated for death. When she jumps from a height onto the mattress, signifying the Swan Queen's suicide, blood begins to gush from her wound. The other ballet dancers, who have formed around her in a circle, are horrified when they discover that Nina is dying. Everyone except Nina is troubled by her imminent death. When asked by Leroy why Nina has harmed herself, she does not answer but instead states that she experienced perfection, "I felt it. I was perfect." The cheers from the crowd seem to confirm her statement, and the score becomes exultant.

With cinematic portrayals of the tragic artist, the existential suffering associated with death is gone. Nietzsche's conception of the tragic artist is more directed to suffering, the questionable and the ugly than, specifically, to death. For Nietzsche, Dionysus is the continuance of life. Death is one more hurdle, one more ugly aspect involved in living. But Nietzsche was conscious of "the terrible anxiety which death and time evoke" (Nietzsche 2010, 213). The solution to suffering is its glorification through spectacle, in which intoxication destroys the moral sense and takes us beyond our individual experience. Nietzsche's ideas are far from systematic and he presents us with only allusive images of how life as a totality can be affirmed. In a sense, by framing these films through Nietzsche, we are also examining Nietzsche through these films. Philosophers, especially in analytic philosophy, often systematize Nietzsche, slowly working through his ideas in a manner that deprives them of their power. Nietzsche did not stage a tragedy and he had to look to Wagner and then Bizet for an image of the tragic artist and a way to induce the tragic experience. We have cinema. These films add something to Nietzsche's conception of the tragedian, by rendering the tragic artist's death a finale, by which he and

his art can become metaphors for life's continuance. In *Mishima*, Mishima seems to gain a spiritual fulfilment when he becomes one with his creations as conveyed through montage. Mishima, with the bubbling score from Philip Glass, comes close to becoming creative energy itself. And in *The Doors*, Morrison has mystical visions in which he experiences the eternity of the desert. More than that, Morrison sees the ghosts of past Native Americans and even foresees his own death, "the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past" (Nietzsche 1976a, 561). We cut from his corpse in the bathtub to Morrison's tombstone in Père Lachaise Cemetery, an indication of his immortality. Morrison's tombstone is decorated with paint, and a wreath, making him appear a pagan deity. On the tombstone we see inscribed that he was a poet, thus an artist-deity whose divine madness taps into the source of eternal life. When the credits roll, we see Morrison having fun, recording an album with the other members from "The Doors." Interestingly, part of Canudo's claim regarding the transformative power of cinema is its ability to quickly establish connections through cuts that cannot take place in theatre, cinema allowing for sequences and experiences to be brought together (Canudo 1988a, 59). Morrison and Mishima are thus shown to be able to embrace their fate. In this way, cinema transcends space and time, liberating us from anxiety.

But at the end of *Black Swan*, after Nina's exultant triumph, the applause continues before fading amidst an ominous silence as the credits appear. The initial silence allows the experience to soak in. The music begins again, cautiously, but establishes a pronounced feeling of ambivalence. The title sequence is clearly meant to leave the audience in a state of unease and to instil doubt. For although we may experience some triumphant sense at the close of these films, with the artists triumphing in destruction and over destruction, we do not necessarily agree with the artists' transgressions, nor are we capable of bringing about the affirmation of life on a grand-scale. For a moment we feel part of the tragic artist's experience, cinematically transported beyond good and evil. Day-to-day life involves divisions, separations, conceptual categories. But cinema is a way to transcend categories and conceptual divisions because, as Canudo notes, it allows people to "forget in greater or lesser measure, their isolated individuality" (Canudo 1988a, 65). More than that, cinema confronts "the ugly and the disharmonic" aspects of life, aestheticizing the ugly side of existence (Nietzsche 1968a, 141). Nietzsche initially realised the importance of aesthetically confronting suffering in *The Birth of Tragedy*, claiming that it was principally at a tragedy that life became justified (Nietzsche 1968a, 52). The problem between film and life may

hint toward an answer regarding Nietzsche's own revisions in which tragedy becomes detached from the artform and is reconstituted as an art of life.

This essay has attempted to establish a relationship between the tragic artists of *Mishima*, *The Doors* and *Black Swan* through a Nietzschean Dionysian myth where the artist is a metaphor for creation. But in the hyperbolic realms of cinema and Nietzsche, creation involves destruction and dissolution, and with it, continuation. Rebirth through death, embracing destruction and creation, integrating life with art, is not an option for most of us. But cinema provides us with this Dionysian, theodicean myth, and an escape from everyday reality. In this way, the very experience of film, and art generally, involves a micro death in which the spectator becomes absorbed into the work. Cinema itself, as Canudo points out, can take us beyond the individual on screen to give us an image of life. The tragic artist as presented in films serves as a testament to cinema, indicating cinema's power to convey transience as part of continuation. As such, film provides us with an instance where the tragic artist "is enriched into an image of the world" (Nietzsche 1968a, 107). Nietzsche gives us a mythology by which this image can be understood without recourse to cold, systematised analysis, just as cinema provides us with a way to conceive and experience Nietzsche's ideas.

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