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PRESENTATIONS

ESSAYS

REVIEWS

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

When asked what he would like to hear philosophers such as Heidegger, Kant, or Hegel start speaking about, Derrida answered, “their sexual lives, because it’s something they refuse to talk about.” Why do philosophers present themselves asexually in their work, erasing their private lives, if there is nothing more important in life than love? This claim is a development of an earlier thought formulated by Pascal, for whom the private life of a philosopher is his fundamental philosophical oeuvre: “When Plato and Aristotle diverted themselves with writing their *Laws* and *Politics*, they did it as an amusement; it was the least philosophic and least serious part of their lives.” As philosophers, “we must keep our thoughts secret,” adds Pascal, continuing the age-old tradition of philosophical esotericism and following the thought uttered by Descartes in his *Cogitationes Privatae*: “at the moment of entering the world’s stage, I walk disguised, *larvatus prodeo*.”

The mask of a philosopher creates a veil of ignorance, an undefined space of secrecy into which any possible content can be inscribed, a domain of things unspeakable, forbidden to reveal in public, performing the psychic function equivalent to the Eleusinian injunction of the ἄρρητον. Accordingly, Kant’s secrecy regarding his private matters, in agreement with his own maxim that “while all that one says must be true, this does not mean that it is one’s duty to speak out the whole truth in public,” led to a variety of presumptions on this subject: from Madame de Staël’s depiction of Kant as a philosophical saint who passed his life in meditation upon the laws of human intelligence, contenting himself with the silent pleasure of reflection in virtuous solitude and contemplation, to Heine’s rebuttal of this idealization, offering an alternate vision of Kant as the philosophical Robespierre who is liberating us with his *Critique of Pure Reason* from the Nazarene ideology of contempt for the body and advocating the death of deism and the advent of sensualism.

In the paradigmatic case of Platonism as well, due to the ambiguities of Socratic irony, which serves the purpose of a philosopher’s mask, one can never be certain whether *amor platonicus* is solely spiritual or ultimately also corporeal, not to mention the complicated status of corpus, which further obfuscates the matter. As Allan Bloom noticed, in an exquisitely ironic Platonic mode, “the Platonic corpus is pretty hairy.” On the one hand, in the *Symposium*, Socrates says to the infatuated Alcibiades, clearly courting him, “Let us consider what is best for us, then let us do it.” On the other hand, in the *Phaedrus*, he says, “It is nowhere said that a good man cannot engage in physical love,” adding even that “One does not deny a favor to a lover if he demands it.”

As Vittorio Hösle pointedly remarked, all the hiding techniques of the dialogues, the infamous esotericism, and the slow coming out are “a particularly subtle way of exerting power over young men Plato longed for sexually, for eroticism has indeed something to do with concealing and

revealing." Perhaps Ficino was mistaken in his attempt to defend Plato's good name when he claimed that the epigrams attributed to him (in which he confesses love for Agathon, known from the *Symposium*; Aster, at whom Plato gazes as at the stars, *ad astra*; Alexis; Phaedrus, likely the one from the dialogue; as well as the hetaera Archeanassa and Xanthippe) to be forgeries fabricated by Aristippus of Cyrene, who invented "licentious songs of Plato for prostitutes and boys in order to provide a false example of great philosophers to secure for himself the freedom to commit vice" and who dared to pronounce the utterly scandalous claim in his *Debauchery of the Ancients* that Plato had an affair with the midwife Xanthippe before she became Socrates's wife.

Perhaps the key to understanding Plato and Platonism in this crucial aspect is provided by the contemporary arch-Platonist philosopher Allan Bloom, both in his strategy of interpretation as well as in the complexities of his personal life, and especially in the particular intertwining of both. Only a few recordings of Allan Bloom's candid, vigorous lectures have been preserved, including one on Aristotle. It gives us a certain insight into his reading of this philosopher, radically and deliberately misinterpreted in *The Closing of the American Mind*, to the point of attributing nonexistent thoughts to him, such as: "Aristotle said that man has two peaks, each accompanied by intense pleasure: sexual intercourse and thinking." Such a thought was never formulated explicitly by the Stagirite, to say the least. But perhaps it is possible to read him in a way that allows for such an interpretation. The restored lecture gives us hints on how to do that. Bloom says, for example, that "Aristotle's peculiar form of delicacy is there," in the fragment of the *Nicomachean Ethics* on the pleasures of sex, τά ἀφροδίσια, where by means of "slight little hints," such as the figure of "the man who wishes he had a neck long enough, as long as a crane, to have greater pleasure," Aristotle alludes to "the hidden, forgotten other parts" (EN III.10 1118a).

The key may be partly contained in Bloom's posthumously published work, *Love and Friendship*, a grand hymn to Eros, a lament over his fall and decline, a blatantly religious confession of devotion to that "most mysterious, exciting, and profound force that animates man." He wrote, or rather dictated, this last work in the hospital, while already partially paralyzed, dying, suffering from AIDS. The situation is all the more interesting as almost nothing is known about Bloom's own love life – he was very discreet about it. He did not start a family, nor did he have children, and yet he considered Eros to be the most important aspect of every man's life. The key lies in the dedication of this book: "To Michael Z. Wu." A further clue, however, can be found in the passages removed from the original version of Saul Bellow's outstanding novel *Ravelstein*, a veiled portrait of his close friend Bloom. I quote from Christopher Hitchens's review copy:

> Even toward the end, Ravelstein was still cruising. It turned out that he went to gay bars. One day he said to me, "Chick, I need a check drawn. It's not a lot. Five hundred bucks." "Why can't you write it yourself?" "I want to avoid trouble with Nikki. He'd see it on the check-stub." "All right. How do you want it drawn?" "Make it out to Eulace Harms." "Eulace?" "That's how the kid spells it. Pronounced Ulysee." There was no need to ask Ravelstein to explain. Harms was a boy he had brought home one night ... Eulace was the handsome little boy who had wandered about his apartment in the nude, physically so elegant ... "No older than sixteen. Very well built ..."

There is an expression commonly used in esoteric phraseology: "those in the know." What does one in the know know? Perhaps this knowledge does not have to consist in a sublime dualistic ontology, proclaiming an evil demiurge responsible for the fallen world, as the early diaries of Carl Schmitt might suggest: "The evil creator of this world has arranged it in such a way" (22.06.1914)

that "the earth is hell" (26.06.1914), "nature is hostile, and man is evil by nature" (24.01.1915), hence "I see only evil and baseness in the world, perhaps because there is so much evil and baseness in myself" (25.06.1914). Schmitt was clearly influenced not only by the surrounding misdemeanors of war but even earlier by his readings on gnosis, in particular Döllinger's *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters* (3.10.1913), and conversations with Harnack on Marcion (14.12.1913). Schmitt saw himself as a gnostic (10.07.1914), belonging to an elite of those who knew the divine secrets and assumed a dualism between the Creator and creation. But what are those secrets? Octavio Paz in his *Double Flame* offers the following conjecture:

> Every great historic religion has given rise, on its margins or at its very heart, to sects, movements, rites and liturgies in which the flesh and sex are paths to divinity. It could not be otherwise: eroticism is first and foremost a thirst for otherness. And the supernatural is the supreme otherness. Erotic religious practices are surprising both in their variety and in their recurrence. Collective ritual copulation was practised by the Tantric sects of India, by the Taoists in China, and by the Gnostic Christians of the Mediterranean region. The same is true for communion with semen, a rite shared by the initiates of Tantrism and by the Christian Gnostics [...]. Many of these erotico-religious movements, inspired by millennial dreams, combined religion, eroticism and politics. [...] I emphasize that in all these rituals reproduction plays no role, or only a negative one.

Mircea Eliade in his *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* claims that in the Tantric tradition the term *suññatā* did not stand for an abstract, metaphysical nothingness but for the emptiness, or vacuity, in which the semen was deposed at the high point of the religious rituals (attested also by Augustine with regard to the Manicheans in *De haeres.* 46.10). Abraham Bos claims that πνεῦμα, usually translated as "spirit," stands for semen not only in gnostic texts but even in Aristotle's *De Anima* II.4 415b, which states in an important group of manuscripts that "the semen of animals and plants is the instrument of the soul," in accordance with his groundbreaking reading of Basilides's interpretation of Aristotle, where πνεῦμα understood as semen is the instrument (ὄργανον) by which the divine power is present. The gnostic phrase "pneumatic succession" thus takes on an entirely new meaning. Could it be that not only Bloom is a gnostic in this sense but also Plato, and even Kant, if Botul was right in his *Vie sexuelle d'Emmanuel Kant*, suggesting that Kant had a penchant for his butler Lampe? Heine could have been right: Kant, too, was a nihilist.

Andrzej Serafin

Allan Bloom

ON ARISTOTLE'S *ETHICS*[1]

... atoms, bones and joints and sinews, and that's the reason why he was sitting there. And he said, "But these bones would be running down the road to Megara if I hadn't decided to stay here, because I thought it was better." And they have to explain that. The question is, can you really explain your ... I run into this more in terms of a kind of simple acceptance of Darwin, a simple acceptance of a certain kind of modern science, which is very *easy*, at least in the first place. But the difficulty is, how do they explain that additional thing in man on his farm? Also the fact that the being who reasons about being a determined being who can be aware that he's determined, and the fact that he's determined, the only thing that's capable of that. Those are long things that you have to deal with each student and see what you can speak to them about. But I think that they can be charmed enough by the alternatives to recognize that there are real difficulties. And that's all there is, that's all you can do. Because I don't think we're in a position to resolve those difficulties. And Aristotle's description of choice and voluntary and so on *is* highly difficult to understand. Of course he has to deny Socrates, too, in a certain way. Obviously, ignorance is an excuse, and Aristotle has to admit there's ignorance, but he has to distinguish between culpable and nonculpable ignorance. But his discussion of the ends is somehow not adequate, at least at the end, the proper ends seem to be more naturally accessible by natural consciousness, and Aristotle would have a right to assume that somebody who had lived in the age (a) of revelation and (b) of ideology, or decent men can be ... I mean, think of the decent, stupid men who were in Nazi Germany. It's very hard for me to blame them simply in the same

[1] This transcript contains the only surviving portion of Allan Bloom's 1983 lecture on Aristotle's *Ethics*, delivered at Boston College as part of the "Philosophic Perspectives" lecture series. It featured Bloom discussing various thinkers, including Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Tocqueville, and Nietzsche. The recording was recovered in 1995 with the assistance of Ernest L. Fortin.

way that extreme moralists would. But then you would have to be a philosopher, and how many men are philosophers. That would reduce morality to philosophy. At the same time, somehow or other, we do recognize that decent politics require responsibility and that we can praise and blame decently, although Aristotle, of course, is very careful not to have fanatic blame. I mean, we have moved in our times between no blame at all, you know – my no-fault murder – to the most extreme indignation, which the Father Baragan, I think, represents. The extreme is that everyone's responsible for everyone and everything. There's no moderation on either side of the discussion. And Aristotle presents a moderate pitch, but I think every one of these formulae, every one of the formulations are in themselves just formulations, and you can say the opposite. What he says, what you have to teach them is that ... well, try to take the opposite one and see if you can understand the moral law [...]. It is *the* virtue that is least agreeable, least connected with the clear perfection of the soul, least in relationship to the end. And that's one of the reasons why Aristotle – you see very clearly from the very first one – why Aristotle has to make that connection. He won't do what Kant does, but he won't do what Hobbes does. He's a kind of middle ground, which somehow lacks the theoretical attractiveness of one or the other, but which really handles the thing. Of course, you can say that the courageous man in many ways is happier, a man who can handle his fear. But still, it's a problem. It's a very interesting discussion, of course, and it's the only place where he discusses false forms of a virtue. This is five false forms. Anyway, I won't go into that now, but the discussion of moderation is always great fun because there's also Aristotle's peculiar form of delicacy is there. He discusses ... it has to do with food and sex, and he discusses almost only food, by slight little hints indicates the man who wishes he had a neck long enough, as long as a crane, to have greater pleasure, which of course will remind him of other possibilities and so on in the hidden, forgotten other parts of moderation or object of moderation. But then why should liberality and magnificence – which seem to deal with external things, money – be higher than courage and moderation?

[...]

Although I always hate to interpret things in terms of ... that just because he had this particular intention, I think it's also in the nature of the thing because it has to do with benefactions, treatment of others. It is in a way of getting beyond the body and a kind of superior morality, which will find its ..., you see, I don't like to think that he *began* with the proud man, but in a way, the proud man is a kind of culmination of what was naturally there. There is no question that it is better to give than to receive if you've got. I mean, it's really hard to get kids to believe it's better to give than to receive, unless you're just preaching to them. But I think that they can also understand what a pleasure it is to be the one whom everybody looks up to and hence teach them how to be a good football player and so on, rather than to learn how ... because it shows their power, which is the way Aristotle understands it. Now, the two virtues are really magnificent. I mean, liberality and magnificence, both are virtues that modern men don't like. Courage is still popular. Moderation is not popular because we believe in self-expression. Liberality they would like the least. Why? Because it's an aristocratic virtue. You gotta have money. The poor man can't be liberal. And that's just very painful for us to take. It obviously depends somewhat on fortune. Aristotle doesn't concentrate on that fact, but it's true.

Then, magnificence is even worse because you have to have a tremendous amount of money. And the characteristic activity of the magnificent man is to build temples. And, of course, the implied in all of that, when you discuss it, is: What is the purpose of the moral life? In one sense, you choose morality for its own sake, for the sake of the noble. You do these things simply because they're the right thing to do. But if a man has moderation and courage, money, what is the real satisfaction? The only connection with eternity is somehow by way of the gods, in a way imitating the gods, or at least being the greatest of the citizens, building a temple to the gods. What do people usually do with great sums of money, great men? They build themselves ... Well, first they want automobiles and TVs and airplanes, and so on. But once they have exhausted all of that, that's so petty, what can they do? Leave a great monument to themselves, which is somehow connected with eternity, and the only connection of the gentleman with eternity, the gods, and the building of beautiful things to the gods. And this is Aristotle's expression of that. Then comes the extraordinary discussion on pride which I shan't go into. I mean, you all know that passage, I'm sure. But it's a marvelous description of a type, in a way it's a very selfish type. But it's the grandest type, the man who says, "I should be first." And who, by saying he should be first, this would be absolutely anathema to everything today, to be elitist, the man who says he deserves to be first, the man who loves beautiful but useless things, who won't run because nothing is important enough, who gets honor, but who despises it. And his true goal is honor, which seems to us wrong, it's unhealthy. But that's what produces a certain kind of *grand* ambition and hence *grand* activity, the virtues. When we say morality, we usually mean things that are accessible to all people, what every decent man can have. And that's fundamentally courage, moderation, perhaps willingness to offer charity, as opposed to liberality – those would be the virtues that most people think because they're accessible to all. But Aristotle would say, "Take a man like Alcibiades, who was a rascal, and then take an ordinary decent man. Which do you prefer?" Now, I think we all prefer the ordinary decent man, but I don't believe it. Alcibiades is a rascal, but he shows certain human powers you just can't help but admire. Those human powers tamed and given a proper direction seem to be part of human perfection too. And that's what the proud man is. It's taking seriously the phenomenon that motivates a certain kind of man whom we find dangerous. And you can say the biblical tradition finds them dangerous, but also the moderns, picking that up from a very different point of view from the Bible, because these men start wars. These men insist upon being honored, as we used to say, they'll fight those who don't honor them. And there are a couple of little things, problems about the proud men. In a way this seems to be the peak of the moral life. But in the first place he seeks for honor, but in a way he despises it, so at the very end, it has something empty about it. You can see that beautifully characterized in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Caesar, who's conquered the world, is bored. It really isn't an end that's self-satisfying. And the second thing, and the more interesting one from this point of view, is that he has a tendency to remember the benefits he has done and to forget the benefits he has received. We should go to ask Zeus for a favor. You don't say to him, "Well, I did this and this for you, and you owe it back to me." You say, "Zeus, you did this for me, you did this for me, now do this for me." But you see, there's a certain form of injustice implied in that because you forget benefits given, since the character of the proud man is to show his *independence* of necessity. He

can play the role of the god. So, Book 5 on justice, it turns out there are two peaks of the moral life: justice, which has to do with doing good for others and remembering benefits and paying them back. I won't say anything more than that. And magnificence or ... no, not magnificence – pride, I would call it, greatness of soul. Pride, which forgets benefits, which takes oneself seriously, which is self-oriented. And those two are slightly different things. And you can say that two great traditions of the moral problem are represented in these first five books. One is the simple virtues of ordinary goodness and the heroic virtues or the grand virtues, and the other is magnanimity versus justice. And you can say the moderns tried to simplify that in various ways, usually by choosing goodness and forgetting the heroic virtues in that opposition, and on the other, like Hobbes, choosing justice, or, like Descartes, choosing magnanimity, but mostly justice, and justice meaning the social virtues as opposed to the virtues of self-perfection. But for Aristotle, those two are at a tension; it is a presentation of the whole moral phenomenon.

Now, Book 6 – we obviously have to rush through. It's so amazing about Aristotle. I thought I didn't remember a thing, and I don't remember very much, but it's taking me more than I thought it would. Book 6 deals with a natural extension. Well, you have to have the virtues. Well, the virtues are nature – you have to have the proper nature for it – habit, but then you have to have the principle of choosing. So you have to discuss prudence. But as soon as you discuss prudence, you're in the intellectual sphere. And when you're in the intellectual sphere, you have to realize that there are two virtues, two intellectual virtues: prudence and wisdom, which deal with different things. Aristotle makes a fundamental distinction: prudence, which calculates toward the ends; and wisdom, which understands nature and the whole of things. And you see, Aristotle's whole moral philosophy, as you can see, somewhat stands on the fact that there *is* a separation between prudence and wisdom, that the moral life has an independence, a certain independence at least from the theoretical life. That's one side of it. In second place, that there is prudence, that there isn't a simple moralism: obey the commandments simply. Every moral rule, I believe, in Aristotle can be broken somehow in the name of prudence. There are no single simple rules like the Ten Commandments. But that suddenly brings you out into a new world, which is beyond the moral world, when he suddenly tells you that he deals with the things that are always ... prudence deals with man, and man is not the highest thing, that there are things about man, but of course, man can know those things, and so that's part of man. But in a way, you don't talk much about that in this context. And suddenly, at the beginning of Book 7, he says, let's have a fresh beginning. And it's no longer virtue and vice only, but it's virtue and vice, self-control and lack of self-control, and heroic virtue and bestiality. Suddenly the presence of a theoretical life expands and complicates the moral world. He talks about that but only passingly. But it's very important to see that. And then a discussion of pleasure and a defense of pleasure. And then, the two books on friendship. And then another discussion of pleasure. Isn't that beautiful? You see, friendship surrounded by pleasure. See, the moral virtues had to do with duty. A certain kind of effort. Friendship is pleasure, doesn't require effort, and is superior to justice. There can't be claims of justice among friends. Friendship is the goal of political life, but political life really isn't the same as friendship. And it's somehow superior to the moral life, but the moral life is necessary *to* friendship. But also, you'll see, true friendship also requires a theoretical life

because what have men really got in common? You know, somebody said at lunch today, they don't have my toothache. I believe it was Father Flanagan did not have my toothache and therefore was able to take it with the kind of ease, the ease of science. But he could never have my toothache nor I his. But what we *can* have is we can have the same vision of things, the same understanding. It's the only thing men really have in common. You know, when you and I are concentrating on the same problem in mathematics and understanding the role of 1. Today, the only form of communicating is making love. But of course, if two people are having their own pleasures, this is the only communicating, and that's really ultimately the only basis of friendship. So, the discussion of friendship provides the link between the moral life and the theoretical life. And it is a basis on which the ordinary gentleman can understand something of the theoretical life, transcends ordinary morality, there's a gentleness and so on about friendship.

Now, that passage on friendship should be read with the greatest of care because it shows how reasonable Aristotle is, I mean the peak of it. I just want to read to you the passage that I find most moving. And it doesn't really mean much ... you have to lead them up to a peak. There has to be a crescendo, and it can be very, very exciting because it's the only way to come to this. I mean, by the way, the three kinds of friendships which they can understand. But then he talks about why men prefer doing benefits than receiving them. This is not the peak passage, this is 9.6 or 9.7, the 9.7.3, 9.7.2, but this is not the passage I want to concentrate on. But it might be held that the real reason lies deeper. He said, people like to do benefits because then they hold people in – how shall I say it? – in debt. You see, in Machiavelli, from a political point of view, he says, it's nonsense to make benefits the basis; fear is a much surer tie, you know.

> But it might be held that the real reason lies deeper, and that the case of the creditor is not really a parallel. With him it is not a matter of affection, but only of wishing his debtor's preservation for the sake of recovering his money; whereas a benefactor feels friendship and affection for the recipient of his bounty even though he is not getting anything out of him and is never likely to do so. [Nic. Eth. 9.7.2]

I believe this to be true. I really do think we love our children more than we love our parents. That we love our students more than our students love us – if we're decent teachers – which is a sad situation, by the way, if you think about it, for ourselves.

> The same thing happens with the artist; every artist loves his own handiwork more than that handiwork, if it were to come to life would love him. This is perhaps especially true of poets, who have an exaggerated affection for their own poems and love them as parents love their children. The position of the benefactor then resembles that of the artist; the recipient of his bounty is his handiwork, and he therefore loves him more than his handiwork loves its maker. The reason of this is that all things desire and love existence; but we exist in activity, since we exist by living in doing; and in a sense one who has made something exists actively, and so he loves his handiwork because

> he loves existence. This is in fact a fundamental principle of nature: what a thing is potentially, that its work reveals an actuality. [Nic. Eth. 9.7.3-4]

So from the point of view of selfishness, but it's almost as based upon a more elaborated notion of the soul. He's able to derive the basis of benefaction. It's so beautiful, and it's so true. You know, there's no moralism or talk about their empty altruism or something in that, but the love of one's own existence causes one to .... And this is what that comes to, these vague formulae that don't mean anything. And then he goes through this question of whether one should have friends, that first one has to love oneself, and that one is one's own best friend. And then there is this question of why you need friends. In a way the gods don't need friends, but sometimes we would say that the man who had no friends would be unhappy. "Again, if we examine the matter more fundamentally, it appears that a virtuous ..." – this is 9.9 or 9.7:

> Again, if we examine the matter more fundamentally, it appears that a virtuous friend is essentially desirable for a virtuous man. For as has been said above, that which is essentially good is good and pleasing in itself to the virtuous man. And life is defined, in the case of animals, by the capacity for sensation; in the case of man, by the capacity for sensation and thought. But a capacity is referred to its activity, and in this its full reality consists. It appears therefore that life in the full sense is sensation or thought. But life is a thing good and pleasant in itself, for it is definite, and definiteness is a part of the essence of goodness, and what is essentially good is good for the good man, and hence appears to be pleasant to all men. We must not argue from a vicious and corrupt life [...] and if one who sees is conscious that he sees, one who hears that he hears, one who walks that he walks, and similarly for all the other human activities there is a faculty that is conscious of their exercise, so that whenever we perceive, we are conscious that we perceive, and whenever we think, we are conscious that we think, and to be conscious that we are perceiving or thinking is to be conscious that we exist (for existences, as we saw, is sense-perception or thought); and if to be conscious one is alive is a pleasant thing in itself (for life is a thing essentially good, and to be conscious that one possesses a good thing is pleasant); and if life is desirable, and especially so for good men, because existence is good for them, and so pleasant (because they are pleased by the perception of what is intrinsically good); and if the virtuous man feels towards his friend in the same way as he feels towards himself (for his friends as a second self) – then, just as a man's own existence is desirable for him, so, or nearly so, is his friend's existence also desirable. But, as we saw, it is the consciousness of oneself as good that makes existence desirable, and such consciousness is pleasant in itself. Therefore a man ought also to share his friend's consciousnesses of his existence, and this is attained by their living together and by conversing and communicating their thoughts to each other; for this is the meaning of living together as applied

> to human beings, it does not mean merely feeding in the same place, as it does when applied to cattle. If then to the supremely happy man existence is ... [Nic. Eth. 9.9.7-10]

You see, the point is that one sees in one ... I mean, I didn't get the right line here, but the friend is like a mirror of oneself. One can't see oneself, so the friend extends our consciousness of our own existence. And that's the deepest cause, that is so beautiful when really developed, the phenomenon of friendship.

All right, I won't say anything more about Book 10. Again, the discussion, the profounder discussion of pleasure. And he asserts, of course, that there are pure pleasures. That's what's denied by Hobbes and Locke. That's the reason why work isn't awful. Because what do you want? You see an apple on a tree; in order to eat it, you've got to pick it, that's painful, it's work. Aristotle says, there are certain kinds of pleasures like smelling a rose, which there's no pain before and no pain afterwards, that which can be goals in themselves. But of course, the implication is the moral life is not such a pleasure, only the theoretical life, and he ends with praise for the theoretical life as the highest life. There are two or three things that are questionable, but two fundamental things. The first is, Is the moral life necessary to the contemplative life? The answer, I believe, is *no*, so says Thomas Aquinas. That's a really great question about morality. Second, if the moral virtues serve the intellectual virtues, then you would have to say that a society, the end of a society was the intellectual virtues, but no society has as its end the intellectual virtues. So that there's always an upside down and a problem, and the moral virtues politically make primary demands. So we have this marvelous architecture, which covers everything, then the link to the political at the end, which I won't talk to you about that link to the politics, the definition of ethics, not from feelings but from the ends of action, and the ends of action on the students, essentially politically. But, well, you see, there was an extraordinary richness, the obvious need for curtailing but obviously for spending time and really developing these phenomena, each in their own way, it can be the most thrilling experience that one was going to have, if one can pull it off, as it were.

[...]

[**Questions and Answers**]

Q: If you turn the student loose with the *Ethics*, with only a very peripheral introductory lecture to read the *Ethics* through appropriate cover, and we'll come back and discuss it. Do you think the average student could read this on his own and get anything out of it with any sort of ...?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so. Not really. I think there are certain things require training, training is what's lacking, and that's what we have to give. There are various problems in reading books in a way. We pick two kinds of books, or three kinds really: the *Apology* and the *Ethics*. They need real training. And you see, this is what's lacking, real competence. And they need leading, they have to have these things pointed out, they don't have the experience.

Q: ... Are Aristotle's *Ethics* more accessible than some of the other great books?

A: It's accessible in certain kinds of ways. In a way, it's very alien. They don't really like the style to begin with. But it's more accessible in that the level of common sense is

much more maintained. Whereas in Plato, you never know really what he's talking about because it goes so far. It's always the most radical, highest questions he's thinking about. It's always an enigma. So to a certain extent, I think they can have a more satisfying *ending* to this reading. But the first experience is rather repulsive. And I really just think they get lost in it, and they can't see. Look at all the years that all of us probably have read Aristotle and how closed it is still, and how many real problems there are. But I think the experience that I have talked about today could be gotten in a six-week segment, in which you met two or three times a week. But I don't think it can be done any shorter. And if you can't do it ... The *Politics* I'm willing to cut up a little bit. But the *Politics*, of course, is not as impressive a book, particularly for our kids. Normally you can take Book 1 and parts of Book 2 and then Book 3 on the regime and Book 7 and 8, something like that. And that I used to do, although I'm never sure how successful it was in getting them to read it. But they could describe the political phenomenon. But this is a book that I just have never been able to ... So I wouldn't answer your question. I don't want to answer because, I mean, I do have one point of advocacy here, I really think that you ought to spend more time on the books you're doing. I think that's absolutely of the essence. I suppose you could discuss some of the virtues, individual virtues, and that's valuable. But in a way it's a whole context of life in relationship to a whole set of traditions and alternatives, that it becomes interesting. And it's only in such a focus, I think it would be worthwhile doing. And I think you must feel that yourself.

Q: The tremendous tension in the course itself which partly perhaps accounts for the success between two valid things that most of us want to do. And we're not convinced that they can be done in tandem, but we're trying. One is that a really deep confrontation with at least some parts, at least some texts, at least some great books, and the other is this broad historical perspective, ...

A: I think you get both my way, to be perfectly frank with you. I don't think the historical perspective is that important. I mean, I think that if a person knows one book well, the innocence doesn't make any difference. He's gonna pick up the other things later, to be perfectly frank. I think it's easier, much easier to get that broad historical thing, you can tell them all the names, if you want to make them happy. It is that on the basis of the experience of one, which leads into the others, then you suddenly know what the issues are. [...]

[...]

But you see, if you took ...this is what I suggest it saves: if you made it a course of the *Ethics*, you could take five or six books, and then everybody else is somehow derivative from those things. And then you can mention the other names, how they fit in schematically in relationship to this. And I think that you know that, but the other way, the way you do it, I don't think you get this, I just don't think you can. I'm persuaded of this. And I'm persuaded that the necessity, the most important thing ... You see, I don't think they read. And I don't think they know how to read even in the very simplest sense. So in a way, I'd like to say that we can't have an argument because I win simply because of this necessity from the very beginning. And then after that, once you've done this, then you can argue about the broader sweep and so on. But my experience is that the students want to narrow more and more. And that's the way they really learn. Of course they know how to read books, and they're really passionately concerned, they'll pick up the rest. The

general knowledge is very secondary. And that's a very academic thing. The interesting thing is life and the effect on life.

[...]

Q: But the evolution of consciousness seems to be a really interesting story to tell. The means of approach ...

A: But I would argue that one only becomes aware of the evolution of consciousness if one gets a very strong perspective outside of one's own consciousness, and I think that only comes again by this way, and you see I'm not sure their evolution of consciousness is not a decline. I mean, you see, and I leave those questions open in this way.

Does anybody want to talk about either what I was saying about the text? Does it seem a plausible general orientation? I realize how general it was, so it wasn't very satisfying. Or about the course? Because I'll be leaving you, and I really do, I now feel a certain involvement in your common enterprise.

Q: If you were teaching, let's say, Aristotle and Kant on *Ethics*, whether in one course context or another, to what extent do you make comparisons beyond the obvious the virtue of reward versus the virtue of happiness?

A: I would do it a good deal. I mean, I frequently do it. I frequently mention it, you know. I constantly just refer to their experience, and so-and-so says this and so-and-so says that. They have to be aware of the difficulties. Aristotle's constantly raising them, too. I would do it constantly, but on the basis of what I'm feeling at that particular moment, or on the basis of particularly what they are, trying to see what *they* think about things. The big thing is to make them take it seriously, and the only way you can do that is beating them over the head, saying, this guy is saying what you're saying, and you don't like what he's saying. That's one thing. Or the other is to say this guy is saying what you're not saying, and it's better than you. But the better one is to make them see, they all hate Hobbes, and what if you're a Hobbesian. You know, you live that way, and that's all you care about. I mean, that kind of thing. But then also the kind of internal thing, once they've built a little structure, you know, if you have the Locke, and you have the Hobbes, and so on. I'm not suggesting you have to go terribly, terribly deep. I think you can do ten or eleven books in a year. But that's it. I don't think any more.

Q: I have a similar question about textbook comparisons. Which type of these two comparisons, to your mind, comes off better? A comparison between, let's say, Book 1 of Aristotle's *Ethics* on happiness and Aquinas's treatise on happiness [...], which follows the same general line but with a subtle room for difference, or, the contrast between Aristotle's *Ethics* and Keynes, which are very obviously contrasting. In other words ...

A: I think I would do both. I mean, I don't know which I feel more comfortable [with] ... because it's very interesting. I think both very interesting. Now, I'm not saying that one is more interesting than the other because it depends partly on their immediate concerns. If they're Christians, and serious Christians, then I think that the former is more interesting because it really leads into the question that we were talking about this morning, which is, that's the reason why perhaps Pascal in there also would be extremely interesting. You see, as I say, there are very many ways of organizing with ...

Q: Do you have any feedback of the psychological process that goes through a student's mind when he compares two texts that are apparently similar and he begins

to see differences; or the process that goes through a student's mind when he compares two texts that are apparently very different, and then he begins to see the similarities?

A: Yeah, I think they're both equally satisfying experiences. But I mean, that's a very good question. I think the big thing, the most exciting psychological process is for them to see themselves in a strange light and to see new possibilities. And you can say that the *great* thing, the beginning point, less than the religious question – although that may be different at Boston College – is the egalitarian issue. That's what they really are. And that's the one thing they care about, it's the one principle, and it's the one thing they're absolutely sure is right. That's very helpful.

Q: [...] question of morality, the *Ethics* of Aristotle [...]

A: Well, that's a very dicey question because you don't want to make them immoral. At the same time, since they're already so immoral, if you moralize with them, it's better to raise questions about morality. You know, they're already so immoral that they may have a patina of moralism. And I try to run a kind of dialectic, which is sometimes less successful than I think, impress them with the moral life, the moral virtues, but then also teaching the morality of doubt And that can have, I suppose, bad effects. It's very hard to say ... to the extent that [...] and so on, usually the very best students see this, and they tend to be very decent people, but ...

Q: [...] morality [...]

A: I think that it's terribly important, raising the doubts about the moral life. One can do this with a very great deal of ambiguity and a kind of Socratic way, raising the doubts, of course, and while you're raising the doubts in order that you can make more serious arguments for it. And at this level, I'm not sure that that definitely becomes clear. But I am very frequently misapprehended; I didn't sense how quick the breakdown in morals that was occurring was. It was about '66-'67. And I make a certain criticism of ordinary American bourgeois life, which by the way, I think is the most decent available alternative. But it's by freeing themselves partly from it that I think they can see its strengths and also what its dangers are. And I realized my course would be very popular because I appeared to be making an even more powerful critique of the bourgeois than the Marx that they wanted. I had to make a very sudden shift in gears, that I was being misused.

Well, [...] if there are any last words, I should be glad to ....

Q: Maybe there's time for another question. Do they raise the question themselves about the contrasts in the life of a philosopher versus the life of a statesman, ...

A: No. Well, you can ask them, but first you have to talk about what the political life is because most of them have no idea of the political life, and you have to construct so much, which is part of the natural human potential, but which they don't have much opportunity for in contemporary society. I mean, they have only private lives. And the life of a philosopher doesn't mean very much. But when you see Aristotle chooses political life, in that early section, to discuss, why not the contemplative life? And then ... read the *Apology*, or you can raise it. But no. I mean, in a way, you have to make them aware of the contemplative life. That's what we could say is *the* great problem of liberal studies. This is one of the ways of doing it. Aristotle does it. This is what Aristotle's doing. He's taking men who are not contemplative and making them aware of the contemplative life

by way of, not by saying you have to live the contemplative... but by the way of their very moral virtues. He does it quite subtly: their moral virtues, then he leads them to prudence, and then mentions the theoretical life, and then raises friendship, which is an experience they also have.

Q: [...]

A: But the treatise on friendship is only interesting after one has developed the idea of the virtues. I mean, I really do think one has to go through the whole book. I'm going to be very intransigent in that, and you have to forgive me, I come from the outside, I don't recognize the right problems you have in the course and so on. But I have a view of what a course ought to be. Not in its particular content. But I do believe there's a certain method, and I believe it's one that they'll go for. And that is, I don't want you picking and choosing ... You know, I don't think you have to read the whole amount, I think Book 1 will do. But I think the *Ethics* could be the focus for the whole course, with the treatise on friendship as somehow the swing point between the various ... It's very hard to explain friendship, friendship in terms of modern psychology. [...] The simple fact is when people don't have friends anymore. Oh, it's just overwhelming when you know, if you really can get them to the right mood. In small groups, you can, particularly if they've been slogging through it for four or five weeks and they're wondering where they are, and then all of a sudden they reach a bright, sunlit upland that they understand. Then everything in the past comes through. You don't have to worry if it's not going well at first because frequently that's a good thing. Here's how we stumbled into it, you know.

[tape ends]

Brian Marrin

JEPHTHA AND THE APPEAL TO HEAVEN: THE POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF LOCKE'S *SECOND TREATISE OF GOVERNMENT*

And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

Judg. 2:18

John Locke is universally recognized as a pivotal figure in the history of modern political philosophy and especially in the liberal or constitutional tradition in political philosophy. Thus the great critic of political liberalism Carl Schmitt can say that Locke is the "unconditional representative of the constitutional state [*dem unbedingten Vertreter des Rechtsstaats*]" who "gives the classic formulations for the constitutional state [*die klassischen rechtsstaatlichen Vormulierungen*]" and elsewhere that "for Locke's doctrine of the constitutional state [*rechtsstaatlichen Doktrin*] and the rationalist eighteenth century, the state of exception was something incommensurable," such that Locke failed to recognize the problem of the sovereign decision.[1] Citing Locke's dictum that

[1] Carl Schmitt, *Die Diktatur* (Munich: Duncker und Humblot, 1921), 200; *Verfassungslehre* (Munich: Duncker und Humblot, 1928), 140; *Politische Theologie* (Munich: Duncker und Humblot, 1922), 20.

not the personal command of the monarch but only "the Law gives authority," Schmitt immediately adds that "Locke does not see that the law does not say to whom it gives authority." As a norm for decision-making (*Entscheidungsnorm*), the law can only prescribe "how a decision ought to be made" but not "who ought to make it." It can only answer the question of competence, then, by referring back to the content of the law, which is an answer fit only for "fools."[2] For Schmitt, then, Locke is a typical example of the failure of liberal political theory to recognize the inevitability of the sovereign decision and so the very nature of politics. And even as Schmitt recognizes Locke's doctrine of prerogative, which resembles his own doctrine of the sovereign decision, he dismisses as superficial and question-begging Locke's answer to the question "Who shall be judge?" by invoking the People, for this, again, is to resolve the question of competence by what for Schmitt are empty appeals to natural right.[3] Scholars have noted, however, that Schmitt seems to systematically misread Locke (as well as other early liberal constitutionalist thinkers), assimilating him to the constitutional rationalism of Hans Kelsen,[4] and that Locke in fact offers a middle path, which in presenting a "version of liberalism that recognizes the necessity of extralegal political action yet struggles to constrain discretionary power," avoids many of the criticisms that Schmitt levels against the liberal tradition.[5] What these analyses of Locke's doctrine of prerogative have mostly failed to notice, however, is that Locke's argument is embedded within an explicitly theological framework.[6] Thus, immediately after arguing that "the people shall be judge (II 240),[7] Locke explains that the question "Who shall be judge?" cannot mean "that there is no judge at all," for "where there is no judicature on Earth ... God in heaven is *judge*. He alone, it is true, is judge of the right. But *every man is judge* for himself ..., whether he should appeal to the Supream Judge, as *Jephtha* did" (II 241). The people, then, is only judge in its collective right to appeal to the supreme judge in Heaven, and the actions of the Judge Jephtha are the model of that appeal. Locke's "liberal" account of the right to revolt, then, is couched in explicit, if somewhat vague, theological language. What a close reading of the theological dimension of Locke's argument in the *Second Treatise*

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2 Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, 38-39.

3 Schmitt, *Die Diktatur*, 24.

4 Cf. William E. Scheuerman, "Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberal Constitutionalism," *Review of Politics* 58, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 299-322; Douglas Casson, "Emergency Judgment: Carl Schmitt, John Locke, and the Paradox of Prerogative," *Politics and Policy* 36, no. 6 (November 2008): 951-52.

5 See Casson, "Emergency Judgment": 947; Leonard C. Feldman. "Schmitt, Locke, and the Limits of Liberalism," *Konturen* 1 (2008): 3; also Vicente Medina, "Locke's Militant Liberalism: A Reply to Carl Schmitt's State of Exception," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (October 2002).

6 Of the studies of Schmitt and Locke cited in the previous note, only Casson, "Emergency Judgment": 964, notes it in passing. Monserrat Herrero, "The Quest for Locke's Political Theology," *Ética & Politica / Ethics & Politics* 18 (2016): 108-9, recognizes the theological-political implications of Locke's doctrine of prerogative and, by inexplicably ignoring Locke's acknowledgement of the right to rebellion, actually assimilates his position to that of Schmitt. For the necessary complementarity of prerogative and the right to rebellion in Locke, see Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of Modern Executive Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 288.

7 All parenthetical citations in this paper will be to the section number of the first or second treatise as reproduced in Laslett's text (John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988]). All oddities of orthography, grammar, or punctuation in the cited passages follow the reproduction of the seventeenth-century text. Emphasis is mine unless otherwise noted.

of Government reveals is that, contrary to Schmitt's reading, he is not primarily concerned with formulating an internally consistent liberal *theory* of government but rather with the *pragmatic* question of ensuring as much as possible a balance of powers that would avoid the twin evils of tyranny and civil war. As such, at least in the case of Locke, the inconsistencies or contradictions that Schmitt identifies in liberal constitutional theory are intentional responses to what Locke understands to be the insoluble problem of politics. And most importantly, while Locke recognizes that theological-political disputes are a great cause of political instability and violence and so takes great pains to circumscribe their role in political discourse, he recognizes that to eliminate all theological discourse from politics in the name of "consistency" would itself be an act of tyranny and that it is precisely at the moment of the "sovereign decision," and the revolt it might inspire, that the "appeal of Heaven" becomes not only inevitable but even justified. While Schmitt, then, sees the liberal tradition as tending inevitably toward the "depoliticization" of the political sphere, Locke, though always striving to reduce the risk of political violence, nonetheless recognizes that its elimination is impossible and so proposes a " self-critical constitution" that aims to promote a liberal practice that is fundamentally political without falling into the excesses of Schmittian decisionism.[8]

APPROACHING LOCKE'S POLITICAL THEOLOGY

It should hardly need mentioning that Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* are involved as much in theological as in political controversy. What is perhaps surprising about the works is how the connection between the theological and the political is primarily negative and even downplayed. The sustained attack on Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* in the *First Treatise* has the purely destructive task of showing that there was no scriptural support for the divine right of kings by paternal authority, while the *Second Treatise* has no thematic discussions of any theological subject such as might be found in similar works of political philosophy by Hobbes, Spinoza, Pufendorf, or even such early Lockean writings as the so-called "English" and "Latin" tracts.[9] Indeed, the absence of any sustained and explicit theological argument from Locke's mature statement of his political thought would seem to be entirely in keeping with his attempt in his writings on toleration to separate the temporal and spiritual powers.[10] This is not to say, however, that the *Second Treatise* displays no theological or scriptural elements; as we have already seen, these elements can be found at pivotal points in the development of Locke's argument. One of the most frequent and indeed perhaps *the* most important theological motif is the repeated allusion to the Old Testament figure of Jephtha and his "appeal to Heaven," found first in Locke's discussion of the state of war.[11] What is initially striking is that in a book

[8] For the phrase, see Mansfield, *Taming the Prince*, 240.

[9] For these two tracts, see John Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: The University Press, 1997). The tracts treat exclusively the problem of the *adiaphora* or "things indifferent" in religious worship and whether government had the authority to define by legislation the specifics of their observance. As such, they were concerned with an explicitly theological-political theme.

[10] In his introduction (Locke, *Two Treatises*, 19, 86), Laslett notes the connection between these two themes for Locke.

[11] For Jephtha (I shall retain for convenience the Lockean spelling), see Judges 11-12. His is mentioned once in the *First Treatise* (I 163) as an important counter-example to the transferal of authority along paternal lines among the

with almost no scriptural allusions whatsoever, one relatively obscure biblical passage could be referred to again and again.[12] An examination of the passages in question, moreover, shows that Locke's interpretation of the Jephtha episode plays perhaps *the* pivotal role in his argument concerning both the foundation of civil society and the right to revolt, such that it has been called the "*locus classicus* concerning controversies between the government and the people."[13] It is all the more curious, then, that, even when its importance has been noted, the figure of Jephtha has received practically no sustained interpretation in Lockean studies.[14] The reading presented here argues that in Locke's understanding the introduction of theological discourse into the properly political sphere poses a fundamental challenge to the authority of civil government – that "Judge on earth" – and therefore risks a collapse into a state of war. In fact, one might say that for Locke the political appeal to divine sanction constitutes a sufficient condition for, as well as a declaration of, the state of war. Insofar, however, as no society can be so ordered as to avoid altogether the risk of tyranny, the "appeal to Heaven" stands as a last resort against the unjust usurpation of political power.[15] Locke, then, on the one hand, means to show that the introduction of robust theological discourse in political affairs leads ultimately to the dissolution of politics properly understood as grounded on rational interest and the balance of powers and sets the rival parties in a state of war determined by main force and nonrational appeals to divine sanction; on the other, insofar as he admits that the state of civil society, in which alone politics properly speaking is possible, *cannot* be absolutely removed from the state of nature, he must leave open the possibility of an appeal to heaven as a rallying cry for subjects in their revolt against the encroachments of a despotic executive power. Locke's argument is made as much by example as by open discourse: in the *Second Treatise* it can be discerned mainly by attending to the context of the various employments of the story of Jephtha, and its significance becomes easier to grasp once one has read it in light of Locke's earlier writings on similar themes. Locke's failure to present

ancient Israelites. In the *Second Treatise* he is mentioned by name in secs. 21, 109, 176, and 241; at II 168 the same passage is alluded to in connection with the question "Who shall be judge?" but without naming Jephtha.

[12] The only other biblical figure mentioned as often – indeed more often – is Adam, who is mentioned as far as I can tell seven times. Two occasions, however, are simply references to the conclusions of the *First Treatise* (1, 61), one a passing reference to the "sons of Adam" (202), three references in denial of the right to property by Adam's donation (25, 36, 39), and last a discussion of the duty of parents to raise to maturity their children, who were not, like Adam, "created a perfect Man" (56). See Samuel Moyn, "Appealing to Heaven: Jephthah, John Locke, and Just War," *Hebraic Political Studies* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 291. On the role of Adam in the *Second Treatise*, see Joanne Tetlow, "Locke's Political Theology and the *Second Treatise*," *Locke Studies* 17 (2017): 208ff.

[13] Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 215. In Locke, *Two Treatises,* 282, Laslett recognizes that the figure of Jephtha is "crucial to the scriptural foundations of his case about civil society and justice."

[14] Andrew Rehfeld, "Jephthah, the Hebrew Bible, and John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*," *Hebraic Political Studies* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 60-93, and Moyn, "Appealing to Heaven," are exceptions. Rehfeld presents an exhaustive analysis of the discrepancies between the biblical narrative and Locke's use of it, without advancing any more than provisional hypotheses as to Locke's reasons for doing so. Moyn presents an excellent analysis of the appeal to heaven as the expression of the subjective but fallible confidence of the righteousness of one's cause where objective criteria are lacking but does not attempt to incorporate it into any general reading of Locke's political theology in the *Second Treatise* or elsewhere.

[15] See Moyn, "Appealing to Heaven," 300.

this argument more explicitly in the *Second Treatise* is a symptom of his desire that political discourse, especially that concerning the origins and legitimacy of government, avoid as much as possible the controversies of theology. Locke, however, recognizes no perfectly satisfactory solution to the problem posed by the state of nature or religious sectarianism. His aim is not to lay out the plan of a rigorously consistent political system but to defend a pragmatic conception of politics as an imperfect balancing of competing rights-claims meant to avoid in as many cases as possible the appeal to force.

"WHERE THERE IS NO JUDGE ON EARTH": THE STATE OF NATURE AND THE STATE OF WAR

Locke concludes his analysis of the state of nature and its relation to the state of war in the following passage:

> To avoid this State of War (wherein there is no appeal but to Heaven, and wherein every [*sic*] the least difference is apt to end, where there is no Authority to decide between the Contenders) is one great *reason of Mens* [*sic*] *putting themselves into Society*, and quitting the State of Nature. For where there is an Authority, a Power on Earth, from which relief can be had by *appeal*, there the continuance of the State of War is excluded, and the Controversie is decided by that Power. Had there been any such Court, any superior Jurisdiction on Earth, to determine the right between *Jephtha* and the *Ammonites,* they had never come to a State of War, but we see he was forced to appeal to *Heaven*. *The Lord the Judge* (says he) *be Judge this day between the Children of* Israel*, and the Children of* Ammon*, Judg.* 11. 27. and then Prosecuting, and relying on his *appeal*, he leads out his Army to Battle: And therefore in such Controversies, where the question is put, *who shall be Judge?* It cannot be meant, who shall decide the Controversie; every one knows what *Jephtha* here tells us, that *the Lord the Judge*, shall judge. Where there is no Judge on Earth, the *Appeal* lies to God in Heaven. That Question then cannot mean, who shall judge? whether another hath put himself in a State of War with me, and whether I may as *Jephtha* did, appeal to Heaven in it? Of that I my self can only be Judge in my own Conscience, as I will answer it at the great Day, to the Supream [*sic*] Judge of all Men. (II 21)

This intricate tissue of reasoning and scriptural exegesis stands in a sense as Locke's considered statement of the need for civil society and government, even granted the distinction between the state of nature and the state of war. In order to understand it properly, we must briefly retrace the steps of Locke's argument. What will emerge as the crux of the matter is the "very strange doctrine" of the right of every man in the state of nature to be judge and executioner of the law of nature (II 9). This doctrine has the twofold consequence, first, of normatively grounding by the transfer of right the power of the magistrate to punish in civil societies and, second, because *every* man has this right, of practically entailing the great likelihood of disputes over adjudication of the natural

law and so collapsing into a state of war (II 13).[16] The law within us is in great part the instigator of the war without.

The development of this stage of Locke's argument has been summarized most ably by Dunn, whose characterization of some of Locke's first premises, however, fundamentally misunderstands Locke's general mode of presentation in the *Second Treatise*.[17] "Men being all the Workmanship of a Sovereign Master, [...] they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one anothers Pleasure." Thus, "[e]very one as he is *bound to preserve himself* [...] so by the like reason when his own Preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to *preserve the rest of Mankind*, and may not unless it be to do Justice on an Offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the Preservation of the Life, the Liberty, Health, Limb or Goods of another" (II 6).[18] Therefore:

> that all Men may be restrained from invading others Rights, [...] and the Law of Nature be observed, which willeth the Peace and *Preservation of all Mankind*, the *Execution* of the Law of Nature is in that State, put into every Mans [*sic*] hands[...]. For the *Law of Nature* would [...] be in vain, if there were no body that in the State of Nature, had a *Power to Execute* that Law. (II 7)

The presence of law implies the sanction to enforce that law. It is significant that, despite his invocation of the so-called doctrine of divine ownership, Locke does not here, as elsewhere, raise the possibility of divine enforcement of the law of nature through future rewards and punishments, for such a statement, by granting to God the ultimate authority to punish, might obviate the need to grant that authority to all men and so threaten the separation of religion and government that the *Treatise* tacitly advocates.[19] Furthermore, men have a right to punish transgression of the law "to such a Degree, as may hinder its

[16] What Casson, "Emergency Judgment": 957, calls the "epistemological difficulty" of the state of nature but which Locke attributes more plausibly to "self-love, ... ill nature, passion and revenge" (II 13). At II 124, Locke also admits that not only bias but also "want of study" may lead to disputes about the right of nature.

[17] See II 8-11. See John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 165-70. Dunn's presentation of the specifics of Locke's argument, which I follow in the immediately subsequent exposition, are in general terse and accurate. It is therefore somewhat surprising to read his assertion that "[w]hen force without right disrupts the proper peace of the state of nature every man's hand is justly against the aggressor, not because of the universality of the threat in natural terms *but because the aggressor has violated the Hebraic unity of the tribal family and bears in consequence the brand of Cain*" (168, my emphasis). Dunn completely misconstrues Locke's mention of the fratricide Cain (II 11), which does not replace but confirms Locke's rational argument, and in general makes too much of Locke's rather vague references to the "chain of being" and pays too little attention to the utilitarian arguments that stand shoulder to shoulder with the quotations from scripture (88ff.). He reads Locke as the kind of radical Puritan political theologian that Locke explicitly condemns. For the utilitarian character of Locke's arguments in the *Second Treatise*, cf. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 230-36; for Locke's manner of writing, see ibid., 165: "Locke makes it particularly difficult for us to recognize how modern he is or how much he deviates from the natural right tradition. [...] [He] had the good sense to quote only the right kind of writers and to be silent about the wrong kind[...]."

[18] In the *Essays on the Law of Nature* (Locke, *Political Essays*), Locke argues (2.89) that it is the "light of nature" – that is natural reason, and not simply revealed truth – that leads us to this conclusion. For the obvious difficulties of his supporting arguments, see Dunn, *Political Thought*, 87-95.

[19] Cf. Steven Forde, "Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke," *American Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 2 (April 2001): 400.

Violation" (II 7). Thus punishment, up to and including capital punishment, may be meted out according to the severity of the crime – that is, according as the criminal presents a greater or lesser threat to the lives and safety of mankind, "so far as calm reason and conscience dictates." In addition to this, the injured party in particular has the right of seeking reparation from the wrongdoer for any damages done to his property, "that is, his Life, Liberty and Estate" (cf. II 87). This right is founded solely on the individual's right to his own property and is not conferred on other men like the common right to punishment, though others have the right to assist him should he choose to prosecute this right.

It is unnecessary here to recount the relatively straightforward account of how the natural right of the individual to punish normatively grounds the social right to punish belonging to the government established by contract. For it is not to normatively ground the right of government to punish but to set forth the practical argument for the *need* to establish an executive governing body bearing such a right that is the central aim of these sections of the *Second Treatise*. If the generally distributed right to punish violations of the law of nature brought no inconveniences with it, then it would never occur to men to transfer their right to punish, legitimately or otherwise, to a sovereign body. But happily for the prospects of government, many inconveniences do attach to such a state. Put most simply, the common right of all men, granted by the law of nature, to punish its transgression operates on a normative plane in a way identical to the dynamic of universal natural right in Hobbes, and the solution, too, is nearly the same. As in Hobbes, it is granted that men are often partial in the adjudication of right in their cases and that "[i]ll Nature, Passion, and Revenge" will often out-sway "calm reason and conscience" (II 13). Locke's only caveat is that the establishment of a tribunal (which Hobbes would have called "right reason") must not have absolute and arbitrary authority, for such government is in fact more dangerous than the ordinary state of nature where individual men have but little power to harm each other compared with the massive power of an unchecked sovereign (ibid.). Absolute monarchy, which Locke will later attack as an infringement on the principle of divine ownership and so on the law of nature, is also undesirable on the purely Hobbesian grounds of the preservation of self and property.

It is not the mere conflict of individual and thereby partial adjudications of right, however, that is the cause of conflict in the state of nature. It is the conceptually distinct attempt of one man to bring another under his arbitrary power that initiates a true state of war and is the true cause of the need of society. The state of nature, then, is not a state of war but is especially prone to occasion such a state. "[F]orce, or a declared design of force upon the Person of another, where there is no common Superior on Earth to appeal to for relief, *is a State of War:* And 'tis the want of such an appeal [i.e., appeal to a common judge] gives a Man the Right of War even against an *aggressor*, though he be in Society and a fellow Subject" (II 19). Every state of war actually presupposes a state of nature, that is, a situation without a "common Superior" existing at the very least between two individuals, such as the highwayman and the traveler he has waylaid. The difference between this case and that of two parties who belong to no society at all is that, on a later occasion, those who are members of a society may go before the "common Superior on Earth" for arbitration and to settle their private state of war (II 20). For those entirely outside the state of society, however, there is no such option. For them there is only the

"right of war." Or, said otherwise, those in the state of nature, "having no appeal on Earth to right them, they are left to the only remedy in such Cases, an appeal to Heaven" (II 21).

JEPHTHA THE JUDGE

We are now in a position to properly interpret the passage on Jephtha quoted above. Lacking any appeal on Earth – that is, any established magistrate governing by positive law in accord with the laws of nature – men have only their individual claims to right based on their individual judgment. Moreover, the bias of self-love and irrational passion insures that in many cases men will come into conflict over the interpretation of right, or, what is effectively the same, make claims on the property of the other (II 13, 123-24). In such cases there is no way for one man to have his judgment peacefully prevail upon the other, for it is assumed in the first place that the difference is caused by a nonrational motive or a misinterpretation of right that has gone beyond the point of friendly argument. There is thus a double course open to them: in terms of their action, they may have recourse to the right of war in self-defense (understood as the defense of their right, for both assume themselves to be in the right), and they may also "appeal to heaven." This appeal, however, is subject to certain limitations. First of all, it can be made only when there is no "superior Jurisdiction on Earth" to settle the dispute. Nor is it made to be an appeal to decide the controversy of right instead of the jurisdiction on earth, nor even to decide the rightness of entering into a state of war. To say "*the Lord the Judge, be Judge this day*" is merely equivalent to "I my self can only be judge in my own Conscience, as I will answer it at the great Day, to the Supream [*sic*] Judge of all Men" (II 21).

The appeal to heaven, then, seems to have three leading characteristics for Locke. First, it is made only upon entering the state of war – even serving as a declaration of war – and as such is associated with a situation above all others to be avoided. Second, it is ineffectual except as a rhetorical accompaniment to a resort to main force and is not even a certain guarantee of the rightness of the cause. Third, it is no more than an expression of one's own conscience, insofar as one submits oneself to the judgment of God on the Last Day; that is, it has no immediate significance whatsoever for one's actions or the evaluation of them but is simply an assertion of the subjective confidence in one's own cause. With this in mind, it is somewhat puzzling why Locke should mention the appeal to heaven at all, let alone repeat it many times throughout the *Second Treatise*. If the appeal to heaven is simply a matter of conscience, why not simply say that the state of war involves an appeal to conscience and avoid the trouble of adducing a scriptural passage of questionable relevance and an interpretation of questionable accuracy?

In order to understand the significance of the figure of Jephtha for Locke, it is essential to see how unusual his employment of this scriptural passage actually is and especially how much it leaves out. This can most easily be seen by comparing it to Grotius's employment of this same passage in his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*. On the question of the right to make war, Grotius writes:

> And further, God himself prescribed to his People certain general and established Rules of making War (Deut. 20:10, 15), thereby plainly shewing that War might sometimes be just, even without a special command from

> God; [...] And since he does not declare the just Reasons of making War, he thereby supposes that they may be easily discovered by the Light of Nature. Such was the Case of the War made by *Jephtha* against the Ammonites, in defense of their borders, [...]. And it is very remarkable, what the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews records, that *Gideon, Barack, Sampson, Jephtha, Samuel,* and others*, by Faith subdued Kingdoms*, [...] (Heb. 11:33, 34), in which Place (as we may gather from the Context) under the Notion of Faith, is included their assured Confidence, that what they did was pleasing to God.[20]

This passage is in certain ways similar to the passage from Locke quoted above, but it is its differences that are instructive for us. It is to be noted first that Grotius provides a combination of Old and New Testament passages to make a general scriptural argument about the specifics of the right to make war, whereas Locke makes only the single reference.[21] Again, although Grotius's understanding of faith as "Confidence, that what they did was pleasing to God" might at first appear similar to Locke's understanding of the appeal to heaven as an appeal to conscience, he differs markedly from Locke in quoting the suggestion of St. Paul that "Faith subdued Kingdoms." For Locke, the appeal to heaven, as an appeal to conscience, is nothing but an expression of subjective certainty that does not guarantee the bestowal of divine favor.[22] Last and most importantly, Grotius is elaborating a specific *right* of one state to make war on another based on principles "easily discovered by the Light of Nature," whereas for Locke it is *by definition* the offending party that enters into the state of war, only then giving the injured party the right of resistance, so that strictly speaking there is no *right* to make war at all but only to respond in kind (II 16, cf. II 176). For Locke it is not a question of war between states (he does not seem to recognize any *ius gentium*) but of the collapse of civil government into civil war.

We will see later how Locke's understanding of the right to rebellion leaves room for the "appeal to Heaven" and a limited political theology. But first it is necessary to see how Locke's use of Jephtha implies a radical circumscription of theological discourse in politics. Unlike Grotius, Locke fails to make any connection between the appeal to heaven and the actual outcome of the battle. The story of Jephtha itself, however, asserts just such a connection. To quote the passage in question at greater length, Jephtha, addressing the Ammonites, says:

> [W]herefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me. The Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon. Howbeit the king of the children of

[20] Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, ed. Richard Tuck (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), I.ii.2. Grotius mentions Jephtha on two other occasions: once as not raising arms against the Ammonites before exhausting diplomatic options (II.xv.9), and once again among a number of examples of men who were transferred from the status of leaders of bands of thieves to legitimate rulers (III.iii.3).

[21] Sections of Grotius's text not quoted also contain references to Abraham, Melchizedek, Moses, Joshua, and David. As far as I can tell, the *Second Treatise* lacks any explicit reference to the New Testament. For the significance of this last point, see Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 205-6.

[22] Moyn, "Appealing to Heaven," 294, does not see the essential difference between Grotius's and Locke's use of the story.

> Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephtha which he sent him. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephtha [...] and he passed over unto the children of Ammon[...]. So Jephtha passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them: And the Lord delivered them into his hands. (Judg. 11:27-33)

Contrary to what Locke suggests above, Jephtha does not have to wait for that "great Day" to know whether his appeal is heard. Rather, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephtha," implying God's immediate approval of his appeal and assistance in the immediate prosecution of the war. Locke removes Jephtha's appeal to Heaven from its context and so radically changes its meaning.[23] Beyond his passing remarks about the danger of superstition, Locke's prudence keeps him from any explicit discussion of political theology in the *Second Treatise*, making is difficult to assess his particular motive for so radical a reinterpretation of the Jephtha story.[24] A glance at some of his unpublished writings as well as at his "Letter Concerning Toleration," however, confirms his awareness of the danger posed to civil peace by religious zealotry and his intention of limiting as much as possible the place of explicit theological discourse in political debate. In light of these other writings, his employment of the figure of Jephtha in the *Second Treatise* comes to light as *the model* of the legitimate scope and limits of Lockean political theology.

LOCKE ON RELIGION AND POLITICS

There is no doubt that Locke shared with earlier thinkers in his tradition an all-too-keen awareness of the dangers posed by religious disputes to civil order. In his early and unpublished "English Tract" written against Edward Bagshaw's *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship* (1660),[25] Locke writes that "I no sooner perceived myself in the world but I found myself in a storm, which hath lasted almost hitherto, and therefore cannot but entertain the approaches of a calm with the greatest joy and satisfaction," and therefore that he "would men would be persuaded to be so kind to their religion, their country, and themselves as not to hazard again the substantial blessings of peace and settlement in an *over-zealous contention about things, which they themselves confess to be little and at most are but indifferent*."[26] He admits that though slavery is a condition suitable only for beasts, unrestrained liberty brings its own dangers. "I know not whether experience (if it may be credited) would not give us some reason to think that were this part of freedom contended for here by our author [i.e., freedom in things indifferent advocated by Bagshaw] generally indulged in England it would prove only a liberty for contention, censure and persecution and turn us loose

[23] See Rehfeld, *Jephtha*, 72; Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 214: "[Locke] fails even to allude to the fact that Jephtha's statement is made in the context of a controversy about the right of conquest, as well as to Jephtha's entirely un-Lockean view of the rights of the conqueror." As Strauss well understood, this failure is entirely in keeping with Locke's intention in writing the *Second Treatise*. For Locke's very selective use of the biblical "appeal to Heaven," see also Nathan Tarcov, "Locke's *Second Treatise* and 'The Best Fence against Rebellion,'" *Review of Politics* 43, no. 2 (April 1981): 216n.

[24] In part, no doubt, so as not to distract from its specific polemical intent and embroil it in even more controversy. See Forde, "Natural Law," 403.

[25] For information about the circumstances of this tract, see Goldies's comments in Locke, *Political Essays*, 3.

[26] Locke, *Political Essays*, 7 (my italics).

to the tyranny of a religious rage."[27] Explaining how religion or the mask of religion is an especially dangerous cause of rebellion, he argues that:

> men finding no cause that can so rationally draw them to hazard this life, or compound for the dangers of a war, as that which promises them a better, all other arguments [...] can give but small encouragements to a man to endanger that and to improve their present enjoyments a little, run themselves into the danger of an irreparable loss of all. Hence have the cunning and malice of men taken occasion to pervert the doctrine of peace and charity into a perpetual foundation of war and contention, all those flames that have made such havoc and desolation in Europe, and have not been quenched but with the blood of so many millions, have been at first kindled with coals from the altar, who, forgetting their calling, which is to promote peace and meekness, have proved [to be] the trumpeters of strife and sounded a charge with a "curse ye Meros."[28]

It is the mention of the last words, the "curse ye Meros" (Judg. 5:23), that encapsulates Locke's understanding of the dangers of theological discourse in politics. This common rallying cry of radical Puritan preachers[29] assumed a specific interpretation of Scripture and of its relation to contemporary believers. To adopt that cry was to identify one's own cause with the cause of the Israelites and so to claim for oneself and one's cause the same relationship to God that the Israelites claimed.[30] It was considerations of this kind that lead the early Locke to a more or less Hobbesian position as to the relation of Church and State. And even as he later abandoned his strictures on the ultimate authority of government and changed his position on the question of things indifferent, he could not have altogether abandoned the concern for avoiding religious conflict that originally led him to his early position.

Locke would later reverse his practical position of opposing religious freedom concerning the *adiaphora*, a change motivated not by any fundamental modification of his premises but rather by a new estimation of the relative dangers of unchecked liberty and despotism.[31] What Locke had argued in the early writings was that what God had not expressly legislated one way or the other was as such open for the magistrate to decide and that the interests of stability and the suppression of violent revolt rendered it advisable to impose such legislation.[32] Even then, however, Locke left an opening that shows that he

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[27] Ibid. In the "Latin Tract," Locke, after making what is virtually the same argument, mentions that "Germany, which is notorious for civil disasters, provides evidence of this" (55).

[28] Ibid., 41.

[29] See Goldie's note in Locke, *Political Essays*, 41n23.

[30] Locke, *Political Essays*, 40. See Num. 33:51-55.

[31] Compare the "Latin Tract" (Locke, *Political Essays*, 57-58) and "A Letter Concerning Toleration" in Locke, *Locke on Toleration*, ed. Richard Vernon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22-25. In both cases he relies on the distinction between "inner" and "outer" worship, the former encompassing the essential and properly religious domain of faith and opinion, the latter the non-essential (thus "indifferent") sphere of outward observances, such as particular modes of dress, rites or actions that do not bear on the fundamentals of the faith.

[32] Locke, *Political Essays*, 33-34, 56-57.

was perhaps already somewhat dissatisfied with this authoritarian position. Immediately following the passage quoted above, he writes:

> I know not therefore how much it might conduce to the peace and security of mankind if religion were banished the camp and forbid[den] to take arms, at least to use no other sword but that of the word and spirit, if ambition and revenge were disrobed of that so specious outside of reformation and the cause of God, [and] were forced to appear in their own native ugliness and lie open to the eyes and contempt of all the world, if the believer and unbeliever could be content as Paul advises to live together, and use no other weapons to conquer each other's opinions but pity and persuasion (1 Cor. 7:12-13), if men would suffer one another to go to heaven everyone his own way, and not out of a fond conceit of themselves pretend to greater knowledge and care of another's soul and eternal concernments than he himself, how much I say of such a temper and tenderness were wrought in the hearts of men our author's doctrine of toleration might promote a quiet in the world, and at last bring those glorious days that men have a great while sought after the wrong way, I shall leave everyone to judge.[33]

The double affirmation of religious freedom and toleration that here Locke merely entertains would later be advocated in the "Letter Concerning Toleration."[34] The argument of the latter, however, is primarily – though not exclusively – concerned with the deleterious results of governmental legislation for religion itself and not the strictly political harm that such interference could cause. As a journal entry from 1681 shows, however, Locke's concern with the dangers religion posed to politics did not slacken as his opinions changed. There he wrote that "three great things that govern mankind are Reason, Passion, and Superstition; the first governs a few, the two last share the bulk of mankind [...] but superstition is most powerful, and produces the greatest mischiefs."[35] In light of these passages, even the passing references to superstition in the *Second Treatise* take on new significance, and Locke's unusual treatment of the Jephtha episode can be seen to constitute an implicit rebuke to such appropriations of Scripture as that contained in the cry "curse ye Meros" and an attempt to disrobe the "specious outside" of ambition and greed.

At first reading, the story of Jephtha would seem just as amenable to appropriation by radical Puritan preachers as the "curse ye Meros" was. Jephtha states his case, calls God as his witness and judge, and proceeds with the aid of God to defeat them in battle. What is to stop someone from declaring his cause the cause of Jephtha and his enemies the children of Ammon? It was not difficult for Locke to find support in the New

[33] Ibid., 41-42.

[34] Cf. "Letter on Toleration," 37-40, especially for the attempt to show that freedom of religious worship is not a destabilizing force in society. The "Letter" offers several other echoes of the language of the "English Tract," such as the phrase "arms that do not belong to Christian warfare" (5 [translation modified]) and "different tracks going the same way on the same road" (18).

[35] From Peter King's 1830 *The Life of John Locke*, as cited in Peter C. Myers, "Between Divine and Human Sovereignty: The State of Nature and the Basis of Locke's Political Thought," *Polity* 27, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 642.

Testament for the separation of religion and politics,[36] but the case of the Old Testament was for obvious reasons more difficult. Locke had already implicitly denied the direct relevance of the latter in the "English Tract" when he wrote that "[t]he Scripture speaks very little of polities anywhere (except only the government of the Jews constituted by God himself over which he had a particular care) and God doth nowhere by distinct and particular prescription set down rules of governments and bounds to the magistrate's authority,"[37] but in the *Second Treatise* he advances this line of argument only implicitly, again with the figure of Jephtha.

In chapter VIII on the beginning of political societies, Locke incorporates the story of Jephtha, and the period of the judges in general, into a general account of the gradual progress of early human associations toward a properly political arrangement. The gradual expansion of paternal to tribal authority and eventually to a kind of primitive monarchy is argued to be the general course followed by all early societies (II 105-9). And it was the threat of war especially that induced men to put authority into the hands of a chief among them to lead them into battle (II 107).

> Thus we see that the *Kings* of the *Indians* in *America*, which is still a Pattern of the first Ages in *Asia* and *Europe* [...] are little more than *Generals of their Armies;* and though they command absolutely in War, yet at home and in time of Peace they exercise very little Dominion, and have but a very moderate Sovereignty, the Resolutions of Peace and War, being ordinarily either in the People, or in a Council. (II 108)

The current state of America, moreover, is reflective of the primitive state of Europe and Asia. Thus, "in Israel it self, the chief *Business of their Judges, and first Kings* seems to have been to be *Captains of War*, and Leaders of their Armies, which [...] appears plainly in the Story of *Jephtha*" (II 109). Locke proceeds to adduce a great number of scriptural passages relative to Jephtha and the other judges, as well as the kings Saul and David, in order to show the precise nature and extent of their authority. The result of this argument is twofold. First, by the juxtaposition of specifically biblical examples with a discussion of the pre-political societies of American Indians, Locke suggests that the case of the ancient Israelites is no more exemplary for the understanding of natural or political right than that

[36] Compare Locke's categorical statement that "[t]here is absolutely no such thing, under the Gospel, as a Christian Commonwealth" ("Letter Concerning Toleration," 418); as well a passage from a 1676 manuscript on the "Obligation of Penal Laws (Locke, *Political Essays*, 235-37): "The Gospel alters not in the least civil affairs, but leaves husband and wife, master and servant, magistrate and subject, every one of them, with the very same power and privileges that it found them, neither more nor less. And therefore when the New Testament says, obey your superiors in all things, etc. [Col. 3:18-22], it cannot be thought that it laid any new obligation upon the Christians after their conversion, other than what they were under before; not that the magistrate had any other extent of jurisdiction over them than over his heathen subjects: so that the magistrate has the same power still over his Christian as he had [over] his heathen subjects; so that, when he had the power to command, they had still, notwithstanding the liberty and privileges of the Gospel, obligation to obey" (236).

[37] Locke, *Political Essays*, 51. In the paragraph following the passage quoted in the previous note, Locke argues that, since heathen governments are obviously not set down by the command of God for the preservation of true religion but only for the preservation of the society itself, it is precisely there that one could find an example of the true extent and end of civil government (Locke, *Political Essays*, 236).

of any other society. The second point is the suggestion that the time of the judges was not a time of fully developed government but attained at the most to its earliest stages (II 110). Locke goes so far as to argue that the Old Testament judges, and even the first kings, were merely captains in war and exercised no strictly judicial function (II 109).[38] Thus, it is at most by way of illustration that such societies can contribute an understanding of the proper purpose of government, for they had not yet "found it necessary to examine more carefully the *Original* and the Rights of *Government*" (II 111). Thus understood, the Old Testament in its political use would stand merely as one source among many for insight into the origins of primitive societies, and not even the paradigmatic case, since "in the beginning all the world was *America*" (II 49).[39] Even if it could be said that the "government of the Jews [was] constituted by God himself," this is obviously not the case with the government of England, and it would be no more reasonable for a seventeenth-century Englishman to invoke the appeal of Jephtha than it would to follow the example of "the *Kings* of the *Indians* in *America*."

This is not to say that it would be any *less* reasonable in certain circumstances, and for obvious reasons Locke recognizes that it would have a more powerful rhetorical effect. Up to this point, we have considered the relation of the state of war to the beginnings of society and how Locke's specific use of the figure of Jephtha as an illustration of this relation when viewed in light of his early and late writings on the relation of religion and politics suggests both a wariness of the dangers of making religious claims in the political sphere as well as a politically secular reading of Scripture in the attempt to weaken the support for such claims. But this is not to say that Locke advocated openly or even tacitly the total banishment of religion from the political sphere, if only because he realized the inevitable limits of the political as such.[40] Locke, of course, like practically all thinkers of his time, had never questioned the necessity and legitimacy of some sort of minimal civil religion. "Everyone knows and agrees that God should be publicly worshipped."[41] But even if Locke had privately entertained the idea of an entirely secular society, there are two intrinsic limitations to political society on his understanding that would render the total elimination of theological discourse from politics both illegitimate and tyrannical. The limitations are, first, that no society is ever fully removed from the state of nature even as to its internal constitution and, second, that the usurpation of political authority by a tyrant is in itself a dissolution of legitimate government as well as a tacit declaration of war, rendering legitimate the right of war in self-defense and the appeal to heaven. These two limitations, in the final analysis, bleed into one. Locke, however, does not conceive of legitimate rebellion against a tyrant as in every way identical to the paradigmatic state of war and so must modify his understanding of that right of war and appeal to a judge not of this earth.

[38] See Rehfeld, "Jephthah," 75.

[39] M. Seliger, "Locke's Natural Law and the Foundations of Politics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 3 (July-September 1963): 343, argues that for Locke it is enough that "for civic purposes, dictates of reason based on natural laws of self-preservation are not counter-acted by scriptural principles."

[40] This same point is made, with different arguments, by Myers, "Between Divine and Human Sovereignty," who contrasts the bold claims for unchecked rationality made by Descartes with Locke's own more modest statements.

[41] John Locke, *Locke on Toleration*, ed. Richard Vernon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22.

To begin with the first limitation, scholars have long noted that for Locke there can be no complete exit from the state of nature.[42] In fact, this result flows almost deductively from the main premises of Locke's political theory. Civil society is established by the agreement of a group of men to transfer their right to judge and execute the law of nature to a common magistrate who will arbitrate between them and enforce its judgments through exercise of the force that they promise to transfer as well (II 87). But this power cannot be absolute, for the attempt of one party (the magistrate or government) to put another under its total control is the condition of the state of war and so is "inconsistent with civil society" (II 90, 93-94). The transfer of right, therefore, cannot be total and irrevocable, which leaves the subjects of a society to a certain extent still in the state of nature in relation to the government (II 149). But neither would there be civil society if the citizens could at any moment revoke their transfer of right. The Lockean solution to this dilemma is the separation of powers, which allows for sufficient power to be vested in the government to guarantee in most cases a preserve from the mere state of nature without usurping to any one body the absolute power that would again constitute a state of war. This point comes out most clearly in Locke's discussion of the prerogative of the executive power to act outside the law when they see fit. So long as these strictly extra-legal actions are performed for the common good (remember the motto placed at the head of the *Two Treatises* as a whole: *salus populi suprema lex esto*), no objection need be made, and there is no motive for the legislative to curtail them by explicit law (II 164-66). But problems arise when the people come to dispute their wisdom or rightness:

> The old question will be asked in this matter of *Prerogative*: But *who shall be Judge* when this Power is made right use of? I Answer: Between an Executive Power in being, with such a Prerogative, and a Legislative that depends upon his will for their convening, there can be no *Judge on Earth*: As there can be none, between the Legislative, and the People, should either the Executive, or the Legislative, when they have got the Power in their hands, design, or go about to enslave, or destroy them. The People have no other remedy in this, as in all other cases where they have no Judge on Earth, but to *appeal to Heaven*. (II 167)

It is politically advantageous to divide the powers of making and executing the law, but if King and Parliament come to a disagreement, then they risk a state of war no less than an absolute monarch and his subjects as a whole. This distinction between the legitimate and useful exercise of prerogative and its despotic use resembles nothing so much as Locke's discussion of the distinction between the state of nature and the state of war (II 19). For in both cases the distinction rests merely on the observance of, or failure to observe, laws that in the end can only be guaranteed by force. Indeed, we might say

[42] Seliger, "Locke's Natural Law," 352-53, argues that the "distinction between the state of nature and political society is not meant to be complete" and thus that his understanding of society is of necessity anti-utopian. See also his note on page 353 for citations of related literature. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 230-31, suggests an even more radical elision of the distinction, arguing that "the most obvious example of men in the state of nature under the law of nature is that of men living in civil society."

that political society is nothing more than the most convenient human arrangement for the execution and enforcement of the laws of nature, and as such only one highly specific permutation of the state of nature itself. The Hobbesian attempt to eliminate the state of nature root and branch is merely chimerical. Far from eliminating the right to an appeal to heaven, or even obviating its need in extremis, a sound civil society will always preserve its citizens' right to revolt should the executive power misuse its prerogative or should the legislature usurp to itself more powers than were at first entrusted to it.

These unavoidable limitations on the power of government and the transformative power of civil society grant room for a moderated theological politics, or better put, a moderated theological response to the breakdown of government. If civil society cannot completely banish nature, then neither can it prohibit the invocation of nature's God. However, in his careful treatment and circumscription of the right to revolt, Locke is sure to leave an opening that will admit no more than the limited political theology of the appeal to Heaven.

The principal difference between the right of rebellion and the state of war to which men in the state of nature are prone is grounded in Locke's distinction between the dissolution of government and the dissolution of society (II 211). If government violates the trust of the people and so forfeits its power, that right does not immediately devolve to each individual as originally, for each individual has already bound himself to every other when he contracted to form a community with them (II 243). Thus the right to rebellion belongs not to each citizen individually but only to the people collectively. It is only the collective determination of the people, or which is the same, the determination of the majority thereof, that can be the legitimate foundation of rebellion (II 242, cf. 176, 96). The majority, however, does not have the right to rebel on a mere whim. It is only the perception of a long and considered tendency in the government to usurp absolute power that justifies revolt (II 209-10). But to lay down certain criteria by which to judge a prince's intent regarding usurpation guarantees the proper use of these criteria no more than the reality of the natural law guarantees its obedience in the state of nature. Locke was already fully aware of the problem Schmitt alludes to in his criticism of him. Again, the question may be asked, who is to be judge? "*Who shall be Judge* whether the Prince or Legislative act contrary to their Trust? This, perhaps ill affected and factious Men may spread amongst the People, when the Prince only makes use of his due Prerogative." Of this, too, the people shall be judge, just as the individual is rightful interpreter of the law of the state of nature. "If this is reasonable in the particular Cases of private Men, why should it be otherwise in that of the greatest moment; where the Welfare of Millions is concerned, and also where the evil, if not prevented, is greater, and the Redress very difficult, dear, and dangerous?" (II 240). This would seem to leave the case of rebellion in no better standing than the simple case of the state of war, and for certain cases Locke intends this to be so. In both cases it is assumed that there is an aggressor and a victim and that the victim at least believes that there are adequate grounds for recognizing the acts of an aggressor. But if the proposition were to be insisted upon that the right to rebellion differed from the right of war merely because the body of the people has agreed to it, then it would seem that political society does not ensure what it sets out to do, that is, to allow its members to live in security from war and in the enjoyment of their property. Even if it is allowed that no practical system

of thought could withstand entirely the rigid demands of formal consistency, it would still remain necessary to explain how the right to rebellion (which apparently may take the form of a preemptive assault on a government that is collectively judged to be encroaching on the liberty of the people) is given the most stringent limitations possible. To the extent that Locke is in fact able to do this, it is by appeal to the very circumscribed political theology he included in the *Treatises*.

THE APPEAL TO HEAVEN AND LOCKE'S MINIMALIST POLITICAL THEOLOGY

We are finally in a position to address Schmitt's most direct criticism of Locke – namely, that his statement (II 240) that the "people shall be Judge" simply evades the problem of the sovereign decision. As we have already seen, Locke immediately continues to clarify his point, invoking once again the figure of Jephtha and the appeal to heaven, in a passage that is worth quoting in full:

> But farther, this Question, (*Who shall be Judge?*) cannot mean, that there is no Judge at all. For where there is no Judicature on Earth, to decide Controversies amongst Men, *God* in Heaven is *Judge*: He alone, 'tis true, is Judge of the Right. But *every Man* is *Judge* for himself, as in all other Cases, so in this, whether another hath put himself into a State of War with him, and whether he should appeal to the Supreme Judge, as *Jephtha* did. (II 241)

Locke, then, clearly recognizes that the statement, "the people shall be Judge," does not solve the problem of the sovereign decision. Indeed, one is inclined to say that for Locke it is precisely equivalent to the statement of the question, albeit in a rhetorical form that already suggests his preferred answer. For to say that the people shall be judge, in concrete terms, is simply to recognize that the balance of powers has been lost and that there is no longer any common judge recognized by all parties. All men, including the magistrate, are free, then, to appeal to the supreme judge in heaven. Once again, the appeal to heaven seems to be equivalent to a declaration of war, and the passages just cited appear in the context of an argument against absolute monarchy and in favor of the right to revolt. Moreover, it seems to provide an opening for the entry of divisive theological rhetoric into politics, which Locke always sought to discourage. Locke, however, had already taken pains to circumscribe the use of the appeal to Heaven, emphasizing that it must only be employed in times of great peril and where one is certain of the rightness of one's cause. In his discussion of the right of resistance to unlawful conquest Locke makes both his strongest claim for the justice of the appeal to Heaven as well as for the extreme caution with which it must be employed, providing perhaps his clearest statement on the subject of the appeal to Heaven:

> [T]he Conquered, or their Children, have no Court, no Arbitrator on Earth to appeal to. then they may *appeal*, as *Jephtha* did, *to Heaven*, and repeat their *Appeal*, till they have recovered the nature Right of their Ancestors, which was to have such a Legislative over them, as the Majority should approve, and freely acquiesce in. If it be objected, this would cause endless

> trouble; I answer, No more than Justice does, where she lies open to all that appeal to her. He that troubles his Neighbour without a Cause, is punished for it by the Justice of the Court he appeals to. And he that *appeals to Heaven*, must be sure he has Right on his side; and a Right too that is worth the Trouble and Cost of the Appeal, as he will answer at a Tribunal, that cannot be deceived, and will be sure to retribute to every one according to the Mischiefs he hath created to his Fellow-Subjects; that is, any part of Mankind. (II 176)

Here Locke's rhetorical strategy becomes fully evident. While at first it might be asked how the appeal to Heaven can be reconciled with Locke's general aims of separating theology from politics, his assertion that those who appeal to Heaven must be understood to be staking their eternal lives on the justice of their claim not only does not run counter to his general intention but even furthers it. First of all, far from granting immediate divine sanction to otherwise illegal acts, Locke insists that he who makes appeal to Heaven stands liable before the "Supream Judge" for any "mischiefs he hath created to his Fellow-Subjects; that is, *any part of Mankind*" (my italics). A sincere appeal to Heaven, then, would only be made in cases of such extreme injustice that the risk of eternal punishment would seem worth assuming. As Locke had written earlier: "Nor let any one think, this [appeal to Heaven] lays a perpetual foundation for disorder; for this operates not, till the inconveniency is so great, that the majority feel it, and are weary of it, and find a necessity to have it amended" (II 168). Moreover, since it is only when the majority makes its appeal to Heaven that rebellion is declared, the appeal to Heaven does not give sanction to the claims of radical religious minorities whose threat to the stability of society Locke sought to minimize. Again, since it is only the people (the majority) who legitimately make this again, Locke is tacitly basing his argument on the existence of a majority religion: in the immediate polemic context of the *Second Treatise*, the Church of England.[43] Far from promoting religious sectarianism and the conflict it brings, then, Locke's limited appeal to Heaven tacitly assumes the legitimacy of the civil religion of the majority. But this civil religion is never, strictly speaking, a *political* religion but intervenes only in the exceptional circumstances that Locke defines.

Thus Locke can put certain religious motives in the service of civil society without introducing specifically religious ends into the civil sphere. The appeal to Heaven as Locke

[43] Cf. II 209: "and Lives are in danger, and perhaps their Religion too"; also II 210: "and that Religion underhand favoured," which suggests the introduction by the Prince of a religion not favored by the majority, and specifically for Locke's context, Roman Catholicism. Cf. also a passage from the "Letter Concerning Toleration" (424) where the "Who shall be judge?" question appears yet again, this time concerning the encroachment by the government into the proper sphere of religion: "But what if the magistrate believe that he has a right to make such laws, and that they are for the public good and his subjects believe the contrary? Who shall be judge between them? I answer, God alone. For there is no judge upon earth between the supreme magistrate and the people. God I say is the only judge in this case, who will retribute unto everyone at the last day according to his deserts; that is, according to his sincerity and uprightness in endeavouring to promote piety, and the public weal and peace of mankind. But what shall be done in the meanwhile? I answer 'The principal and chief care of everyone ought to be of his own soul first, and in the next place of the public peace: though yet there are very few will think 'tis peace there, where they see all laid waste.'"

interprets it, instead of inciting civil conflict, comes to serve as an alternate source of legitimacy and caution in times when the apparatus of civil government fails to operate as it should. It might even be argued that civil religion, in the very attenuated form that Locke advocates in the *Letter*, supports in part the social cohesion that can itself survive the dissolution of the state. But Locke himself would not want to push such arguments too far. The ordering of civil society is for him not a question of theoretical system building but rather an intricate balancing act, not only of political powers as divided between the legislative and executive branches but indeed most of all of the powers and passions of the individuals for the regulation of whose actions government is established in the first place.[44] Too strong an emphasis on religion, any suggestion that the tribunal of heaven might exert its jurisdiction over earthly tribunals in any but the most extreme cases, might disturb the balance of this arrangement. It could be said that for Locke the state of nature recedes in importance, leaving the primary opposition as that between the state of peace and the state of war. Civil Society is simply the name given to the natural arrangement best suited to preserving us from war and ensuring peace, but it is not in the final analysis conceptually distinct from that state of the world when it all resembled America. Thus the story of Jephtha, a story of a war over disputed borders and conquest, can stand as an example pertaining to the very constitution of society while at the same time pointing out its limits. Locke's rereading of Scripture matches his own revised understanding of the state of nature and of war and peace.

It is hoped that, by drawing out the theological subtext of the *Second Treatise* through a comparison of its statements with some of Locke's other writings, a convincing case has been made for considering the question "Who shall be judge?" and the repeated discussion of the "appeal to Heaven" as central to Locke's argument about the beginning and end of civil society. At the same time, the dangers that Locke sees as resulting from the introduction of radical theological discourse in politics lead him to speak about these issues only with the greatest brevity and circumspection. Scholars have long found problematic Locke's refusal to thematically discuss natural law and the question of the compatibility of its foundations in both divine command and mundane self-interest.[45] To this problem this essay suggests no definitive solution, but it does suggest one reason

[44] See Mansfield, *Taming the Prince*, 240-41, 288.

[45] The literature on Locke and natural law is long and contentious. A resume of much of the scholarship of the last half-century can be found in Francis Oakley, "Locke, Natural Law and God – Again," *History of Political Thought* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1997). W. Von Leyden, "John Locke and Natural Law," *Philosophy* (January 1956), who first edited and published Locke's early essays on natural law, notes that while "the notion of a natural law can be seen to be of central importance in his treatise on Civil Government [...] disappointingly little is said by Locke about this notion" (23). He suggests later that "the development of [Locke's] hedonistic views and his philosophy of language in the *Essay* had made it difficult for him to attempt a full exposition of natural law or even to believe in it whole-heartedly" (26). Seliger, "Locke's Natural Law," 340, argues that the failure to articulate any theory of natural law was a result of Locke's belief "that his natural law concept did not need further epistemological elaboration" and that this is a "particular reason why the distinctive feature of Locke's natural law teaching lies less in a concern with the question of the compatibility of theorems of utility and traditional norms than in the purpose of justifying a competitive diffusion of political authority." Such a diffusion is necessary because "the specification and application of [natural law] as regards particular cases is less plain and more controversial" (354). Thus we can say that for Locke, at least in the *Treatises*, the central problem of natural law is not to provide a philosophical articulation of its nature but to construct a political apparatus in order to minimize the threat of competing claims to the support of natural law, which is obviously connected to the problem of appeal to divine authority in political

at least that might explain Locke's unwillingness to treat this important topic in any detail. Whether or not he thought himself to be in possession of a satisfactory account of natural law grounded in divine or human terms, presenting it publicly would have been prejudicial to his political aims. Too great an elaboration of the role of God and the divine punishments that Locke sometimes claims are essential to the divine grounding of natural law would have run the risk of being theologically divisive, for to make any definite claims about divine punishment is necessarily to tread into disputed theological terrain. On the other hand, failure to leave any room for the "Supream Judge" by providing a purely naturalistic argument would risk turning the natural right of revolt into a mere point of contention between prince and subjects. Locke's intentionally unsatisfactory natural law teaching reflects a view of politics in general as a necessarily unsatisfactory solution, faute de mieux, in the face of the threat of war.[46] Locke does not think that the elaboration of a coherent and abstract system of right, even if it were possible, would ensure that all disputes of rights claims would be adjudicated peacefully and therefore eliminate non-rational appeals to superstition and force. Reason cannot completely conquer the human passions, acquisitiveness, and superstition that lead to disputes and war. Whatever his private belief may have been, Locke's understanding of politics does not allow him to advocate for its complete secularization.

The majority of Locke's argument in the *Second Treatise*, therefore, is devoted to describing and advocating a form of society that can direct the passion for acquisitiveness away from conflict toward peaceful economic activity, but our examination has shown that concerns with religious superstition form a continual subtext to his central argument. Thus he reinterprets the "appeal to Heaven" to emphasize the gravity and risk of any situation in which it would be legitimate. By positing strict conditions for a legitimate appeal, and reminding the reader that the one who makes this appeal explicitly opens himself to divine judgment and so must be cautious of asserting the righteousness of his cause and certain when he does so, Locke presents the appeal to Heaven as something to be made not in rash confidence but in diffident consideration of the extremity of the political situation. Such an appeal is not to be made lightly and, far from adding divine sanction to an otherwise dubious cause, is only as valid as the cause it is invoked to support. Such an appeal is legitimate, and on rare occasions even desirable, because it marshals the rhetorical and moral force of religion in the name of a justice that cannot be determined with absolute certainty on Earth. It is an expression of the limitations of political rationalism of the kind that Hobbes, for instance, had advocated (and that Schmitt so violently rejects), but it is also presented so as to show the grave dangers that follow the attempt to tear down the political structures that protect us, however imperfectly, from the dangers of the state of nature.

For this reason, the appeal to heaven provides no criterion for determining its own legitimacy and vouchsafes no divine sanction based on public or personal revelation. It merely provides a fallible and not entirely rational rallying cry to stand against the fallible

causes. Or as Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 202, writes, Locke's "failure to embark on this great enterprise [of elaborating a natural law doctrine] was due to the problem posed by theology."

[46] Arguments similar to these are made in Seliger, *Locke's Natural Law*, and Myers, "Between Divine and Human Sovereignty."

duty of obedience to the executive authority when it exercises its extralegal but sometimes necessary prerogative. Locke argues that the authority of God may be invoked, but not often, only with extreme caution, and only when buttressed by arguments in terms of the common interest, just as he himself only invokes God or Scripture to support claims that he has already defended on rational and utilitarian grounds. By his appropriation of the language of divine appeal, Locke attempts to turn it from an encouragement to religiously inspired strife to the ultimate recourse in the failure of strictly political solutions to political problems. Instead of being a guarantee of divine sanction, the appeal to Heaven becomes a mark of human fallibility and a reminder of the prudence and political moderation this fallibility demands not only of "wise princes" (cf. II 168) but also of wise Peoples. Of course, no argument of Locke's could guarantee that this appeal would not be misused, and even its general success would depend on the change in religious sentiment whose possibility Locke entertained in the "English Tract" and advocated in the "Letter Concerning Toleration," but this only speaks to Locke's essentially pragmatic understanding of politics. By his frequent use of the figure of Jephtha as well as his pointed failure to make other Scripture-based arguments, Locke in the *Second Treatise*, as well, can be understood as contributing, however cautiously, to this revolution in the understanding of the relation of religion and politics.

Schmitt sees in Locke a would-be political rationalist who falls into incoherence upon encountering the problem of the sovereign decision. What this essay has tried to show is that Locke, recognizing that there is ultimately "no judicature on Earth" to adjudicate in the case of a dispute between sovereign and people (and so ultimately no *strict* distinction between the state of nature, the state of society, and even the state of war), did not see this problem as a theoretical one to be solved by a supposedly more consistent definition and application of the concept of "sovereignty," "politics," or the like but viewed the lack of "closure" in his political thought as an accurate reflection of the nature of political affairs. Furthermore, while recognizing and seeking to minimize the threat posed by religious disputes to civil peace, he also acknowledged that theological discourse could never be entirely divorced from the political except by the same tyrannical means that would suppress the right to rebellion. Thus he affirms both the right to rebellion and the "appeal to Heaven" in extremis. In the last analysis, he does not seek to subordinate the theological to the political but rather subordinates both spheres to the always fallible but unavoidably pragmatic standard of human prudence.

Jeremy Raymond Bell

RELATIVISM, SKEPTICISM, AND RATIONALISM IN LOCKE'S FIRST *LETTER CONCERNING TOLERATION*

Readers of Locke's first *Letter Concerning Toleration* are divided on the question of whether the *Letter*'s case for religious toleration is premised in part on some form of religious skepticism.[1] Locke's early critic, the Anglican theologian Jonas Proast, was probably the first to suggest an affirmative answer to this question, though he was prompted to do so not by the first *Letter* itself but by a passage in Locke's second *Letter* faulting him for defending the persecution of dissenters from his own religion on the supposition of this religion's being true. Proast had no more right to argue in this way for persecution on behalf of his own religion, according to Locke, than would any other apologist for persecution on behalf of his own, different religion.[2] In his reply, Proast demanded to know why not, and continued:

> I think it is no hard matter to guess at your reason, though you did not think fit expressly to own it. For it is obvious enough that there can be no other reason for this assertion of yours, but either the equal truth, or at least the equal certainty (or uncertainty) of all religions. For whoever considers your assertion must see that, to make it good, you will be obliged to maintain one of these two things: either (1) that no religion is the true religion, in

[1] Jeremy Waldron, "Locke: Toleration and the Rationality of Persecution," in *Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 69, denies that skepticism plays any role in Locke's case for toleration, as does Richard Vernon, *The Career of Toleration: John Locke, Jonas Proast and After* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 68. A more recent exponent of the same position is Diego Lucci, *John Locke's Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 179. J. Judd Owen, "Locke's Case for Religious Toleration: Its Neglected Foundation in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *The Journal of Politics* 69, no.1 (February 2007): 156-68, argues that Locke promotes religious toleration "by the assertion of radical theological uncertainty" (158). Sam Black, "A Skeptical Argument for Toleration," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (October 2007): 355-75, argues not only that the first *Letter* contains a skeptical argument for toleration but that this argument is stronger than Locke's "official" arguments. In the judgement of Adam Wolfson, *Persecution or Toleration: An Explication of the Locke-Proast Quarrel 1689-1704* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 7, a majority of Locke scholars deny skepticism any role, or any important role, in the first *Letter*.

[2] John Locke, *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *The Works of John Locke*, vol. 5 (London: printed for G. and J. Rivington et al., 1824), 111.

> opposition to other religions: which makes all religions true, or all false, and so either way indifferent, or (2) that though some one religion be the true religion, yet no man can have any more reason than another man of another religion may have, to believe his to be the true religion: which makes all religions equally certain (or uncertain; whether you please) and so renders it vain and idle to enquire after the true religion, and only a piece of good luck if any man be of it, and such good luck as he can never know that he has, until he comes into the other world. Whichever of these two principles you will own, I know not. But certainly one or the other of them lies at the bottom with you, and is the lurking supposition upon which you build all that you say.[3]

In his third *Letter*, Locke flatly denies that either of these principles "lies at the bottom" with him.[4] The contemporary Straussian scholar Adam Wolfson nonetheless argues in his book-length study of the Locke-Proast correspondence that skepticism, or the equal (un)certainty of all religions, is indeed "central" to Locke's case for toleration.[5] He seemingly discounts Proast's suggestion that, if not skepticism, then either relativism (the equal truth of all religions) or what one might call rationalism[6] (the equal falsity of all religions) is the "lurking supposition" on which this case is built. Moreover, he focuses on Locke's third and (incomplete) fourth *Letters* and does not discuss the possible role of religious skepticism, to say nothing of relativism or rationalism, in the first *Letter*. Yet the first *Letter* clearly merits special attention in any consideration of Locke's mature thought about the relation between religious toleration and religious truth-claims. Unlike the other three *Letters*, the first was not a reply to specific, public criticism of previously aired views but a response to a friend's private request to address the subject of toleration in general terms. Since Locke was consequently free to include in it whatever he wished, we may presume that anything he deemed of fundamental importance to the subject is treated therein, if only cursorily or implicitly. If, as Wolfson maintains, religious skepticism was central to his case for toleration as further developed in the correspondence with Proast,

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3 Jonas Proast, "From *A Third Letter Concerning Toleration in Defence of the Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration, Briefly Considered and Answered*," in *Locke on Toleration*, ed. Richard Vernon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 111-12.

4 John Locke, *A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works*, vol. 5, 419.

5 Wolfson, *Persecution or Toleration*, 61. An earlier presentation of some of Wolfson's thoughts on the exchange is "Toleration and Relativism: The Locke-Proast Exchange," *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 2 (1997): 213-31. John William Tate, *Liberty, Toleration and Equality: John Locke, Jonas Proast and the Letters Concerning Toleration* (New York: Routledge, 2016), chap. 9, likewise argues that a skeptical argument for toleration emerges in the course of the exchange with Proast. He notes Locke's express rejection of Proast's charge, argues that this leads him into contradictions, and countenances the possibility that he "perhaps" denies being a skeptic merely in order to "avoid a bad name" (a phrase Tate borrows from Maurice Cranston) (231), yet, unlike Wolfson, Tate is unwilling to pursue a Straussian reading of Locke. Locke, he claims, was clearly "a sincere Christian" (127).

6 "Rationalism" has different meanings, but in the present context I use it in the sense of the rejection, on supposedly rational grounds, of all alleged divine revelation. Locke's statement in the first *Treatise on Civil Government* that reason is man's "only star and compass" (I.58) can be, but need not be, read as an expression of "rationalism" in this sense. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 182. Leo Strauss uses the expression "thoroughgoing rationalism" in a similar though not identical sense in his discussion of Locke in *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 209.

we should expect to find evidence for such skepticism in the original *Letter*. If, as Proast alternatively hypothesized, Locke was not a skeptic but a relativist or a rationalist, we should again expect to find evidence for this in the original *Letter*.

The purpose of this paper is to argue on the basis of a close, Straussian[7] reading of certain passages in the first *Letter* that Proast's charge was well-founded – better founded, in fact, than Proast himself realized. Relativism, skepticism, and rationalism can all be found "lurking" within the *Letter* and, since each logically excludes both of the others, their co-presence is a puzzle that is only partially solved by observing that each in its different way strengthens the rhetorical force of Locke's case for toleration. I will seek to solve this puzzle satisfactorily and thereby to show that the concealed religious epistemology of the *Letter* is not merely skeptical but rationalist.

RELATIVISM AND RATIONALISM

At first glance, the suggestion that Locke's plea for religious toleration tacitly presupposes the equal truth of all religions seems outlandish. While opposing the use of force in religious matters, he grants that the magistrate, like "any good man," may make use of arguments to draw "the heterodox" (whom he also calls "the erroneous") into "the way of truth," and so "procure their salvation"[8] – hardly the words of a relativist. He later goes so far as to describe (noncoercive) endeavors "to reduce men from errors" as "the greatest duty of a Christian."[9] The third of his "considerations" in support of toleration is expressly premised on there being "but one truth, one way to heaven," and that a "narrow" one.[10] Proast himself initially had no hesitation in ascribing to Locke the proposition that "[t]here is but one way of salvation, or but one true religion."[11]

Yet some passages in the first *Letter* strike a distinctly more liberal note. Locke declares in the very first sentence that he considers religious toleration the "chief characteristical mark of the true church," seemingly because toleration is the most important manifestation of Christian "charity," "meekness," and general "good-will."[12] Actively to reduce men from error can hardly be "the greatest duty of a Christian" if passive toleration of what one takes to be error is the most important manifestation of Christian charity. Indeed, if its toleration is more important than its correction, doctrinal error or "heterodoxy" must surely be irrelevant to salvation.[13] It is not surprising that,

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[7] I assume without argument the legitimacy of a Straussian approach to Locke's writings, while recognizing that this approach remains controversial. Strauss's own, seminal interpretation of Locke is to be found in *Natural Right and History*, 202-51. For a detailed, sympathetic discussion of Strauss's thesis of "exoteric" writing, with specific reference to the writings of Locke, see Michael Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism: On Lockean Political Philosophy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), chap. 3.

[8] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Mario Montuori (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoof, 1963), 19. Quotations from the Latin are from the even-numbered pages of this edition. Except where otherwise indicated, English quotations are from William Popple's translation on the odd-numbered pages of this edition.

[9] Ibid., 81.

[10] Ibid., 21.

[11] Jonas Proast, *The Argument of the Letter concerning Toleration, Briefly Considered and Answered*, in Vernon, *Locke on Toleration*, 55.

[12] Locke, *Letter*, 7

[13] As Aaron Herold, "'The Chief Characteristical Mark of the True Church': John Locke's Theology of Toleration and His Case for Civil Religion," *The Review of Politics* 76, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 198-99, remarks, "[w]hat Locke

after a beginning so implicitly radical, Locke hastens to soothe any disquieted readers by citing Scripture three times in quick succession, by blandly but traditionally describing "[t]he business of true religion" as "the regulating of men's lives according to the rules of virtue and piety" and by avowing that any true Christian must "in the first place and above all things" make war upon his own "lusts and vices."[14] When, several pages later, he presents his three formal "considerations" in support of toleration, he assumes the existence of "but one truth, one way to heaven," as we have seen. However, around the center of the *Letter*, in the context of discussing the duty of "magistrates" or princes in "the business of toleration,"[15] he again begins to speak in more liberal accents. Drawing an analogy between the pursuit of heaven and an earthly pilgrimage, he assumes the persona of a pilgrim marching resolutely to Jerusalem in accordance with "the sacred geography." Though he and his fellow pilgrims have the same destination and the same map, he suffers ill-usage at their hands for such trifles as not wearing buskins, cutting his hair in a certain fashion, and eating certain foods. We shall find, he declares, that "for the most part they are such frivolous things [*minoris momenti res*] as these" that breed the "implacable enmities amongst Christian brethren." Provided only that they are "not accompanied with superstition or hypocrisy," such things "might either be observed or omitted" with no "prejudice to [...] the salvation of souls." The analogy with pilgrims at odds over practical matters like dress and diet to some extent obscures the chiefly doctrinal character of the divisions among Christians. One implication of the analogy is that Christian doctrinal disputes are "for the most part" frivolous, that is, irrelevant to "the salvation of souls." Christian brethren, Locke says, "opine unanimously and correctly of the substance of religion" (*de summa religionis eadem et recte sentientes*).[16] The way to heaven is apparently broad enough to accommodate Christians of any denomination.

This boldly latitudinarian conclusion seems inconsistent with Locke's earlier talk, echoing Scripture, of the "narrow" way to heaven. He uses this expression in a context where he is concerned with the "variety and contradiction" of religious opinions generally, not of Christian opinions specifically.[17] We cannot, however, reconcile the two passages by supposing that the doctrinal content of the (relatively) narrow way to heaven is identical with the doctrinal content of the "substance of religion" on which all Christians agree, in contradistinction to the doctrinal content of all non-Christian religions. Locke's particular concern in the earlier passage is with the various and contradictory religious opinions of princes. There were many Christian princes in the late seventeenth century, yet he clearly implies that only one prince in the world can be on the narrow way to heaven, while all others, Christian or not, must be on "ways that lead to destruction."[18]

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paradoxically suggests is that truly orthodox Christians are those who take their belief in their own orthodoxy least seriously."

[14] Locke, *Letter*, 7

[15] Ibid., 45

[16] Ibid., 47. Popple renders this "are all agreed in the substantial and truly fundamental part of religion."

[17] Ibid., 21

[18] In the second *Letter*, Locke says that "not one of ten, take which side you will, perhaps you will grant not one of an hundred, [are] of the true religion" (ibid., 77). As Wolfson notes in "Toleration and Relativism," 218, in the fourth *Letter* he is still more pessimistic, suggesting in one place that an individual's chances of being of the true

The statement that all Christian brethren agree on this "substance" serves a readily intelligible rhetorical purpose. Christians of one denomination can have no rationale for persecuting those of another if all Christians agree on everything necessary to salvation. Indeed, since the statement refers to "religion," not to "the Christian religion," it is an open question whether at least some non-Christians likewise accept this "substance," about whose content Locke is silent. We cannot exclude even the possibility that *all* non-Christian believers accept it. If the doctrines necessary to salvation were the common property of all religious believers, Christian and non-Christian, then there could be no rationale for *any* religious persecution. All religions would share a substantial kernel of truth. We might then loosely say that they are all true.

However, Locke's statement cannot be taken at face value, even apart from its inconsistency with his earlier avowal that most Christians, to say nothing of non-Christians, miss the "narrow way" that leads to heaven. If Christian doctrinal disputes are "for the most part" frivolous, then a small number of them are *not* frivolous, that is, a man's salvation may depend on his taking the correct side in them. Moreover, close attention to Locke's seemingly whimsical description of quarrels among pilgrims to Jerusalem suggests that he knowingly understates the possible importance of Christian sectarian divisions. One of the occasions of quarrel is his pilgrim's decision to "avoid certain by-ways" because they seem to him to "lead into briars *or precipices*."[19] To follow a by-way that may lead to precipices is to risk death, here presumably analogous to damnation. On the other hand, the pilgrim's fellows are perhaps convinced that one of the by-ways he wishes to avoid is in fact far safer than his preferred route and are anxious to keep him from harm or, at least, to stop him from setting others a dangerous example. By including this glaringly inappropriate instance in his list of "frivolous" grounds of ill-usage, Locke draws attention to the seeming rashness of the latitudinarianism he is nonetheless happy to espouse for rhetorical purposes. A dispute that strikes some as frivolous may in truth be a matter of eternal life and death.

This is not to exclude the possibility that his affirmation of universal Christian agreement on religious fundamentals is in some sense perfectly serious. One sense in which it might be so is suggested by a striking remark he makes in the context of addressing an objection to his (not specifically Christian) definition of "church." The objection is that no religious society lacking the mark of apostolicity can be said to be "a true church."[20] Locke responds by firstly demanding proof that Christ imposed any such law on his church, since his promise in Matthew 18:20 that, where "two or three" are gathered in his name, he will be in their midst "seems to imply the contrary." He asks the champions of apostolicity to consider whether, in light of this promise, two or three gathered in Christ's name would lack anything necessary to "a true church" (*veram ecclesiam*) – or perhaps, as the Latin could also be rendered, to "*the* true church." He then says: "Nothing certainly can there

religion may be as low as one in a thousand. John Locke, *A Fourth Letter Concerning Toleration*, in Locke, *Works*, vol. 5, 567.

[19] Locke, *Letter*, 47 (emphasis added).

[20] Ibid., 25.

be lacking to true salvation [*Nihil certe illic deesse potest ad veram salutem*];[21] which is sufficient for our purpose."

This brief and unobtrusive remark has far-reaching implications. Two or three individuals without a shared mode of worship and with opposing doctrinal commitments could gather "in Christ's name" and, according to Locke, lack nothing necessary to salvation. He does not, then, consider *any* doctrine or mode of worship necessary for salvation. Whatever the "substance of religion" might be, neither worship nor doctrine belongs to it. We might speculate that the one thing necessary for salvation is charity, the preeminent Christian virtue, or rather an attenuated or denatured form thereof. [22] If salvation does not depend on right belief or worship, then charity (love of neighbor) does not demand correction of the erroneous. It demands little, if anything, more than toleration of their beliefs, which Locke has already told us is "the chief characteristical mark of the true church." All Christians truly would agree on the (very minimal) "substance of religion."

If "charity" or tolerance exhausts the substance of religion, then the doctrines that distinguish different (Christian or non-Christian) religions from one another are at best unimportant and possibly also false. But one of a religion's doctrines is normally the supreme importance of these same doctrines. If they are unimportant, then presumably this is because they are also false. According to Locke, the ultimate end of every "church" or "religious society" is the salvation of the soul or "the acquisition of eternal life."[23] All religions, then, in some sense affirm that the salvation of the soul or the acquisition of eternal life is possible, provided human beings conduct themselves appropriately in this life.[24] If all disputed religious doctrines are false, however, we may well wonder whether the concern with the soul's salvation common to all religions is itself premised on a falsehood. Is there such a thing as the salvation or damnation of the soul? If not, then neither rightness of belief and worship, charity, nor anything else could be said to be necessary thereto. Locke's remark would then in one sense be a truism: when two or three are gathered in Christ's name, they lack nothing necessary to salvation – regardless of their beliefs and even regardless of their having or lacking the virtue of charity – because no one can *ever* be said to lack anything necessary to salvation.

This rationalist conclusion is in fact the only one compatible with the literal sense of Locke's remark and not wildly implausible. Does one's salvation truly require *nothing* more than that one gather together with one or two others in the name of Christ? Has Locke not denounced those who "usurp the name of Christian" while destitute of "holiness of life, purity of manners, and benignity and meekness of spirit" and implied that such

[21] Popple renders this, "Certain I am that nothing can be there wanting to the salvation of souls."

[22] Locke says in the Preface to *The Reasonableness of Christianity* that the "*spirit of the Gospel*" is that of "*Charity*." John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, in *Writings on Religion*, ed. Victor Nuovo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 89. For a discussion of Locke's denaturing or "secularizing" of Christian charity in the *Letters Concerning Toleration*, see Wolfson, *Toleration or Persecution*, 26-27.

[23] Locke, *Letter*, 29.

[24] This may strike us as an arbitrarily restrictive condition on what is to count as a "religious" society, but it is in any case understandable in the *Letter*'s polemical context.

people are "careless about [their] own salvation"?[25] Even if we disregard the more severely rigorist passages in the *Letter*, it surely cannot be his serious view that so little is requisite to salvation. If there is such a thing as eternal happiness or misery consequent on one's earthly choices, it is not credible that merely gathering with one or two others in the name of Christ is sufficient to attain the one and avoid the other. Assuming Locke is in earnest when he says that nothing can be wanting to salvation when two or three are so gathered, it is unclear how we can interpret this statement as anything but an oblique intimation that there is no such thing as salvation (or damnation), hence that nothing can ever be "wanting" thereto. All religions are false.

On this interpretation, it might seem that Locke's talk of the "substance of religion" on which all Christians (and perhaps at least some non-Christians) agree must after all serve the purely rhetorical purpose of persuading believing readers to repudiate persecution as a means for saving souls. Yet this is not necessarily the case. His statements about the socio-political ramifications of religious belief and about the psychology of persecutors point to a perspective from which such talk would be more than merely rhetorical, even if one denied that there is such a thing as the soul's salvation or damnation. We have seen that the substance of religion can ultimately be nothing more than "charity," that is, toleration. The rejection of toleration, that is, the opinion that any individuals, churches, or commonwealths have any "just title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other, upon pretence of religion," is a "pernicious [...] seed of discord and war," a "powerful [...] provocation to endless hatreds, rapines, and slaughters."[26] He has earlier appealed to the consciences of "those that persecute, torment, destroy and kill other men upon pretence of religion, whether they do it out of friendship and kindness towards them, or no,"[27] and he will later all but accuse persecutors of desiring "temporal dominion" rather than the salvation of heretics' souls.[28] A religion of love surely cannot approve "endless hatreds," and if we may reasonably suspect persecutors of being actuated not by love but by lust for power, the conclusion seems inescapable that there is an ineliminable tension between historic Christianity's paramount emphasis on love (charity) and its post-Constantinian acceptance of persecution. The precise nature of this tension is not as clear as some of Locke's rhetoric would suggest.[29] Nonetheless, if his diagnosis is correct, toleration truly is more "agreeable to the doctrine of Jesus Christ" than persecution.[30] More generally, toleration is more agreeable than persecution to any religion that professedly condemns "endless hatreds" – and what religion with pretensions to universal allegiance would not? Persecution in the cause of a religion without such pretensions, on the other hand, would be senseless; a non-universalist religion would necessarily be tolerant.[31] Toleration is therefore

[25] Locke, *Letter*, 8-9.
[26] Ibid., 39.
[27] Ibid., 9.
[28] Ibid., 43.
[29] Genuine love of souls, combined with sincere belief in the possibility of their eternal misery if they miss the narrow way to heaven, would seem on its face to supply an authentically charitable motive for religious persecution (whether or not such persecution would do its victims any real good).
[30] Locke, *Letter*, 15.
[31] It would not necessarily be peaceful.

basic to any internally consistent religious creed. Then again, precisely if all religions are false, toleration exhausts their genuinely "substantial" content.

FAITH AND DOUBT

Locke is certain that nothing can be lacking to salvation when two or three are gathered in Christ's name. On the present interpretation, this means he is certain of the falsity of all religions. Yet if this is correct, he surely cannot expect readers to rest content with a veiled assertion. He owes them some indication of the grounds of his certainty. It need hardly be said that he cannot set forth these grounds explicitly and in order.

A first clue appears in the passage following his statement that all Christian brethren are agreed in "the substance of religion." We have already seen that he subtly draws attention to this statement's rashness from the perspective of any serious believer in the possibility of salvation and damnation. Even if most, but not all, doctrinal disputes are frivolous, men with a care for their souls need to identify the few that are not and to take the correct sides in them. In short, they need to discern which is the true "narrow way" to heaven. Still maintaining his latitudinarian pose, Locke brands as "zealots" those who insist that there is only one such way.[32] Granting their thesis for argument's sake, however, he asks what follows from it. "[I]n this great variety of ways that men follow, it is doubted which is this right one," and "neither the care of the commonwealth, nor the right of enacting laws, does discover this way [...] more certainly to the magistrate, than every man's private search and study discovers it unto himself." He evidently means to suggest that the "zealots'" thesis cannot therefore be used to justify religious persecution.

The precise meaning of "it is doubted" (*ambigitur*) is not obvious.[33] Who are they who doubt? One possibility is that *all* men doubt which is the true narrow way. (Perhaps some refuse to admit their doubts, even to themselves.) A likelier possibility is that all men who have given any serious thought to religious questions doubt which is the true narrow way. In either case, such universal religious doubt could hardly be accidental; we would have no good reason to hope for its future overcoming.[34] Locke would on this interpretation be adumbrating a kind of religious skepticism. If, to avoid this conclusion, we were to interpret him as affirming only that *some* men (or only some of those who have given serious thought to religious questions) doubt which is the true narrow way, his implicit reasoning would seem manifestly inept. If a certain magistrate happens not

[32] Locke, *Letter*, 47.

[33] Owen, "Locke's Case for Religious Toleration," 158, identifies this as the locus of the first *Letter*'s "assertion of radical theological uncertainty" (religious skepticism). While I think this is ultimately correct, I also think Owen reaches the conclusion too swiftly.

[34] Nathan Tarcov, "John Locke and the Foundations of Toleration," in *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration*, ed. Alan Levine (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), 183, notes that Locke's statement "Truth certainly would do well enough, if she were once left to shift for herself" (Locke, *Letter*, 79) could be taken to mean that "we cannot know the truth until we have toleration." However, the statement does not strictly imply this, and I see no reason to interpret Locke as seriously holding that universal religious toleration would first make it possible for at least some to identify the one true religion. (In footnote 59 below, I argue that there is a decisive reason *not* to interpret him in this way.) That he, in Tarcov's words, "at least suggests" such an argument, to bolster his rhetorical case for toleration, is plausible enough.

to suffer from religious doubt and this freedom from doubt is unrelated to his office, there would be no objection to his using force on behalf of what he considers the true religion.

We might suppose that Locke simply wishes to emphasize, as he does in the correspondence with Proast[35] and elsewhere,[36] that religious faith unavoidably falls short of (certain) knowledge. But on this interpretation, his implicit reasoning would again seem inept. If a magistrate is as confident as any man can be that his religion is the only way to salvation, the impossibility of his certainly knowing this is not obviously an objection to his using force on its behalf. Moreover, Locke does not elsewhere infer from faith's falling short of knowledge that it is necessarily infected with *doubt*. On the contrary, in the *Essay* he says that faith in divine revelation "as perfectly excludes all wavering as our knowledge itself" and "leaves no manner of room for doubt or hesitation."[37] Later in the *Letter*, he denies that a person can be saved by a religion that he doubts, even if it is true.[38] If saving faith is possible at all, it must not be infected with doubt, despite falling short of knowledge.[39]

A further difficulty with taking "it is doubted [...]" to mean no more than that religious faith falls short of certain knowledge is that, almost immediately afterward, Locke talks as if the true way to heaven *can* be certainly known. "Those things that every man ought sincerely to enquire into himself, by meditation, study, search and his own endeavors," he says, "cannot be looked upon as the peculiar profession of any one sort of men," such as magistrates or princes.[40] Neither the right to rule nor the art of ruling "does necessarily carry with it the certain knowledge [*certam cognitionem*] of other things; and least of all of the true religion." He thus seems to speak of "certain knowledge" of religious truth as of something possible, though without saying or strictly implying that it is so.

The argument against persecution suggested, though not strictly implied, by Locke's remarks on the "zealots" thesis is as follows. The true narrow way to heaven is knowable with certainty but currently unknown to anyone. Since princes are no better equipped than other men to discover it, the prudent or "safe" course for a subject is to strive assiduously to discover it for himself, not to be guided by his ignorant prince. The prudent course for a prince, in turn, is to leave his subjects free to seek the true narrow way, since his current ignorance makes him powerless to help them. It is not surprising that Locke offers little more than a faint sketch of this argument. A clear, explicit presentation would, in the first place, make its weakness evident. The argument proves at most that a prince currently ignorant (but potentially cognizant) of the true narrow way to heaven should

[35] The distinction between faith and knowledge is a recurring theme in the third *Letter*.

[36] In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he characterizes "faith" ("belief," "opinion") as "the admitting or receiving any proposition for true [...], without certain Knowledge that it is so" (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], IV.XV.3 [655]). In *Reasonableness*, 200, he says that "[t]he greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe."

[37] Locke, *Essay*, IV, XVI.14 (667).

[38] "[*R*]*eligione vero de qua dubito [...] salvus fieri non possum*" (Locke, *Letter*, 54). Popple renders this, "I cannot be saved by a religion I distrust."

[39] Readers who detect an undercurrent of skepticism in the first *Letter* do not always take note of this important fact. Neither Owen ("Locke's Case for Religious Toleration") nor Black ("A Skeptical Argument") does so.

[40] Locke, *Letter*, 49. Popple overtranslates this sentence, adding a reference to "knowledge" that has no textual warrant.

not currently practice religious persecution. This is trivial. It does not follow that a prince whose investigations have led him to certain knowledge of the true narrow way should not persecute those of his subjects currently ignorant of this way. On the other hand, as noted earlier, universal religious ignorance or "doubt" would be strong presumptive evidence that the narrow way is in fact unknowable. The impossibility of overcoming religious doubt would severely weaken any justification for religious persecution. How could a magistrate conscionably use force on behalf of a religion whose truth he doubts? Yet it would also weaken Locke's positive case *against* persecution. The adumbration of religious skepticism occurs in the context of his suggesting (though not expressly arguing) that it is not prudent or "safe" for a subject to be guided in religious matters by his ignorant prince. However, if a subject's religious doubts are no less insuperable than his prince's, it is no *less* safe for him to be guided by his prince than by his own (necessarily inconclusive) "meditation, study," and so on. When prince and subject alike are stabbing in the dark, it makes no knowable difference whether each goes his own way or whether the subject follows his prince.

The real interest of Locke's remarks on the "zealots" thesis accordingly lies not in his unconvincing response to the argument for persecution based on this thesis but in the religious skepticism that underpins the response. His frank contempt for his imagined "zealot" opponents discourages the reader from attaching any special importance to the response, and he intimates the skepticism underpinning it by means of a lone passive verb (*ambigitur*, "it is doubted"). Moreover, he straightaway obscures the briefly intimated skepticism by talking as if religious truth were knowable with certainty. Yet the very sharpness of the contrast between this talk of certain knowledge and the immediately preceding talk of (apparently universal) doubt underscores the latter's skeptical significance, since it suggests that the only alternative to certain knowledge in religious matters is doubt. It suggests, in other words, that since religious belief is not certain knowledge, it necessarily *is* infected with doubt – at least in the case of any man who gives serious thought to religious questions. Religious faith that is not entirely unthinking does not and cannot "perfectly exclude all wavering."

Since this suggestion seems plainly inconsistent with what Locke says elsewhere about faith, both in the first *Letter* itself and in other texts, it is worth digressing to consider some pertinent passages. The most important are the passages from the *Essay* about faith and knowledge, from one of which I quoted earlier. This passage occurs in book 4, chapter 16, which discusses "degrees of assent." Faith in divine revelation is here treated as a species of belief based on "testimony" – in this instance, God's testimony. The reason why such faith is said to leave "no manner of room for doubt or hesitation" is the traditional one that God "cannot deceive, nor be deceived."[41] "[W]e may as well doubt of our own being," Locke says, "as we can, whether any revelation from God be true." If unaided reason could discover the existence of a God both omniscient and perfectly truthful, this last statement would be correct, as far as it goes. The demonstration of the existence of God in IV.X purports to establish that God is "*most knowing*," an expression

[41] Locke, *Essay*, IV, XVI.14 (667).

Locke apparently uses synonymously with "omniscient."[42] It does not purport to establish that God is perfectly truthful. Supposing for argument's sake that the demonstration is cogent and, furthermore, that God's perfect truthfulness can also be demonstrated, it would certainly follow that "we may as well doubt of our own being, as we can, whether any revelation from God be true." However, as Locke is quick to point out, before we accept any supposedly revealed proposition, we "must be sure" both that God has in fact revealed it and that we have rightly understood it.[43] Consequently, "our Assent can be rationally no higher than the Evidence of its being a Revelation, and that this is the meaning of the Expressions it is delivered in."

A glance at the history of Christian doctrinal conflicts shows the seriousness of the problem of determining the precise meaning of an allegedly revealed proposition. However, it is the problem of determining that God has indeed revealed a given proposition on which I shall focus.[44] How strong can the relevant evidence be? How high can our assent to a supposedly revealed proposition rationally be? Neither here nor in the later chapter (18) on "faith and reason" does Locke expressly answer these questions. It is at any rate clear that we can never certainly know both that God has in fact revealed a certain proposition and that we have rightly understood it, since we would then certainly know that this proposition is true, which would be inconsistent with our holding it on mere faith. As Locke will succinctly write in his second letter to the Bishop of Worcester, "[b]ring it to certainty, and it ceases to be faith."[45]

Around the center of the chapter on "enthusiasm" added to the fourth edition of the *Essay* after the chapter on faith and reason (X.XIX), in the context of examining the alleged "internal light" of which men in the grip of "enthusiasm" boast,[46] Locke distinguishes two "wholly distinct" ways "whereby Truth comes into the Mind" – namely, "seeing" (here clearly synonymous with "knowing") and "believing."[47] He gives the following concise statement concerning each: "What I see I know to be so by the Evidence of the thing it self: what I believe I take to be so upon the Testimony of another: But this Testimony I must *know* to be given, or else what ground have I of believing? I must *see* that it is GOD that reveals this to me, or else I see nothing" (emphases added).

The specificity of its context should not distract us from this statement's generality. I must in every case *know* that an alleged divine testimony truly is such, else I have no rational ground for believing it. Locke subtly emphasizes the unrestricted scope of the statement by continuing: "The question then *here* is, How do I know that GOD is the Revealer of this to me; that this Impression is made upon my Mind by his holy Spirit, and that therefore I ought to obey it?" (emphasis added). He seeks to apply to the specific

[42] Ibid., IV.X.6 (621), IV.X.13 (625).
[43] Locke, *Essay*, IV, XVI.14 (667).
[44] For a discussion of Locke's indications regarding the problem of determining the meaning of (allegedly) revealed propositions, see Owen, "Locke's Case for Religious Toleration," 164-65.
[45] John Locke, *Second Letter to the Bishop of Worcester*, in *The Works of John Locke*, vol. 3 (London: printed for G. and J. Rivington et al., 1824), 147.
[46] Ibid., IV, XIX.10 (700).
[47] Ibid. (701).

case ("here") of alleged divine illumination a general criterion for rational belief in any alleged revelation. And the general criterion is unambiguous: one's sole rational ground for believing any proposition allegedly revealed by God, whether mediately or immediately, is the certain[48] knowledge that God has in fact revealed it.

Locke can afford to set forth this criterion openly in a chapter devoted largely to alleged (post-apostolic) private revelation. Most of his readers will assuredly share his contempt for those who claim that God has privately spoken to them – Quakers, for instance – and will approve his subjecting this claim to the severest possible epistemic test. Fewer will likely notice that he implicitly subjects *all* faith in supposed revelation to this same test. Yet there is no apparent reason to apply a less severe test to faith in alleged second-hand revelation than to faith in alleged immediate, private revelation. Locke underscores the parity of the two cases in his brief discussion of the Old Testament prophets. These prophets not only had "outward signs" (miracles) to confirm that the communications they received were truly from God but, "when they were to convince others," they were also given "a Power [...] to justify the Truth of their Commission from Heaven" and "by visible signs" (miracles) to "assert the divine Authority of the Message they were sent with."[49] Neither here nor elsewhere in the *Essay* does he say, as he does in the unpublished *Discourse on Miracles*,[50] that a miracle is the *only* possible proof of an alleged revelation's authenticity, but he mentions no other. In the *Discourse* he implies that we cannot certainly know that any extraordinary occurrence is the work of God.[51] It follows that we can never certainly know that any alleged revelation is genuine.

Chapter 19 thus intimates that we cannot rationally assent to a supposedly revealed proposition unless we certainly know that God has in fact revealed it. It follows that rationally grounded "faith" – faith that is not mere enthusiasm – would be indistinguishable from certain knowledge. If, however, we could never certainly know that a supposedly revealed proposition truly is such, it would follow conversely that the only alternatives to irrational enthusiasm are suspension of judgement with respect to, and outright rejection of, all supposedly revealed propositions. The only rational options with respect to alleged revelation would be philosophic doubt and, possibly, disbelief. Locke implicitly denies that we can ever certainly know that an extraordinary event is the work of God and, consequently, that any supposedly revealed proposition truly is such. This appears to be the primary reason for his consistently and emphatically distinguishing between certain knowledge and faith. He must then be either a philosophic doubter (a skeptic) or a disbeliever (a rationalist).

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[48] Less than half a page later, Locke says that I can only accept a proposition I take for a direct, private communication from God if it has been "certainly" (not "probably") put into my mind by God.

[49] Ibid., IV, XIX.15 (705).

[50] "[...] Miracles being *the* Basis on which divine Mission is *always* establish'd, and consequently that Foundation on which the Believers of any divine Revelation *must* ultimately bottom their Faith [...]" (John Locke, *Discourse on Miracles*, in *Writings on Religion*, 50 [emphases added]).

[51] This is because men "cannot discover" the limits to the power of "natural Agents or created Beings" (Locke, *Discourse*, 48). Strauss takes Locke to be "tacitly following Spinoza" here (*Natural Right and History*, 210).

The suggestion in the first *Letter on Toleration* that (reasonable) religious faith short of certain knowledge is necessarily infected with doubt is not, then, inconsistent with the fuller treatment of faith and reason in the *Essay*. Despite first appearances, the *Essay*, too, refuses to recognize any reasonable medium between certain knowledge and sheer doubt in religious matters.[52]

SKEPTICISM AND RATIONALISM

We must now resume our investigation into the grounds for Locke's intimated disbelief in any revealed religion. Insuperable doubt about which religion is true is not, of course, the same as certain knowledge that none is true. We must not conflate the thinly veiled skepticism in his response to the "zealots" with the heavily veiled rationalism in his earlier response to the champions of apostolicity. Nonetheless, the former is our first clue as to the grounds for the latter. We shall see presently that, for Locke, religious skepticism leads inexorably to outright rationalism or disbelief.

Having declared that "it is doubted" which is the true narrow way to heaven and that princes are no better judges of religious truth than other men, Locke further contends that there would be no justification for religious persecution even if the magistrate *were* for some reason better placed than other men to discern which is the true narrow way. "[L]et us grant," he says, "that it is probable the way to eternal life may be better known [*notiorem*] by a prince than by his subjects."[53] Indeed, he is prepared for argument's sake to make the still weaker, hence more plausible, assumption that "in this incertitude of things, the safest and most commodious way for private persons is to follow [the prince's] dictates." (This second assumption, we should note, does not require the way of heaven to be *knowable*, whether by princes or anyone else.) He compares the case of a prince desirous of saving his subjects' souls with that of a prince desirous of making his subjects rich. If a prince should command me to take up a certain trade so that I may become rich, "in case I should have ill success [...] he is abundantly able to make up my loss in some other way." However, in "things that regard the life to come," if I am "once undone," the prince cannot help me. Should his religious dictates turn out to be misguided, he will be unable to save me from hell or to ease my sufferings there. Granted the "zealots'" thesis, this is true, but it here seems conspicuously beside the point. If the "safest" way, given the "incertitude of things," were for subjects to follow their prince's religious dictates, his inability (if his religion happens to be false) to save them from hell or to ease their sufferings there would not make it any less rational for them to follow these dictates, since, ex hypothesi, their risk of damnation would be greater if they did not.

Having thus seemingly failed to respond adequately to the "zealots," Locke continues: "Perhaps some will say, that they do not suppose this certain judgement [*certum (...) judicium*], that all men are bound to follow in the affairs of religion, to be in the civil

[52] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127, rightly says that, for Locke, "*though anyone who knows that something is the testimony of God knows also that it is true, one can never know that something is the testimony of God*" (italics in original). Wolterstorff does not, however, draw what I have argued is the unavoidable conclusion that, for Locke, faith is *never* distinguishable from mere enthusiasm.

[53] Locke, *Letter*, 49.

magistrate, but in the church. What the church has determined, that the civil magistrate orders to be observed [...]."[54]

Whereas he initially granted to his "zealot" opponents either that it is "probable" that the one narrow way is "better known by a prince than by his subjects" or that the "safest" course is to follow the religious dictates of one's prince (who is nonetheless fallible, as the real possibility of damnation for following these dictates indicates), he now implies that he has granted to them that the prince is capable of rendering a *certain* judgement in religious questions. This would make the prince infallible in such questions.[55] Even the most zealous apologist for religious persecution would not make so preposterous a claim, and it is not credible either that Locke could have forgotten his initial statement (less than half a page earlier) or that he could fail to recognize the inconsistency between the two statements. What then is the significance of this glaring apparent blunder? Since it occurs immediately after another glaring apparent blunder – his inept response to the argument for persecution premised on the relative safety of following one's prince in religion – it is reasonable to assume that the two "blunders" are connected.

If I long for eternal happiness and dread eternal misery, the thought that my fallible prince is at least likelier than I to know the narrow way to heaven will be of little comfort. With stakes infinitely high, nothing short of certainty can assuage my terror. Only if my prince is infallible in religious matters can I confidently follow his dictates. Psychologically at least, Locke's response to the argument for persecution premised on the *relative* safety of following these dictates is therefore apt. The insufficiency of a mere likelihood that one's prince knows the way to heaven, to which the two "blunders" together draw attention, is a special case of a more general problem. Locke points to this problem in his response to the suggestion that the civil magistrate may impose on his subjects the determinations of a church capable of issuing a "certain judgement" in religious matters. He dismisses the suggestion as irrelevant. It remains true that "[t]he one only narrow way which leads to heaven is not better known to the magistrate than to private persons,"[56] who consequently cannot safely take him for their guide, whether or not he in turn is guided by a supposedly infallible church. The magistrate must "interpose his own judgement in the matter" by choosing one church rather than another to be his guide and, if he is fallible, his judgement in the matter may be false. The more general problem, plainly, is that an infallible guide is of no help to a fallible individual craving certainty, since this individual must (fallibly) judge the guide's credentials. I cannot confidently submit in religious matters to my purportedly infallible prince or, whether directly or indirectly, to some purportedly infallible church, if I cannot certainly know that either truly is infallible.

The fearful, unbearable uncertainty whether I am on the narrow way to heaven is not the worst consequence of my lacking a knowably infallible guide. Unless the religion I profess has, as Locke says, "the *full* assent [*plenumque (...) assensum*] of

[54] Ibid., 49-51.

[55] Popple renders *certum judicium* by "infallible judgement." In the third *Letter* (*Works of John Locke*, vol. 5, 366), Locke says that the persecutor must have "certain knowledge *and infallibility*" (emphasis added) if his actions are to be justified. Later in this *Letter* (401), he again says that the persecutor "must know, that is, be *infallibly* certain" (emphasis added). He would probably not object to Popple's rather free translation of *certum judicium*.

[56] Locke, *Letter*, 51.

my conscience" (emphasis added),[57] my professing it will win me no favor with God. Knowing or believing this, I must believe that any doubts I have about it will damn me, even if it happens to be the true one. Yet precisely because I am acutely conscious of the infinite cost of missing the narrow way, nagging doubt will never cease to haunt me unless I can be certain that I have found it. Without certainty I have only despair.

The problem, however, is not merely psychological. A god who wills my salvation must be presumed to give me the means necessary thereto. He cannot be content to see me miss the narrow way to heaven through no fault of my own. It is "unworthy of God" (*Deo indignum*), Locke remarks, that men should "owe their eternal happiness or their eternal misery to the place of their nativity."[58] The basis for this remark is clearly the more general thesis that it is "unworthy of God" that men should owe their eternal happiness or misery to any circumstance for which they cannot be held responsible.[59] If, however, certain knowledge of the narrow way to heaven were unattainable, yet the only rational alternatives to certain knowledge in religious matters were doubt and disbelief, men could not be held responsible for their own failure to believe, wholeheartedly or otherwise, in the true religion. Since an omniscient god who willed the salvation of all, or indeed of any, would not demand the impossible of those he wished to save, he would not demand that they accept anything not discoverable by natural reason as a condition of his saving them. This being so, he would have no reason to reveal anything to them. Revelation as such would be "unworthy of God."

The requirement that I harbor no doubts about the religion I profess is not arbitrary. An allegedly revealed religion teaches us how we may please the god who has revealed it to us. In Locke's words, it teaches the things "necessary to the obtaining of God's favour" and "prescribed by God to that end."[60] He takes for granted that these things will include beliefs as well as actions. Since our performing the actions God commands can please Him only if we do so in obedience to His will, we must believe that He has indeed commanded these actions if we are to please Him. It follows that the god of even the most doctrinally minimalist revealed religion cannot but "prescribe" certain beliefs to us or command that we believe certain things. All the historically influential variants of Christianity of course teach that God commands us to believe numerous things. Belief in allegedly revealed doctrine being a divine command, it must lie in our power to obey it, since an omniscient and benevolent god would not command the impossible. If we can freely choose to believe, then presumably we can freely choose to believe wholeheartedly. Any degree of doubt is therefore downright disobedience.

Yet, according to Locke, "to believe this or that to be true, does not depend upon our will."[61] This implies that we cannot obey a divine command to believe this or that

[57] Ibid., 29. Popple renders this "thorough conviction and approbation of the mind."
[58] Ibid., 21.
[59] I earlier noted Tarcov's observation that universal religious toleration might be a necessary condition for the overcoming of religious doubt. But if this were so, then men living under intolerant regimes would not be responsible for their own failure to discover the one true religion, which would be unworthy of God. It cannot be Locke's serious view that universal religious doubt is an artefact of near-universal religious intolerance.
[60] Locke, *Letter*, 81.
[61] Ibid., 77.

to be true, even if we devoutly wish to do so. The statement's immediate context is the reiterated denial that articles of faith can be imposed by "the law of the land," and Locke disarmingly adds that "of this enough has been said already." He thus encourages the reader to ignore the statement's generality and to regard it as no more than a rephrasing of his second "consideration" in favor of toleration, which is that "outward force" cannot influence belief.[62] Nonetheless, the statement is clearly more than a simple rephrasing of this "consideration." One may consistently deny that force can influence belief while affirming that, at least under certain circumstances, belief in this or that depends upon our will.[63] When answering an objection to the second consideration, Locke says that it is by "light" (apparently the light of reason) that the mind's opinion can be changed,[64] which might be taken to imply that nothing else, including a man's own will, can work such a change.[65] However, the statement "to believe this or that to be true etc." would still be more than a mere rephrasing of the second consideration, if only by virtue of making explicit what was earlier implicit. Significantly, this statement occurs halfway through a paragraph whose first sentence refers to "knowledge" (*cognitione*) of the articles of faith.[66] Apart from the discussion of the "zealots" thesis, this is the only place in the *Letter* where Locke speaks as if it were possible to know, not merely to believe, revealed truths.[67] There is a connection between the denial that belief depends upon our will and the thesis that revealed truth is strictly knowable. If belief cannot reasonably be commanded, even by God, then God can command nothing more than that we consider the evidence bearing on those doctrines He would have us accept. Locke has already spoken of the obligation every man has to "enquire into" religious truth. To enquire or to consider evidence assuredly does "depend upon our will." However, God cannot reasonably require us to reach certain

[62] Ibid., 19. Many readers find this "consideration" unconvincing because, as Tarcov crisply puts it, "systems of persecution can have effects on belief" (Tarcov, "Foundations," 184). While I cannot discuss the topic here, my suspicion is that, in Locke's view, persecution may indeed bring it about that people *imagine* themselves to believe this or that, but no more (except *per accidens*). In *Essay*, IV, XX.18 (719), he declares more or less openly that "the greatest part of the Partisans of most of the Sects in the World" have "no Thought, no Opinion at all" about the creeds they profess. Most "religious believers" neither believe nor disbelieve the tenets of their religion.

[63] According to Thomas Aquinas, for instance, it may happen that "our understanding is determined by the will, which chooses to assent to one side definitely and precisely because of something which is enough to move the will, though not enough to move the understanding, namely, since it seems good or fitting to assent to this side." This is the case, he claims, with the assent of faith. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, trans. James V. McGlynn, vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), Q.14, Art.1, Resp. (210).

[64] *Luce opus est ut mutetur animi sententia* (Locke, *Letter*, 21). Two paragraphs earlier, he spoke of arguing and persuading "by reasons" (*rationibusque*) (19).

[65] Popple seems to have read the sentence this way, since his translation says that "only" light ("and evidence") can work such a change (ibid., 22).

[66] Ibid., 77. Popple divides what is one sentence in the Latin into two English sentences, so that "knowledge" occurs in the paragraph's second sentence.

[67] When he says that all men "know" (*sciunt*) that God ought to be publicly worshipped (ibid., 55), he is evidently referring to (alleged) knowledge of the demands of natural, not revealed, religion. (In *Essay* I, IV.19, he says that "[e]very one that hath a true *Idea* of *God*, and *Worship*, will assent to this Proposition, That God is to be worshipped" [Locke, *Essay*, 96].) When, near the end of the *Letter*, he speaks of heretics who "err obstinately against knowledge [*scientesque*]," the "knowledge" in question is of the inconsistency between what the heretics themselves take to be "the only foundation of faith" (the Bible) and the "heretical" (non-biblical) propositions that they nonetheless insist on as "fundamental" (Locke, *Letter*, 113). In short, this is not knowledge of what God has revealed but knowledge of logical relations among (possibly false) propositions.

conclusions unless these conclusions follow necessarily from the evidence He commands us to consider, that is, unless the truth of these conclusions can be *known*. Consequently, if it lies within our power to obtain His favor by accepting certain truths, these must be strictly knowable. If revealed truths were not strictly knowable, then conversely, He would not require us to accept them. He would therefore not reveal anything. It would again follow that revelation as such is "unworthy of God."

Reflection on the psychology of the would-be religious believer, on the notion of God as both omniscient and benevolent, and on the nature of belief in general thus yields the conclusion that the very possibility of revealed religion turns upon the certain knowability of revealed truth. An allegedly revealed religion not knowably true is knowably false, and if no allegedly revealed religion is knowably true, all are knowably false. Skepticism is hence no more than a halfway house on the road to rationalism.

CONCLUSION: RATIONALISM AND TOLERATION

I have argued that the first *Letter Concerning Toleration* is the work not of a religious skeptic but of a rationalist, a disbeliever in the possibility of divine revelation. Its exoteric case for religious toleration presupposes the (perhaps unknowable) truth of some revealed religion. A rationalist reading of it therefore prompts the question of whether rationalism can ground a robust case for religious toleration. Rationalism undermines what is surely the commonest justification for religious persecution – namely, the supposed truth of one and only one of the various allegedly revealed religions. Other justifications, however, are possible. Locke himself declares that opinions "contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of human society" are not to be tolerated.[68] One such opinion is the rejection of toleration.[69] From the perspective of a Lockean rationalist, the decision whether or not to tolerate a certain religion turns, then, on the basically Hobbesian criterion of this religion's compatibility or incompatibility with civil peace.

[68] Ibid., 89.
[69] Ibid., 91.

Zbigniew Janowski

THOMAS JEFFERSON'S DEMOCRATIC LIBERALISM

"I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past – so good night."
[Letter to John Adams, 1 August 1816]

Some historians might contest the idea of calling Thomas Jefferson "liberal." He was born long before the doctrine was born in the 1820s, and authors of books on Liberalism do not mention his name or refer to him in passing.[1] Born in 1743, Jefferson was an illustrious son of the Enlightenment. His contribution to political thought falls on the peak of this period, and his ideas embody the spirit and concerns of the epoch.

Such objections do not necessarily undermine my designation of Jefferson as "liberal." First, two letters of 1823 and 1824 are evidence of how late in his life Jefferson (d. 1826) was familiar with the new political usage of the term "liberal,"[2] which in the eighteenth century meant no more than "generous," "munificent," "not low in birth," "not low in mind," "not parsimonious," or "open-minded."[3] Second, despite his natural

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[1] L. T. Hobhouse (*Liberalism*, 1911), Guido De Ruggiero (*The History of European Liberalism*, 1927); and Ludwig von Mises (*Liberalism: In the Classical Tradition*, 1927) do not mention Jefferson; J. Salwyn Schapiro (*Liberalism: Its Meaning and History*, 1958) and Harold Laski (*The Rise of European Liberalism*, 1927) mention him once.

[2] To the Marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823, and to Henry Lee, 10 August 1824. Cf. the letter to John Adams, 27 June 1813.

[3] Dr. Samuel Johnson in his *Dictionary* (1755).

Jefferson's use of it is consistent with Johnson's definition. Here are several examples: "It is contest of opinion in politics as well as religion which makes us take great interest in them, and bestow our money liberally on those who furnish ailment to our appetite." To Elbridge Gerry, 1801; "[...] on the contrary accdg to the spirit of the gospel, charity, bounty, liberality is due to him." Notes on Religion, October 1776 (?); "But in despite of their fulminations against endeavors to enlighten the general mind in the use of it, the liberality of this State will support this institution [University of Virginia], and give fair play to the cultivation of reason." To W. Short, 1820; "Considering that the grounds to be reserved for the public are to be paid for by the acre, I think very liberal reservations should be made for them[...]." To Major L'Enfant, 10 April 1791; "We wish to establish in the upper country, and more centrally for the State, an University on a plan so broad and liberal and modern, as to be worth patronising with the public support[...]." To Dr. Joseph Priestley, 18 January 1800. As far as I was able to find, Jefferson uses the term "conservative" once; see his letter to De Tracy, 1811.

In the 1820s, "liberal" still meant what it used to in the eighteenth century. Here are several examples from a book on art, *Some Account of the Life of Richard Wilson...*, collected and arranged by T. Wright, Esq. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1824): "'Wilson,' says the author, 'was liberal to his brother artist'" (p. 18); "Could the like liberal sentiments, and the same generous feelings, be allowed to influence the minds as well as the hearts of our connoisseurs" (p. 27); "that a person with the kind feeling and the liberal

reluctance to be identified with a political party,[4] his application of the term "liberal" to the Whig Party,[5] with whose political outlook he identified, suggest that the late Jefferson thought of himself as liberal.

One can say that political terms are one thing but the content of the ideas these terms signify is another, and as historical circumstances change, so does the content of ideas that the political labels refer to. Accordingly, as political reality in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was different from that of the nineteenth century, it would be a methodological mistake to look for liberalism in the doctrines of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers only because some elements of it appear to resemble nineteenth-century problems.[6] The task of the historian of political thought is, rather, to demonstrate that the ideas that stand behind political labels are an expression of a new political reality.

If we take Mill's philosophy to be a hallmark of full-blooded Liberal doctrine and contrast it with what we find in Jeffersons, the latter's doctrine can be considered Liberalism's early formulation – less elaborate but very similar in content. This is certainly true with respect to the constitutive elements of Mill's Liberalism that occupied Jefferson

sentiments which the President is known to have possessed" (p. 29); "Could but government be induced to come forward in a liberal manner, in support of so interesting a cause" (p. 131).

[4] "I am not a federalist, because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever, in religion, in philosophy, in politics or in anything else, where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction, is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all. Therefore, I am not of the party of the federalists. But I am much farther from that of the anti-federalists." To Francis Hopkinson, 13 March 1789.

[5] "For in truth, the parties of Whig and Tory, are those of nature. They exist in all countries, whether called by these names, or by those of Aristocrats and Democrats, Coté Droite and Coté Gauche, Ultras and Radicles, Serviles and Liberals. The sickly, weakly, timid man fears the people, and is a Tory by nature. The healthy, strong and bold, cherishes them, and is formed a Whig by nature." To The Marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823; "In every country these two parties exist, and in everyone where they are free to think, speak, and write, they will declare themselves. Call them, therefore, Liberals and Serviles, Jacobins and Ultras, Whigs and Tories, Republicans and Federalists, Aristocrats and Federalists, Aristocrats and Democrats, or whatever name you pleased, they are the same still, and pursue the same object. The last appellation of Aristocrats and Democrats is the true one and expressing the essence of all." To Henry Lee, 10 August 1824; and "Two political Sects have arisen within the United States; the one believing that the Executive is the branch of our Government which the most needs support; the other that like the analogous branch in the English Government, it is already too strong for the republican parts of the Constitution [...]. The former of these are called Federalists, sometimes Aristocrats or monocrats and sometimes Tories, after the corresponding Sect in the English Government of exactly the same definition: the latter are still republicans, whigs, Jacobins, Anarchists, disorganizers, etc. These terms are in familiar use with most persons [...]. The most upright and conscientious characters are on both sides [of] the question, and as to myself I can say with truth that political tenets have never taken away my esteem for a moral good man." To John Wise, 1798.

[6] See Jonathan C. D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 102-3; and "'Liberalism': An Import from Spain?" and "Did Liberals Recognize the Enlightenment?" in *The Enlightenment: An Idea and Its History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024). One of the documents that marks the birth of modern liberal doctrine is John Henry Newman's "Thesis on Liberalism." These documents are part of Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1840). I reproduced them in my edition of John Stuart Mill's writings, *On Democracy, Freedom and Government* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2019). Newman's discussion of early liberalism is examined by Jacob Duggan, "Liberal Catholicism in the Church of England," *The European Legacy* 27, no. 2 (2022): 176-89.

earlier.[7] Here are some of them: man as a rational animal or social agent;[8] freedom of speech and the free press;[9] reason rather than force, as a tool in solving conflicts; parliamentarism and democratic elections[10] (not to be confused with universal suffrage);[11] individual rights;[12] rejection of social hierarchies and privileges;[13] attitude toward organized religions;[14] distrust of the government and political power as such.[15] My list can be made longer, but even in its present form it is sufficient for the purpose of including Jefferson on the list of liberal thinkers.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, OR "LET THEM EAT CAKE"

It is widely believed that freedom of thought and speech constitute the very essence of liberalism. Yet the experience of the past few decades shows that liberalism created a social atmosphere such that future historians may well consider it a period of gross violations of that freedom and an open war against individual conscience aided by the State legislative power to crush it. When asked questions regarding social, ethical, and political views, it turns out that the citizens of liberal democracies are of the same opinion. Differences, if they exist, are insubstantial, and deviation from the majority's opinion often meets with ostracism.

An inquisitive observer must find such uniformity of opinions puzzling and wonder how it came about. The answer can be found in Jefferson's writings. He knew that, once the State is allowed to intervene with the individual conscience,[16] uniformity is inevitable:

> Subject opinion to coercion: whom will you make your inquisitors? Fallible men; men governed by bad passions, by private as well as public reasons. [...] Introduce the bed of Procrustes then, and as there is danger that the large men may beat the small, make us all of a size, by lopping the former and stretching the latter. [...] What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half of the world fools, and the other half hypocrites.[17]

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[7] There is evidence that Mill read Jefferson's inaugural speech of 1805 and *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

[8] To Dr. Priestly, 1802; to Judge Tyler, 1804; to Rutledge, 1788; to Monsieur N. G. Dufief, 19 April 1814; to Judge Johnson, 1823; to Colonel Yancey, 1816.

[9] To Benjamin Waring, 1801; to R. Rush, 1820; to Rutledge, 1788; to Humphreys, 1789; to Corey, 1823.

[10] To Monsieur A. Corey, 31 October 1823.

[11] The only remark about universal suffrage I was able to find in Jefferson is in his letter to J. Moore, 1810. Jefferson, despite being in favor of it ("my opinion has always been in favor of [a general suffrage]"), was aware that the danger of extending it would allow and lead to "buying and selling votes" and, therefore, had to be limited. I discuss this question more fully in the chapter on Benjamin Constant.

[12] To Mr. A. Donald, 7 February 1788; to Francis Hopkinson, 13 March 1789.

[13] To Washington, 1784 and 1786; to De Meunier, 1786; to Adams, 1813; to H. G. Spafford, 1814; to T. Cooper, 1814.

[14] *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 17; Notes on Religion, October 1776 (?); to Elbridge Gerry, 1799.

[15] To Washington, 1792.

[16] To Tocqueville, who visited America in the early 1830s, this uniformity of opinions was a result of democracy. If Jefferson did not see it, we can infer that at the early stages of the American system the majority was not yet as oppressive as it became later.

[17] *Notes on the State of Virgina*, Query 17.

Contemporary liberals, who press toward ever greater State intervention into private convictions,[18] are not taking their predecessors' lesson seriously. In 2012, Jack Philips, a Colorado Christian baker, refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. As expected, a lawsuit followed. A few years later, the same baker who had won a narrow U. S. Supreme Court victory over his refusal to make a wedding cake, "lost his appeal of a ruling in a separate case that he violated a state anti-discrimination law by not making a cake to celebrate a gender transition." In 2019, the Tribunal in the United Kingdom ruled against Dr. David Mackereth, who refused to refer to transgendered people by their preferred name ("I am a Christian, and in good conscience I cannot do what DWP [Department of Work and Pensions] are requiring of me"). To justify its decision, the British Tribunal ruled that the biblical view of the sexes (that there are two sexes) is "incompatible with Human Dignity." The three above examples are only a handful of cases that are now part of the legal folklore in every Western country. Very few who have not been intimidated and find the courage to stand up and live according to the dictates of conscience are presented by the media as intolerant bigots who deserve no legal protection on account of perpetuating so-called harmful attitudes. The court ruling is predictable and almost always against them.

Looking at contemporary problems from a broader historical perspective, the question arises: why did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers handle problems of the freedom of conscience more successfully than we do today? The idea of freedom of conscience emerged from the debates over religious dogma and the conflicts that they ignite. The question for political thinkers was this: Considering that religious conflicts among different Christian churches can weaken political order, what role, if any, should the State play in such conflicts? Should the State use its power to silence conflicts to ensure peace, should it allow one religious party or a Church play a dominant role at the expense of smaller denominations, or should it stay away from religious conflicts altogether? Each option has had its proponents and has been tried. Eighteenth-century American history was a replay of European history a century earlier.

Jefferson was a major player in the debate. Like Mill several decades later, he was suspicious of power as such, be it the power of a Church or the power of a government. He unequivocally asserted the existence of individual conscience, which neither religion nor the government should be allowed to coerce: "The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg [...] Was the government to proscribe to us our medicine and diet, our bodies would be in such keeping as our souls are now. [...] It is error alone which needs the support of government."[19]

Jefferson's position was that the State should stay neutral. This is not so today. Citizens of contemporary Western societies no longer believe that conflicts of opinions and convictions are part of human existence and that to coexist peacefully all we need is to observe rules of civility and nonviolence. Instead, we expect immediate State intervention

[18] "Nationalistic" right-wing governments today, on the other hand, seem to be satisfied with the traditional methods of exercising influence on people by means of using governmental control of public institutions. Such control, one must say, is by far much less oppressive or intrusive than the liberal attempt to control citizens' minds.
[19] *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 17.

and a solution to each clash of opinions, which subsequently becomes a mandatory social norm, the violation of which is punishable by law.

The governing norm of today's liberal societies is the principle of nondiscrimination, which replaced Jeffersonian "not picking my pocket or breaking my leg." Contemplating the state of today's societies, one can say that Jefferson was too optimistic, believing that imposing uniformity of opinions will make one half of the world fools and the other half hypocrites. Two hundred years after he wrote these words, the scale tipped in favor of fools.[20] Hypocrites today are like eccentrics: we can read about them in old books, but we never meet them. More often than not, we meet the believers who were made believers by having their opinions imposed on them by the State through education and legal means.

We all would agree that the notion of discrimination (unknown to classical liberals) is the source of many of our social problems. If we were to abandon it, we would reduce the number of litigation cases, which would make our social life healthier. From the Jeffersonian perspective, the Colorado baker's refusal to make the cake for the same-sex couple or a transgendered person, or the British doctor's unwillingness to use "the preferred names" do not qualify as injury. If anyone was injured in the above cases, it was the baker and the doctor whose freedom of conscience was violated by the court's decision. "Every one must act according to the dictates of his own reason, and mine tells me that civil powers alone have been given to the President of the United States and no authority to direct the religious exercises of his constituents."[21] If we substitute the word "ideological" for "religious," we can suspect that, for the same reason that Jefferson wanted the government to remain neutral in matters of religious differences, he would want today the government to stay neutral in the cases of conflicts between secular ideologies and religions.[22] Alas, the contemporary Western legal system and the judges representing it act like Procrustes. To make everyone equal, they almost always rule against people who act according to their conscience, just as they ruled against Dr. David Mackereth.

In his letter to Edward Dowse (1803), Jefferson writes, "I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance, or admit a right of inquiry into the religious opinion of others. On the contrary, we are bound, you, I, and every one, to make common cause, even with error itself, to maintain *the common right of freedom of conscience*" (emphasis mine). The times when religion attempted to dominate public opinion and make it its mouthpiece are gone, but intolerance persists, and it persists because today's liberals rejected Jefferson's solution of the State's neutrality in solving conflicts.[23] Instead of staying neutral, the State made liberal doctrine its doctrine and became the Inquisitor.

[20] To avoid the problem of hypocrisy, liberals injected into education all kinds of trainings that shape children's minds in accordance with ideological dictates.

[21] To Reverend Samuel Miller, 1808.

[22] As Jefferson writes elsewhere, in two States, Pennsylvania and New York, "religion is well supported, but there is no official religion in them. [...] They have made the happy discovery, that the way to silence religious disputes, is to take no notice of them. Let us too, give this experiment fair play, and get rid, while we may, of those tyrannical [religious] laws." *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 17.

[23] "I consider the government of the United States as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrine, discipline, or exercises. I do not believe it is for the interest of religion to invite the civil magistrate to direct [them]." To Reverend Samuel Miller, 1808.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Different historical circumstances create different solutions to the problems that these circumstances create. Yet sometimes different historical circumstances create seemingly similar solutions. Freedom of speech is one such example. However, similarities are sometimes deceptive. While Mill formulated his argument to protect the individual against the power of the democratic majority, Jefferson designed his argument to protect the individual against the power of the government. "No government ought to be without censors; and where the press is free, no one ever will," he wrote to Washington in 1792. In another letter to Carrington, he states in a similar vein:

> The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. [...] If once they [the people] become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, Judges and Governors, shall all become wolves. [...] experience declares that man is the only animal which devours his own kind.[24]

The common denominator for Mill and Jefferson's arguments is the belief that truth reveals itself through a process of the exchange of opinions,[25] and the press is to be what the canvas is for a painter. However, for the process of collision to be possible, opinions must be freed from Church or governmental control. This idea grew out of the Enlightenment, which understood freedom as man's liberation from the oppression of all kinds of hierarchies.[26] Education was a means to this end.[27]

Given the very long span of the history of political institutions, it may seem surprising that the freedom of speech and the press originated only in modern times.[28] But the surprise disappears the moment we realize that it could emerge only in societies where mass literacy is a norm. Jefferson was aware of the problem and spared no effort to support the development of elementary education. "I should mean that every man should receive those papers, and be capable of reading them,"[29] he told Carrington. In another letter to Wythe, he wrote, "Preach, my dear Sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish

[24] To Carrington, 1787.

[25] Mill talks about the "collision" of opinions, Jefferson of "sifting out the truth" in the "fair operation of attack and defense." And "Nature has given man no other means of sifting out the truth, either in religion, law, or politics." Letter to Washington, 1792.

[26] Jefferson was acutely aware of the novelty of the American political experiment and how unusual the free exchange of ideas is. "No experiment can be more interesting than that we are now trying, which we trust will end in establishing the fact that man may be governed by reason and truth. Our first object should therefore be to leave open to him all the avenues to truth. The most effectual hitherto found is the freedom of the press." Letter to Judge Tyler, 1804. See also his letter to Picet, 1803, and Second Inaugural Address, 4 March 1805.

[27] "[S]cience had liberated the ideas of those who read and reflect, and the American example has kindled feelings of right in the people." To Adams, 1813.

[28] One should also mention here Milton's *Aeropagitica*, in which the poet opposed the 1643 order of Parliament that no book can be published without being licensed.

[29] To Carrington, 1787.

and improve the law for educating the common people."[30] The success of the American experiment depended on education: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, [...] it expects what never was and never will be. [...] Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe."[31]

Jefferson was an optimist, even though his optimism was often unwarranted. He experienced slander and tried to devise a newspaper format that would be most conducive to the propagation of truth.[32] He also knew that the publishers, just like other producers, were interested in keeping their customers excited about their product. He wrote:

> A coalition of sentiments is not for the interest of the printers. They, like the clergy, live by the zeal they can kindle, and the schisms they can create. It is contest of opinion in politics as well as religion which makes us take great interest in them, [...] so the printers can never leave us in a state of perfect rest and union of opinion. They would be no longer useful, and would have to go to the plough.[33]

However, he failed, as did others, to foresee that the free press was a genie in a bottle. There is hardly anyone in the Western world today who could say in good faith that the news with which the democratic public is fed has the liberating effect that Jefferson hoped for, and it is not only because the media is a multibillion-dollar business run by unprincipled news magnates. The difficult task of telling facts from falsehood was always part of the journalistic profession. However, today, the mass media has become an instrument of ideological manipulation in which human greed plays only a marginal role.

The press, despite the cherished assumptions of Enlightenment thinkers, is not *ideologically* neutral, and opinions, unlike the colors of the paint that present a beautiful picture on an ideologically neutral canvas, are more like ideological bullets than sparks of truth. Mill's expectation that truthful opinions colliding with error will make the truth shine even brighter or Jefferson's hope that the clash of opinions is an effective mechanism in sifting out the true ones sadly turned out to be a rarity. Journalists, instead of being

[30] To Wythe, 1786.

[31] To Colonel Yancey, 1816.

[32] Despite his earlier enthusiasm for and firm belief in the value of the exchange of opinions, he was disappointed with what real freedom of the press can bring and wrote to J. Norvell, 1807: "Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle." He felt personally hurt by the Federalists' attacks against him. Unable to find intellectual resolution to the problem, Jefferson considered in detail how the newspapers should present opinions. "Perhaps an editor might begin a reformation in some such way as this. Divide his paper into 4 chapters, heading the 1st Truths. 2nd Probabilities. 3rd Possibilities. 4th Lies. The first chapter would be very short." To J. Norvell, 1807. Identical renumeration of the division into sections can also be found in his letter to T. Wortman, 1813, where Jefferson adds: "[...] the newspapers of our country by their abandoned spirit of falsehood, have more effectually destroyed the utility of the press than all the shackles devised by Bonaparte." And, once again, "I deplore [...] the putrid state into which our newspapers have passed, and the malignity, the vulgarity, and the mendacious spirit of those who write them [...]. These ordures are rapidly depraving the public taste." To Dr. D. W. Jones, 1814. See also his other letters on the subject of the freedom of the press: to Carrington, 1787; to Washington, 1792; Virginia and Kentucky Resolution, 1799 (of which Madison was co-author); to Elbridge Gerry, 1801; to Picets, 1803; to Volney, 1802; to Judge Tyler, 1804; to Th. Seymour, 1807; Second Inaugural, 4 March 1805; to J. Norvell, 1807; to Short, 1808; to Wortman, 1813; to Dr. J. Currie, 1786.

[33] To Elbridge Gerry, 1801.

Jeffersonian guards protecting the public against the power of the State, are sellers of ideology who serve the government that holds power.[34] "Divorced from its original purpose and justification, as a process of criticism, freedom to think and speak are not self-evident necessities," wrote Walter Lippmann, the legend of American journalism, in 1955. "It is only from the hope and the intention of discovering truth that freedom acquires such high public significance."[35]

The times of highbrow truth-seeking journalists are gone. Lies that go through an ideological prism are no longer lies but Truth, believed also by those who spread them.[36] A case in point is the present-day situation in Poland. As I write these words (January 2024), the new Polish government under Donald Tusk, only three weeks after coming to power, declared that the Polish Press Agency, Polish National Radio, and the state Television will be liquidated. The official justification was that they were propagandistic machines of the former PiS (Law and Justice) party. Since the liquidation posed a legal problem, the new government decided to bankrupt the three bodies by freezing their assets, only to "restructure" them in a way that the bankruptcy laws allow institutions on the brink of financial collapse. In addition to the already existing liberal news outlets (for example, TVN24, owned by Warner Brothers), within a week, with new media staff appointed, state media are on the way to becoming another propagandistic machine in the service of the liberal government.

Much of it is obviously old-style, dirty politics. What is astonishing, however, is that in the eyes of the liberal politicians, the State media under the former Law and Justice Party were selling propaganda, while they air truth and nothing but the truth.

Apparently, Jefferson, somewhat disappointed with how freedom of speech worked in the world of real politics, wrote to his friend John Adams, "I have given up newspapers in exchange for Tacitus and Thucydides, for Newton and Euclid, and I find myself much happier."[37] We should follow Jefferson's footsteps.

IMMIGRATION

Jefferson was probably the first modern statesman who gave serious thought to immigration – its negative and positives sides. His views stand in stark contrast to a commonly accepted view among contemporary liberals, who either disregard or underestimate the danger of letting in masses of people from different countries and religious backgrounds. Immigrants, we are told, are not different from the host country's population, and those who imply, let alone claim openly, that it is not the case are deemed racist. Antiracism is a dogma of the liberals, who see everyone as equal and therefore are conflicted with respect to immigration issues.

[34] One should note that in the past twenty years, many very well-known journalists have lost their jobs. While most who were conservatively minded were fired for "inappropriate behavior," the liberals are fired for ideological deviations: e.g., M. Kelley, Don Lemon, J. Scarborough.

[35] Walter Lippman, *The Public Philosophy* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), 97.

[36] "[The] majority, oppressing an individual is guilty of a crime, abuses its strength, and by acting on the law of the strongest breaks up the foundations of society." To Dupont de Nemours, 1816.

[37] January 1821, 1812.

Some politicians, such as the American congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand, went so far as to claim that "there are no illegal human beings." The slogan was quickly picked up by activists and politicians in other countries. A more moderate position on immigration says that the differences between immigrants and the population of host countries are not as great as the critics of immigration claim, and the dangers of letting them in are grossly exaggerated by "nationalists."

Partisans of an open or mass immigration policy miss an important point, which Jefferson was the first to articulate in the context of the nature of modern political regimes. A republican state is a combination of political institutions and the singular virtues of its citizens that make up the popular mindset. The former cannot function without the latter, and if the balance between the two becomes uneven, the political system will stop working properly. The influx of masses of foreigners with a different cultural and political mentality must inevitably cause changes in the character of the citizenry of the host country and threatens the fabric of the republican state.

The early history of the United States provides an illustration of Jefferson's views on the relationship between the nature of the citizens' republican virtues and a republican system of government. Raised on standard history textbooks, we believe that 1776 marks the ultimate breakaway of the thirteen colonies from monarchy. However, the specter of the rebirth of monarchy loomed large for about the next three decades. This time, however, it was not the British who posed the danger but some Americans whose mindset was shaped by the Old World's constitutional ideas or who were resistant to absorb the republican outlook.

> The case in point is the attitude of Alexander Hamilton. In a letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush of 16 January 1811, after relating a conversation that John Adams and Alexander Hamilton were engaged in regarding the British constitution – which the latter, Jefferson writes, considered to be most perfect[38] – Jefferson tells us about "another incident [that] took place on the same occasion which will further delineate Mr. Hamilton's political principle." The room being hung around with a collection of the portraits

[38] It is difficult to determine whether Jefferson's allegations against Hamilton had any basis, but the fact is that on a number of occasions Hamilton felt that he had to explain himself away. For example, on 18 August 1792, he wrote to Washington "Objections and Answers Respecting the Administration of the Government":

"Answer. – This is a palpable misrepresentation. No man that I know of contemplated the introducing into this country of a monarchy. A very small number (not more than three or four) manifested theoretical opinions favorable in the abstract to a constitution like that of Great Britain; but everyone agreed that such a constitution, except as to the general distribution of departments and powers, was out of the question in reference to this country. [...] There is not a man at present in either branch of the Legislature who, that I recollect, had held language in the convention favorable to monarchy."

"Objection 14. – The ultimate object of all [this is to prepare the way for a change from the present republican form of government to that of a monarchy, of which the British constitution is to be the model.] Answer. – To this there is no other answer than a flat denial, except this: that the project from its absurdity, refutes itself. The idea of introducing a monarchy or aristocracy into this country, by employing the influence and force of a government continually changing hands, toward it, is one of those visionary things that none but madmen could mediate, and that no wise man will believe." Hamilton Papers, 1st series. *The Basic Ideas of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Richard B. Morris (New York: Pocket Books, 1956), 97, 98.

> of remarkable men, among them were those of Bacon, Newton and Locke, Hamilton asked me who they were. I told him they were my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced, naming them. He paused for some time: "the greatest man," said he, "that ever lived was Julius Caesar."[39]

Hamilton was in Jefferson's eyes a man of old breed who did not think one can get rid of the vices of the British constitution without rendering it impractical and therefore was inclined to admire the man who destroyed the Roman republic. It was "American monarchism"[40] rather than a republic that Hamilton favored.[41] As Jefferson further explains on commenting on Hamilton's admiration of Caesar, he believed "in the necessity of either force or corruption to govern men,"[42] as opposed to reason and virtue, the cornerstone of Jefferson's political thought. Despite his persistent doubts about the future of the United States, Jefferson wanted to remain a political optimist.[43] Just as Caesar devoted his life to destroying the republican form of government along with the republican virtues, so Jefferson devoted his to resuscitating them. The birth of the United States, he hoped, can bury aristocratic-monarchical order and replace its vices with republican virtues: "[T]he American example has kindled feelings of right in the people. An insurrection has consequently begun of science, talents and courage against rank and birth, which have

[39] To Dr. Benjamin Rush, 16 January 1811.

[40] See Jefferson's letter to John Melish, 13 January 1813, and to James Madison, 15 March 1789, where he states openly, thinking probably of Hamilton, "I know there are some among us, who would now establish a monarchy." In his letter to Colonel Edward Carrington (*Works*, IX, 532-35), Hamilton writes: "A word on another point. I am told that serious apprehensions are disseminated in your State as to the existence of a monarchical party mediating the destruction of State and republican government. If it is possible that so absurd an idea can gain ground, it is necessary that it should be combated. I assure you, on my private faith and honor as a man, that there is not, in my judgment, a shadow of foundation for it. A very small number of men indeed many entertain theories less republican than Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison, but I am persuaded there is not a man among them who would not regard as both criminal and visionary any attempt to subvert the republican system of the country. [...] As to my own political creed, I give it to you with utmost sincerity. I am affectionately attached to the republican theory. I desire above all things to see the equality of political rights, exclusive of all hereditary distinction, firmly established by a practical demonstration of its being consistent with the order and happiness of society." Cf. letter to Philip Mazzei, 24 April 1796.

[41] In his journal, James McHenry (1753-1816), a Maryland delegate to the Constitutional Convention, recorded a conversation between Franklin and Mrs. Powel of Philadelphia that took place on the last day of the convention, 18 September 1787. "A lady asked Dr. Franklin Well Doctor what have we got a republic or a monarchy – A republic replied the Doctor if you can keep it." The journal is at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

[42] Jefferson repeats Hamilton's views in his *Anas, or Notes* (continuation of his Autobiography). In relating the conversation over dinner (in 1790), he writes: "Politics were the chief topic, and a preference of kingly over republican government was evidently the favorite sentiment. An apostate I could not be, nor yet a hypocrite; and I found myself, for the most part, the only advocate on the republican side of the question. [...] [Hamilton] avowed the opinion, that man could be governed by one of two motives only, force or interest; force, he observed, in this country was out of the question, and the interests, therefore, of the members must be laid hold of, to keep the legislative in unison with the executive [...] some members were found sordid enough to bend their duty to their interests, and to look after personal rather than public good."

[43] "But I confess that what I have seen in Europe has brought me over to this opinion; and that though the day may be at some distance, beyond reach of our lives perhaps," Jefferson wrote to George Washington in 1786, "*yet it will certainly come*, when a single fiber left of this institution will produce an hereditary aristocracy, which will change the form of our governments from the best to the worst in the world. [...] I do not flatter myself with the immortality of our governments: but I shall think little also of their longevity, unless this germ of destruction be taken out" (emphasis mine).

fallen into contempt. [...] [R]ank and birth, and tinsel-aristocracy will finally shrink into insignificance."[44] If the events ultimately unfolded in the direction that Jefferson hoped for, it was only because, despite the executive, the judiciary preferred "calm despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty,"[45] "[t]he main body of our citizens however remain true to their republican principles [...] and so is a great mass of talents."[46]

In the context of my remarks on Jefferson's view of immigration, the question is this: If a small group of people such as Hamiltonians could tip the scale and turn the republic into a monarchy,[47] how much more plausible is it that the masses of immigrants can do so? In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 8, titled "Doubts as to the wisdom of mass immigration," he states: "Every species of government has its specific principles. Ours perhaps are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe. [...] To these nothing can be more opposed than the maxims of absolute monarchies. [...] Suppose twenty millions of republican Americans thrown all of a sudden into France, what would be the condition of that kingdom? [...] [W]e may believe that the addition of half a million of foreigners to our present numbers would produce a similar effect."

To obfuscate the problem that cultural and religious differences may create, today's partisans of mass immigration invoke an economic argument, claiming that the economy in developed countries depends on a foreign labor workforce to do work that Westerners are not inclined to perform. This is undoubtedly true, and Jefferson foresaw it as well, but he looked at the *Gastarbeiters* from the point of view of enriching the country by bringing in skilled professionals. "[In case we need] useful artificers," he explains, "[we should] spare no expense in obtaining them. [...] they will teach us something we do not know."[48] There is nothing singular in such an approach to immigration. Many Western countries adopted it in the recent past but differentiated between unskilled workers, who were given temporary work visas, and immigrants with unique skills, who were given permanent residency. In Canada in the 1990s, for example, residency was extended to medical professionals, tech experts, or people with college and university degrees but not pickers of vegetables or janitors. Today, because most social policies are based on the premise of equality of all, such policies are considered discriminatory.

All the above recommendations are pragmatic, but idealism and compassion were also part of his considerations. Jefferson was not oblivious to the idea that asylum must also be granted on humanitarian grounds. In his First Annual Message as President of the

[44] To Adams, 1813.
[45] To Philip Mazzei, 24 April 1796.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Jefferson's writings are full of remarks that aim at Hamilton's vision of a royalist system of government. For example: "I have utterly, in my private conversations, disapproved of the system of the Secretary of the Treasury, I acknowledge and avow; and this was not merely a speculative difference. His system flowed from principles adverse to liberty, and was calculated to undermine and demolish the Republic, by creating an influence of his department over the members of legislature. [...] These were no longer the votes then of the representatives of the people, but of the deserters from the rights and interest of the people: [...] Under the command of the Secretary of the Treasury, for the purpose of subverting step by step, the principles of the Constitution, which he has so often declared to be a thing of nothing which must be changed." To the President of the United States, 9 September 1792. "Anglomany and monarchy, [are the principles] of the Hamiltonians, and Anglomany alone, that of the portion among the *people* who call themselves federalists." To John Melish, 13 January 1813.
[48] *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 8.

United States, he told the members of Congress: "And shall we refuse the [...] unhappy fugitives from distress that hospitality which the savages of the wilderness extended to our fathers arriving in this land? Shall oppressed humanity find no asylum on this globe?"[49]

There is hardly a better litmus test of being a liberal today than one's attitude toward immigration. Liberals believe and attempt to make others believe that immigrants are like the native population; that they are devoid of national and cultural identity and political attitudes that can be detrimental or harmful to the well-being of a country in which they want to settle. They see countries not as organized political communities held together by their history, shared language, and culture but as nameless territories open to settlement by anyone who wishes to inhabit them.

An immigrant as "a human being" is the opposite of someone who is English, Polish, Scottish, Italian, Japanese, or Nigerian, that is, someone who is steeped in cultural heritage and language, which is not merely a tool of daily communication but a vehicle of old national traditions and gestures that live in its semantic structures, proverbs, expressions, accents, and intonation. To invoke any of the above as an argument in favor of limited immigration, or in favor of immigration based on strict criteria, or from the regions of the world that share common tradition is tantamount to being a racist or nationalist. Yet all of the above attitudes directed toward Westerners are normal in Africa, Asia, and the Muslim Middle East. Paradoxically, the same Africans, Asians, and Muslims who would discriminate against Westerners in their respective countries, when they make their home in the West either find themselves patronized by the local liberal elites as minorities that require protection against Western "nationalists"[50] or complain about discrimination. Attempts to impose cultural rules of the host country on immigrants to speed up the process of their assimilation – the very condition of being successful in the new country – is decried by liberals as lack of toleration and openness.[51]

One can agree that an overly restrictive immigration policy may be a flaw. It is likely to manifest itself in lower economic prosperity, an insufficient labor force in certain economic sectors, such as agriculture or construction, whereas countries allowing immigrants, or temporary workers, prove to be economically more successful, at least for a short while. One should be cognizant that countries and nations are not economic corporations or conglomerates that produce commercial goods. If they produce anything, it is citizens. *The character of citizens is like the brand of a product – which can be good or bad. Liberals fail to grasp something that for Jefferson was obvious: republics will exist only so long as republican virtues are nourished and animate the life and mind of its citizens.*

[49] First Annual Message, 8 December 1801.

[50] It is assumed as a matter of course that Africans, Asians, and Muslims can become Westerners, but it is never considered that a white North American and European immigrating to an African country, Korea, Japan, India, or China will never be perceived by local populations as Nigerian, Korean, Japanese, Hindu, or Chinese. At this point in world history, such a scenario is considered as a proper theme for a joke or comedy in those places.

[51] A case in point are the old debates regarding wearing "bourkas" by Muslim girls in French schools that until not a long time ago observed a secular code that everyone had to observe.

EDUCATION – THE TORIES AND THE WHIGS

Jefferson might have said that the difference between the Tories and the Whigs is natural and signifies no more than two kinds of human temperament, but his writings on education present a different picture. One's political views depend on what one reads, and if the books that come our way happen to be written with irresistible charm, they can change the course of political history for hundreds of years. Charm can, however, be an instrument of evil powers in the hands of intellectual conmen, and chief villain to Jefferson was David Hume.

> Every one knows that judicious matter and charms of style have rendered Hume's history the manual of every student. I remember well the enthusiasm with which I devoured it when young, and the length of time, the research and reflection which were necessary to eradicate the poison it had instilled into my mind. It was unfortunate that he first took up the history of the Stuarts, became their apologist, and advocated their enormities. To support his work, when done, he went back to the Tudors, and so selected and arranged the materials of their history as to present their arbitrary acts only, as the genuine samples of the constitutional power of the crown, and, still writing backwards, he then reverted to the early history, and wrote the Saxon and Norman periods with the same perverted view. Although all this is known*, he still continues to be put into the hands of all our young people, and to infect them with the poison of his own principles of government*. It is this book which has undermined the free principles of the English government, has persuaded readers of all classes that these were usurpations on the legitimate and salutary right of the crown, and has spread universal toryism over the land.[52]

Fifteen years later, commenting on Hume again, Jefferson reiterated the same sentiment:

> [B]ut so bewitching was his style and manner, that his readers were unwilling to doubt any thing, swallowed every thing, and all England became Tories by the magic of his art. His pen revolutionized the public sentiment of that country more completely than the standing armies could ever have done.[53]

If we take Jefferson's words at face value, it appears that Hume was the greatest danger to the intellectual formation of the early American mind.[54] His influence was

[52] To Colonel William Duane, 12 August 1810 (emphasis mine).

[53] To [George Washington Lewis?], 25 October 1825. Lewis was a member of a distinguished family in Virginia and one of the first students at the University of Virginia whose curriculum Jefferson designed.

[54] Blackstone is put by Jefferson in the same category as Hume: "With the lawyers it is a new thing. They have, in the mother country been generally the firmest supporters of the free principles of their constitution. But there too they have changed. I ascribe much of this to the substitution of Blackstone for my Lord Coke, as an elementary work. In truth, Blackstone and Hume have made tories of all England, and are making tories of those young

apparently so widespread and alarming that it made an American Founding Father take up metaphorical arms against him. Jefferson's obsessive desire to show that Hume was a manipulator[55] sounds like the proverbial "to be or not to be" of the new country – and it was, at least in the realm of ideas that shaped American political reality. The year 1776 raised the question of the legitimacy of the American rebellion against the British Crown and the source of political legitimacy. Jefferson's virulent attacks on Hume's interpretation of English history mirrored his intellectual effort to give it justification in a broader historical context:

> The government of a nation may be usurped by the forcible intrusion of an individual into the throne. But to conquer its will, so as to rest on that, the only legitimate basis, requires long acquiescence and cessation of all opposition. The Whig historians of England therefore have always gone back to the Saxon period for the true principles of their constitution, while the Tories and Hume, their Coryphaeus, date it from the Norman conquest, and hence conclude that the continual claim by the nation of the good Saxon laws, and the struggles to recover them, were "encroachments of the people on the crown, and not usurpations of the crown on the people." Hume, with Brodie, should be the last histories of England to be read. If first read, Hume makes an English Tory, from whence it is an easy step to American Toryism.[56]

In view of Jefferson's own words, the problem of 1776 was whether the American rebellion was an encroachment on the Crown's legitimate claim to rule the colonies or whether it was an attempt to *reclaim* the people's original rights, which the British monarchy had usurped.[57]

Like all rebellions, the American one depended on victorious military operations, but its long-term success depended on two other factors: the creation of the new American judicial mind and appropriate safeguards against lapses into British-style Toryism and monarchism.[58] Because removing the Hamiltons from political existence was impossible, one had to at least try to eradicate from the American mind the Hamiltonian conviction that man acts from inferior motives and at the same time the idea that the English Constitution, which takes them into account, is the best. Hamilton's British-style toryism and monarchism

Americans whose native feelings of independence do not place them above the wily sophistries of a Hume or a Blackstone. These two books, but especially the former have done more towards the suppression of the liberties of man, than all the million of men in arms of Bonapart." To H. G. Spafford, 1814.

[55] "[H]e suppressed truths, advanced falsehoods, forged authorities, and falsified records. All this is proved on him unanswerably by Brodie." To [George Washington Lewis?], 25 October 1825.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Power, for Jefferson, is inherent in the people: "Hume, the great apostle of toryism, says [...] '[It] is belied by all history and experience, that *the people are the origin of all just power*.' And where else will this degenerate son of science, this traitor to his fellow men, find the origin of *just power*, if not in the majority of the society? Will it be in the minority? Or in an individual or that minority?" To J. Cartwright, 1824 (emphasis in original).

[58] A whole range of issues pertaining to Anglo-American relationships is discussed by Jonathan C. D. Clark: *The Langue of Liberty 1660-1831: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

were on the opposite pole of Jefferson's republicanism based on a system of virtues.[59] The new educational curriculum and a careful selection of university professors were to do the trick.[60]

Writings on education constitute a considerable portion of Jefferson's oeuvre. Analyzing them here would be an impossible task. For our purposes, it is enough to divide them briefly into a few categories. Some of them relate to the establishment of elementary schools with the purpose of diffusing basic knowledge among the masses.[61] This was a typical idea for the Enlightenment period and later. It inscribes itself into the more general view propagated in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that self-government requires an educated public opinion or that tyrannical governments can exist only among ignorant people. In his other writings, Jefferson states with unveiled hostility and derision that hereditary aristocracy is nothing "but body, no mind," that it was due to ignorance of our "semi-barbaric ancestry"[62] that aristocratic rule existed for as long as it did, and that the diffusion of knowledge will inevitably put an end to monarchic-aristocratic oppression. The vacuum that the destruction of hereditary aristocracy in America created had to be filled: hereditary aristocracy was to make room for the natural aristocracy of talent. However, it required "raking the genius from the rubbish."[63] The raking was to be accomplished by a special system of education designed by Jefferson.

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[59] All his life, Jefferson was preoccupied with the question of what a proper republican system is and thus how far direct democracy should extend: "The further the departure from direct and constant control by the citizens, the less has the government of the ingredient of republicanism; [...] The purest republican feature in the government of our own State, is the House of Representatives. The Senate is equally so the first year, less the second, and so on. The Executive still less, because not chosen by the people directly. The Judiciary seriously antirepublican because for life." To J. Taylor, 1816.

[60] Jefferson wrote about legal education and profession in a similar spirit, tracing the ideological deformations from the spirit of republicanism and securing the future of the whiggish-republican frame of mind: "In selecting our Law Professor [at the University of Virginia, ZJ], we must be rigorously attentive to his political principles. You will recollect that, before the Revolution, Cook Littleton was the universal elementary book of law students, and a sounder Whig never wrote, nor profounder learning in the orthodox doctrines of the British constitution, or in what were called English liberties. You remember also that our lawyers were then all Whigs. But when his black-letter text, and uncouth but cunning learning got out of fashion, and the honeyed Mansfieldism of Blackstone became the students' hornbook, from that moment that profession (the nursery of our Congress) began to slide into toryism, and nearly all the young brood of lawyers now are of that hue. They suppose themselves indeed to be Whigs, because they no longer know what Whiggism or republicanism means. It is thence in our seminary that that vestal flame is to be kept alive; it is to be spread anew over our own and the sister States. If we are true and vigilant in our trust, within a dozen or twenty years, a majority of our own legislature, will be from one school, and many disciples will have carried its doctrines home with them to their several States, and will have leavened thus the whole mass." To James Madison, 17 February 1826.

[61] See, for example, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 14.

[62] To J. Cartwright, 1824.

[63] *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 14. And Jefferson shows how to proceed: "These schools to be under a visitor, who is annually to choose the boy, of best genius in the school, of those whose parents are too poor to give them further instruction, and to send him forward to one of the grammar schools, of which twenty are proposed to be erected in different parts of the country, for teaching Greek, Latin, Geography and the higher branches of numerical arithmetic. Of the boys thus sent in one year, trial is to be made at the grammar schools one or two years, and the best genius of the whole selected, and continued six years, and the residue dismissed. By this means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually, and be instructed, at the public expense." In the letter to Peter Carr, 7 September 1814, Jefferson offers a very detailed curriculum for schools at different levels. Cf. Letter to John Adams, 13 October 1813.

Jefferson did not think that equality excludes the existence of classes as such, on the condition that they will not become hereditary. The new society was to consist of learned and laboring citizens.[64] His language of "raking the genius from rubbish" is anathema to today's liberals, who do everything in their power to make genius and rubbish indistinguishable. Lowering educational standards, abolishing mandatory university entrance tests (the SAT) (as has already happened in many American universities); liquidating schools for special-needs children, and so on is done under the banner of equality, while the real threat that Jefferson saw was bankers and a new monied aristocracy.[65] "Merchants have no country," said Jefferson, as if he anticipated today's "globalization." It is the new liberal project that requires weakening the sovereign states and, consequently, depriving the people of its sovereign power.

A considerable portion of Jefferson's writings on education are devoted to learning the languages and "great works" of the Ancient Greek and Roman authors. As the teaching of Ancient Greek and Latin in schools today is virtually extinct and those who still learn them do not think it is a privilege, we may find it mind-boggling to read that Jefferson found it the best thing in his life to learn Greek and Latin. "[T]o read the Latin and Greek authors in their original is sublime luxury; and I deem luxury in science to be at least as justifiable as in architecture, painting, gardening, or the other arts."[66] Advantages in studying them lie in learning from the Greeks and Romans composition and style, "unmatched by any of the ancient people." Among other languages, one should learn French, Spanish, and Italian.[67] Elsewhere, Jefferson asks, "What are the objects of an *useful* American education?" And in answering his question, he writes: "Classical knowledge."[68] The answer is surprising to us, but it would not have made any of his contemporaries roll their eyes. Classical education meant acquisition of knowledge about the ancient people who invented democracy and the republic. Their writings are the thesaurus of ancient virtues and the knowledge of the principles of republicanism newly resuscitated in the New World. Authors that republican citizens should be intimately acquainted with, according to Jefferson, are Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, Dion, Caesar,

[64] "The mass of our citizens may be divided into two classes – the laboring and the learned. The laboring will need the first grade of education to qualify them for their pursuits and duties; the learned will need it as a foundation for further acquirements." To Peter Carr, 7 September 1814.

[65] Jefferson's attacks against banks, the new banking system, as represented by Hamilton, and the monied aristocracy constitutes a subject in its own right. See his letters to Gallatin, 1803 and 1804; to J. W. Eppes, 1813; to Dr. T. Cooper, 1814; to Gallatin, 1815; to Colonel Yancey, 1816. "The bank mania is one of the most threatening of these imitations. It is raising up a monied aristocracy in our country which has already set the government at defiance." To Dr. J. B. Stuart, 1817. The animosity between Jefferson and Hamilton, who was the president of the bank, intensified as Jefferson saw it as a threat to the republic. "This institution [the Bank of the United States] is one of the most deadly hostility existing, against the principles and form of our Constitution." To Gallatin, 1803. "[If th]ere be [a man] in the world I ought to hate, it is Jefferson." To Gouverneur Morris; draft in Hamilton's hand, in Hamilton's Papers, 1st ser. Their mutual lack of trust notwithstanding, Hamilton was magnanimous enough to help Jefferson in his election to presidency when he ran against "this scoundrel Burr." Jefferson acknowledged the debt in his letter to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 26 January 1801: "P.S. Hamilton is using his uttermost influence to procure my election rather than Colonel Burr's."

[66] To Dr. Joseph Priestley, 27 January 1800.

[67] To T. M. Randolph, Junior, 6 July 1787.

[68] To J. Banister, Junior, 15 October 1785 (emphasis mine).

Polybius, Sallust, Plutarch, Arrian, Curtius, Dionysius, Herodotus, Diodorus, Xenophon, and Thucydides.[69]

At most of the American university campuses today, we can see buildings with big signs proclaiming "A Liberal Arts College," but the education there is anything but liberal. Instead of studying the ancient authors to learn the principles of republican government, students learn about the existence of privileges, power structures, and imaginary oppression. Ironically, the professors and students did not notice that much of this was done away with by the American Founding Fathers when they established the American Republic. If one can still study ancient history, classical languages, and Greek and Roman authors, it is mostly in institutions that resisted liberal pressure and are desperately trying to save what is left of the classical liberal mind.

GOTHIC PAST, THE CROOKED PRESENT, AND THE NEW GREEN CONTRACT

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
T. S. Eliot

Both liberals and conservatives would agree that our present is fractured and often incoherent. It is composed of the broken fragments of past and present ideals.[70] We live

[69] To [George Washington Lewis?], 25 October 1825. We find similar lists of authors in Jefferson's many letters. I consciously omit Jefferson's considerations on political and legal works, which in his opinion deserve to be part of the American education. His general approach to what we call political science was that the Federalists Papers superseded everything that was written before, and therefore, there is little in this department that deserves attention. As he stated, "The introduction of this new principle of representative democracy has rendered useless almost everything written before on the structure of governments; and, in a great measure, relieves our regret, if the political writings of Aristotle, or of any other ancient, have been lost." To I. H. Tiffany, 1816. And: "Locke's little book on Government, is perfect as far as it goes. Descending from theory to practice there is no better book than the Federalist. [...] Hume's Political Essays are good also. There are some excellent books of theory written by Turgot and the economists of France. For parliamentary knowledge the Lex Parlamentaria is the best book." To Mr. Thomas Mann Randolph, 30 May 1790. A very interesting account of the classics' influence in America is Eran Shalev's "Empire Transformed: Britain in the American Classical Imagination, 1758-1783," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4, no. 1 (2006): 112-46.

[70] I consciously use the word "ideal" rather than "idea." Today's political and social projects belong to the world of wishful thinking. They are devoid of serious methodology that would merit them the name of ideas. Depending on one's perspective, the fragmentation of our worldview can be traced to the Reformation, which was the first break with tradition; modern philosophy, represented by Bacon and Descartes, which recommended that we dismiss the past before we establish certainty in human sciences; the Enlightenment war against religion in the name of the Light of Reason; nineteenth-century Liberalism; or twentieth century ideologies. Among our contemporaries

in a kind of jig-saw puzzle world whose pieces do not fit well. Social media exacerbated the chaos, of which social life, politics, theology, and art are proof. Looking for coherence and beauty in them would be in vain. The same is true of individual existence. As human mental health requires the existence of cultural constants, it is not surprising that citizens of liberal democracies feel lost and alienated and experience psychological problems. Suicide attempts among young people have reached a historically unprecedented scale.

Conservatives blame the liberal doctrine for this fragmentation and its consequences. To them, the culprit was the party of the new apostles of Reason who believed that an abstract "contractual society" is possible and can be better, free of the sins of past oppression. As Jefferson said, "We can surely boast of having set the world a beautiful example of a government reformed by reason alone."[71] He wrote it only a year before the outbreak of the French Revolution. However, several years later, looking at the destruction of the Old World caused by the revolution launched in the name of Reason,[72] Edmund Burke took on the Jeffersonian idea of abstract society.

> Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure – but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. *As the ends of such partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born*. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primaeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place. This law is not subject to the will of those, who by an obligation above them, and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law. The municipal corporations of that universal kingdom are not morally at liberty at their pleasure, and on their speculations of a contingent improvement, wholly to separate and tear

discussing the fragmentation is the English philosopher Alaisdair MacIntire; see his *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

[71] To Rutledge, 1788. Similar optimism permeated all of Jefferson's writings. "The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them." To Roger C. Weightman, 24 June 1826.

[72] For the terrifying description of what the revolutionaries attempted to accomplish, see the opening pages of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Old Regime and the French Revolution* (1856).

> asunder the bands of their subordinate community, and to dissolve it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles.

Burke's words encapsulate the essence of the conservative credo. According to it, each of us participates in a long march or procession of generations through time of which history is a trodden and safe path. Our belonging to a society is not "contractual" but based on "piety"[73] – reverence for the past, which creates bonds and mutual obligations. In the eyes of the apostles of Reason, this path, which has been tainted by the tyranny of monarchs and aristocrats, should be rejected. As if with the above passage from Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in mind,[74] Jefferson formulated his own idea of society:

> Can one generation bind another, and all others, in succession forever? I think not. The Creator has made the earth for the living, not the dead. Rights and powers can only belong to the persons, not to things, not to mere matter, endowed with will. The dead are not even things. The particles of matter which composed their bodies, make part now of the bodies of other animals, vegetables, or minerals, of a thousand forms. To what then are attached the rights and powers they held while in the form of men. A generation may bind itself as long as its majority continues in life; when that has disappeared, another majority is in place, holds all the rights and powers their predecessors once held and may change their laws and institutions to suit themselves. Nothing then is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man.[75]
>
> As members, therefore, of the universal society of mankind, and standing in high and responsible relation with them, it is our sacred duty to suppress passions among ourselves, and not to blast the confidence we have inspired of proof that a government of reason is better than one of force.[76]

Despite his learning and occasional intellectual finesse, Jefferson was a revolutionary ideologue. His antimonarchism, obsession with the idea of abstract rights as a panacea against oppression, and the rightness of an abstract theory of society blinded him to empirical facts. In commenting on the Reign of Terror in France, Jefferson wrote,

> I hope and firmly believe that the whole world will, sooner or later, feel benefit from the issue of our assertion of the rights of man. Although the horrors of the French revolution have damped for a while the ardor of the

[73] I borrowed this old-fashioned term from Sir Roger Scruton, who resurrected it and used it in his many writings. I find "piety" to be very appropriate as it captures well the question of respect for the dead and indirectly tradition.
[74] Surprisingly, references to Burke in Jefferson are rare (I could find only three). In his Autobiography, he called Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* "rhapsodies."
[75] To Major John Cartwrights, 5 June 1824.
[76] To R. Rush, 1820.

> patriots in every country, yet it is not so extinguished – it will never die. The sense of right has been excited in every breast, and the spark will be rekindled by the very oppressions of that detestable tyranny employed to quench it. The errors of the honest patriots of France, and the crimes of her Dantons and Robespierres, will be forgotten in the more encouraging contemplation of our sober example and steady march to our object.[77]

Jefferson, sadly, was not different from later ideologues, including the Communists. Like them, he persuaded himself that a revolution requires sacrifices, that crimes are necessary, and the guilt can be washed white with the soap of future benefits. From an ideological perspective, the terror and death of *real* people are a historical nuisance, and, as the above quoted words confirm, they were to Jefferson as well.

Respect for the past and tradition is not a feature of liberal societies. Liberalism was born out of the Enlightenment's mockery of the past and revolutionary zeal. The present is a witness. The sight of the recently torn-down monuments of historical figures and the destruction of educational curricula that are believed to perpetuate stereotypes of oppression confirm that the revolution is still in progress. This is not a novelty for anyone who understands that Liberalism is the next chapter in the Enlightenment's rebellion against the past. The behavior of those who rally on the streets in Western countries and the liberal professors who demand that texts by Dead White European Males be replaced by minority writers is a continuation of the Enlightenment liberation project. In their eyes, the West's intellectual tradition does not hide any treasures worthy of being preserved. The implicit assumption of the reformers is that as long as the past is part of our intellectual outlook, we will never be truly free.[78]

A critic might say that Jefferson would never condone changes in educational curricula that have taken place in the 1980s and 1990s. He may have been vehemently anti-English, but he understood that there exists a strong link between the mother country and America.[79] As he himself wrote to the editor of *Aurora*, "Our laws, language, religion, politics, manners are so deeply laid in English foundations, that we shall never cease

[77] To B. Galloway, 1812. Jefferson was present in Paris in July 1789, from where he wrote a long letter (on the nineteenth of the month) to John Jay relating news of the Storming of the Bastille and its immediate aftermath.

[78] In commenting on the "aboriginal inhabitants" of America, Jefferson writes: "These persons inculcate a sanctimonious reverence for the customs of their ancestors; that whatever they did, must be done through all time; that reason is a false guide, and to advance under its counsel, in their physical, moral, or political condition, is perilous innovation." Second Inaugural Address, 4 March 1805. And in a letter to Dr. Joseph Priestley, 27 January 1800, Jefferson expresses a similar idea: "The Gothic idea that we are to look backwards instead of forwards for the improvement of the human mind, and to recur to the annals of our ancestors for what is most perfect in government, in religion and in learning, is worthy of those bigots in religion and government, by whom it has been recommended, and whose purpose it would answer."

[79] "Yet the roots of American society," wrote Richard D. Heffner in 1952, "were firmly implanted in the great traditions of Western Civilization, and ultimately American nationality was heavily indebted to its European heritage of ideas and mode of life as it was to the new environment." *Documentary History of the United States* (New York: A Mentor Books, 1985), 9. The sad truth is that the truth about American origins contained in the above words is far from being obvious today. The idea of America as a multicultural society also changed the historical narrative. In fact, it destroyed it. Accordingly, since each minority's contribution is equally valuable, the importance of British Protestant roots must be played down.

to consider their history as a part of ours, and to study ours in that as its origin."[80] He could hypothetically protest at the sight of what has been happening in America since the 1980s, but he would have to admit that the present-day destroyers are sons and daughters of his own theory of abstract society that severed the link to the past.

Today's academics are the progeny of an ideology of which Jefferson is one of the creators. It is an irony that the man who co-created the ideology that propels the destruction fell victim to it. His liberal progeny hardly ever takes the trouble of reading Jefferson or sees words of wisdom in his gentle language of appreciation of the English tradition. Jefferson to them is another Dead White European Male, and his ideas are the instruments of intellectual enslavement by a dead slave owner.[81]

Liberal education as it is presently constituted explains why the youth's attachment to conservative causes is more and more often sporadic, and the conservatives should seriously worry about the future of the Conservative Mind. However, there is one item that can, if properly exploited and directed, turn things around. It is the problem of the environment.[82] The Jeffersonian idea that one generation cannot bind another, "and all others, in succession forever," or that "the Creator has made the earth for the living, not the dead" when confronted with the danger of an environmental catastrophe appears to be false. Its falsity shows a crack in the liberal worldview that severed the link between generations. Youth's environmental movement establishes the link between the present and the future, which inscribes itself into Edmund Burke's understanding of mutual obligations between generations. Most importantly, it is a nonjudicial sense of obligations that transcends the liberal contractarian understanding of human relationships and the nature of society.

This link, of course, is only one of the two necessary elements of the Conservative Mind. Given the condition of colleges and universities, it is unlikely that one can restore a connection to the past through formal humanistic education. If there is a chance to reestablish such a link, it must grow from young people's aesthetic needs and their moral sensitivity. Despite what art and architecture gurus tell us, much of the contemporary aesthetic environment – architecture, sculpture, painting – is analogous to environmental catastrophe. There is no question that today's houses and apartments are more functional and comfortable than the old places of dwelling, but a growing heritage movement and people escaping to the country reflect the need to connect to the past and an aesthetic awaking in our heartless, machine-made society. Care for them is a link that connects us to bygone generations. At no point in the more recent past was aesthetic education needed as much as it is today, and never before were art historians as great a social asset as they could be today. It is only they who can explain to us why the past is often aesthetically

[80] To Colonel William Duane, 12 August 1810.

[81] One should recall in this context Jessie Jackson's visit to Stanford University in January 1987, where he shouted out "Hey, Hey, Ho Ho, Western civ has got to go." It was the Black congressman and activist's message to American students. Ironically, the same year Allan Bloom published his *Closing of the American Mind*.

[82] Unfortunately, right-wing governments have been conducting overtly anti-environmental policies for decades, which brought the young to the liberal side. They act as if they do not realize the potential that lies in presenting the preservation of the environment as a genuinely conservative concern.

superior to the present. Sadly, too few of them do so. Few people did more in this respect than Prince Charles and Sir Roger Scruton.[83]

As conservatism as an outlook is in danger of disappearing, reclaiming the environmental movement and spreading aesthetic awareness that connects us to the past are the two fundamentals that can save it. Otherwise, conservatism will slide into right-wing national mythology that creates a link to imaginary past generations. It will last only so long as we *believe* it is true.

SOCIAL RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, PARCHMENT RIGHTS, AND THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Today's world looks like a desert, where the only signs of human presence or the only thing that seems to matter is rights. The problems that preoccupied humanity for nearly three thousand years are no longer part of man's intellectual horizon. And if he thinks of them at all, he considers them to be hardly applicable to his life or believes them to be proof of an oppressive past. To prevent oppression from happening again, he establishes new rights. His reasoning is simple: since the past was full of discriminatory attitudes, the remedy lies in anti-discriminatory laws. Rights are supposed to protect him from discrimination by others.

What the enthusiasts of rights fail to understand is the danger created by the multiplication of rights as regulatory principles of human relationships. Introducing new rights is not a zero-sum game: as the number of them increases, the more powerful the State – the rights enforcer – becomes. The outcome is the opposite of Jefferson's original intention, which was securing individual liberties against encroachment by the government or the State. That was the case from the Magna Carta (1215), right through to the liberal nineteenth century. Today, however, rights no longer protect us against the power of the government. Rights today are the worst enemy of the individual. In their name, the people who call themselves liberal have waged a battle against thinking as such. "There are rights which it is useless to surrender to the government [...]. These are rights of thinking, and publishing our thoughts by speaking or writing."[84] One would look in vain today for a liberal who believes what Jefferson so firmly believed in. The liberal public believes that freedom of speech should be restricted, that one should not be allowed to express one's opinions. The list is long and is getting longer each year.

One is naturally tempted to look for the culprit of our current predicament. Conservative and right-wing critics of Liberalism devolve the blame on the liberal doctrine. However, the situation is more complicated as Liberalism was not the only theory that invented new rights.

The pressure of Socialist thought in the twentieth century created an environment in which it was possible to make people believe that they have a right to certain benefits, which we call "social rights." Accordingly, it is natural to think that we have a right to free education, paid vacations, free medical care, aid for parents with children, unemployment

[83] Prince Charles, *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture* (1989) and *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World* (2010). Sir Roger Scruton was one of several conservative thinkers who through his writing on art and architecture directed the attention of the public to the problem of the devastation of our architectural environment.

[84] To Humphrys, 1789.

benefits, maternity leave, retirement benefits, and many other privileges. If we define such entitlements as rights, what we are saying in effect is that the State has the obligation to take care of me, which is the opposite of what the classical liberal doctrine says. What goes unnoticed is that for the State to ensure that our social rights are secured, it must increase taxation on the productive part of the population, which means, first, limiting the rules of free enterprise and, second, the right to arbitrarily decide how high taxes should be. Jefferson, like Mill later, thought the government should be small[85] and frugal.[86]

The idea that the State is supposed to provide its citizens with goods is part of the logic of the Socialist State. To some degree, the same logic motivated classical liberal thought and can be found in Mill. However, in contrast to the Socialists, classical liberals offer a different justification for the distribution of benefits. Mill, who hardly ever used the language of rights, believed that what was a matter of privileges in the past, which only higher classes enjoyed, is today a right. His reasoning is based on the observation that as science and technology developed, European civilization made it possible for a greater number of people to enjoy what privileged classes had hitherto enjoyed. Social rights are natural neither in the ordinary sense nor in the sense of the theory of Natural Law. As fruits of advanced civilization, they could and would disappear if the civilization were to break down.[87]

Human Rights, in contrast to social rights, are in a better conceptual position as their justification is not contingent on the wealth of a country or on anything else. Not to be tortured, violated, debased, abused, humiliated, degraded, deprived of life, or put in prison without trial appear obviously desirable.[88] However, as applies to rights in general, for Human Rights to be upheld, there must be an institution that has legitimacy and the means to punish those who break them. The United Nations proved to be helpless in confrontation with dictatorial, authoritarian, theocratic, or totalitarian regimes that violate them.

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[85] To Gideon Granger, 1800.

[86] To Elbridge Gerry, 1799. The theme of frugality permeates many of Jefferson's writings. He was a fierce enemy of a government that accrues debt that goes beyond the ability of one's generation to pay off. It is the opposite of what we politicians do today. Conservatives are no longer a party of fiscal responsibility but, rather, of fiscal irresponsibility. Vice-President Dick Chayne's saying that "debt does not matter" became a common currency among conservatives and right-wingers. Jefferson, on the other hand, saw it as a danger that must lead to making one's country dependent on foreign powers.

[87] This commonsensical reasoning is not as widely understood as it should be. As an example, consider access to education, which is universal in the West but is not in poor Asian or African countries. Can one consider education to be a right in poor countries, where there is no educational infrastructure? The answer is: of course not. At best we can pity such children, but no reasonable person would claim that their rights are violated. One could subject to similar scrutiny every social right, and the answer will be the same: such rights are not rights but blessings of advanced civilization.

[88] The definition of Human Rights (according to Wikipedia) reads as follows: "Human rights are moral principles or norms for certain standards of human behaviour and are regularly protected in municipal and international law. They are commonly understood as inalienable, fundamental rights 'to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being' and which are 'inherent in all human beings,' regardless of their age, ethnic origin, location, language, religion, ethnicity, or any other status. They are applicable everywhere and at every time in the sense of being universal, and they are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone. They are regarded as requiring empathy and the rule of law and imposing an obligation on persons to respect the human rights of others, and it is generally considered that they should not be taken away except as a result of due process based on specific circumstances."

In the absence of an enforcing state machinery, Human Rights remain a moral postulate rather than a political fact, which brings us to the core of the problem: we are not universal human beings or citizens of the country called the World whose system of laws is based on a universal human nature, and no State represents human beings. We are citizens of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Argentina, Nigeria, or Japan, and we are subject to their laws only. Our respective governments can protect (or punish) us only to the extent that *the nation's* laws prescribe.

Here we enter the realm of history that can tell us about the story of laws. They are a product of a nation's history (as Common Law is in England), but can the opposite be the case? In other words, can laws make a nation? The laws included in the Magna Carta (1215), for example, did not create the English nation; rather, they were formulated because of specific events in the history of the English people. They may have influenced how the English later related to each other because of the rights specified in the Magna Carta, but the English nation had to exist before it created the Magna Carta. It would follow, therefore, that only a nation can create laws because nonhistorical beings cannot create laws for themselves to become a nation. Were it possible, a prior system of laws would have to exist that was created by an actual nation to turn nonhistorical people into a nation. However, the year 1776 turned what appeared conceptually impossible into a historical fact, but a few additional conditions had to be met.[89]

The first line of the French national anthem, the *Marseillaise* – "*Allons enfants de la Patrie*" – identifies the people as French, the children of France, their Motherland. The first words of the Declaration of Independence – "We the People of the United States [...]" – make no reference to the people's nationality; even their historical origins are omitted. "The People" are identified as *inhabitants* of a geographical territory, or the united territories (somewhere) in North America. While the "Children" in the *Marseillaise* want to reclaim the rule over the land of their ancestors, "the People" in the Declaration of Independence have land but no sense of *nationality*, and their future national character is going to be unlike the character of any other people. As Jefferson wrote later, "We of the

[89] In reading Jefferson, one often gets the impression that historical reality is secondary in founding a country. However, there are a few examples that show he understood the problem well. Yet his remarks are limited to law, while literature, language, history, religion, customs, and moral code are absent. "The Laws of England seem to have been adopted by consent of the settlers, which might easily enough be done whilst they were few and living all together. Of such adoption, however, we have no other proof than their practice till the year 1661, when they were expressly adopted by an act of the assembly, except so far as 'a difference of condition' rendered them inapplicable. Under this adoption, the rule, in our courts of judicature was, that the common law of England, and the general statutes previous to the fourth of James, were in force here; but that no subsequent statutes were, *unless we were named in them*, said the judges and other partisans of the crown, but *named or not named*, said those who reflected freely. It will be unnecessary to attempt a description of the laws of England, as that may be found in English publications." *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 14 (italics in original). And: "The common law, therefore which was not in force when we landed here, nor till we had formed ourselves into a nation, and had manifested by the organs we constituted, that the common law was to be our law, continued to be our law, because the nation continued in being, and because though it changed the organs for the future declarations of its will, yet it did not change its former declarations that the common laws was its law. [...] I think it will be of great importance, when you come to the proper part to pourtray [*sic*] at full length the consequences of this new doctrine that the common law is the law of the US, and that their courts have of course, jurisdiction co-extensive with that law, that is to say general over all cases and persons. But, good heavens! Who could have conceived in 1789, that within ten years we should have to combat such windmills." To Edmund Randolph, 18 August 1799.

United States, you know, are constitutionally and conscientiously democrats."[90] In contrast to other nationalisms, which are ethnic, American nationalism is singular – it is political.[91]

This oddity was recognized by Jefferson, who realized that a historical definition of a nation is inadequate to accommodate the new political situation of a people which cut off its historical roots in 1776. This problem transpires in Jefferson's letter to Edmund Randolph. In it, Jefferson explains to him step-by-step what constitutes a nation. It is the will of the people that "creates or annihilates the organ which is to declare and announce it." The will is "a complication of councils, as in our former regal government, or our present republican one."[92] What emerges from it is a conception of nation that is a people that is not bound by "royal parchments and institutions of a semi-barbarous ancestry" but by its legal obligations to the new constitution based on the laws of nature.[93]

The ratification of the Constitution in 1788 replaced the old "parchment" order with the new Bill of Rights, of which Jefferson was the author.[94] "By a declaration of rights, I mean one which shall stipulate freedom of religion,[95] freedom of the press,[96]

[90] To Dupont de Nemours, 1816.

[91] In 1987, Allan Bloom, reflecting on the nature of the American mind, wrote in *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 55: "Everybody can, however, articulate what Americanness is. And that Americanness generated a race of heroes – Franklin, Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lincoln and so on – all of whom contributed to equality. Our imagination is not turned toward Joan of Arc, Louis XIV or Napoleon who counterbalanced our equivalent of 1789. Our heroes and the language of the Declaration contribute to a national reverence for our Constitution, also a unique phenomenon." In contrast to the British, who never thought of imposing Britishness on the local population in their colonies, the first rule of American "imperialism" is to introduce American-style democracies in countries that happen to be under their influence.

[92] Jefferson continues: "The law being law because it is the will of the nation, is not changed by their changing the organ through which they choose to announce their future will [...]. The common law therefore, which was not in force when we landed here, nor till we had formed ourselves into a nation, and had manifested by the organs we constituted, that the common law was to be our law, continued to be our law, because the nation continued in being, and because though it changed the organs for the future declarations of its own will, yet it did not change its former declarations that the common law was its law. Apply these principles to the present case. Before the revolution there existed no such nation as the United States; they then first associated as a nation, but for special purposes only. They had all their laws to make, as Virginia had on her first establishment as a nation." To E. Randolph, 18 August 1799.

[93] "We had no occasion to search into musty records, to hunt up royal parchments, or to investigate the laws and institutions of a semi-barbarous ancestry. We appealed to those of nature." To J. Cartwright, 1825. In another letter, Jefferson writes: "As new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy, as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors." To S. Kercheval, 1816.

[94] "I was in Europe when the Constitution was planned, and never saw it till after it was established. On receiving it I wrote strongly to Mr. Madison, urging the want of provision for the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, trial by jury, habeas corpus, the substitution of militia for a standing army, and express reservation to the States of all right not specifically granted to the Union. He accordingly moved in the first session of Congress for these amendments which were agreed to and ratified by the States as they now stand. This is all the hand I had in which related to the Constitution." To Dr. Priestley, 1802.

[95] "Freedom of religion, restricted only from *acts* of trespass on that of others." To Coray, 1823 (emphasis in original); "I am for freedom of religion, and against all maneuvers to bring about legal ascendency of one sect over another." To Gideon Granger, 1800.

[96] "[I am] for freedom of the press, and against all violations of the Constitution to silence by force and not by reason the complaints or criticisms, just or unjust, of our citizens against conduct of their agents." To Elbridge Gerry, 1799. And: "Freedom of the press, subject only to liability for personal injuries. This formidable censor of the public functionaries, by arraigning them at the tribunal of public opinion, produces reform peaceably,

freedom of commerce against monopolies, trial by juries in all cases,[97] no suspensions of the habeas corpus,[98] no standing armies. These are fetters against doing evil which no honest government should decline."[99] One can add to it "A right of free correspondence between citizen and citizen, on their joint interests, whether public or private, and under whatsoever laws these interests arise."[100]

Jefferson's list of rights is the most extensive of the lists of all classical liberals. All of them were conceived to limit the government's power over the individual, to expand the area of individual freedom. His list does not include any of the social rights, but it does not exclude them explicitly. If they were to be excluded, it is not because they stand in opposition to or in conflict with classical rights but because the liberal state does not include provisions that the later liberal welfare state does.[101]

The situation is different when we talk about human rights in a liberal society. Because they refer to a specific form of harm that takes place only in totalitarian or oppressive regimes, in liberal societies, on account of its very nature, they are superfluous.

However, latter-day liberals exploit the idea of Human Rights in a different way. Hilary Clinton's saying that "women's rights are human rights" is a good illustration of it. Human Rights, contrary to what Clinton believes, are not group rights. Groups are not natural. They are either formal or voluntary associations. Women may be biologically different from men, but since both are human, they can claim only the same rights. The right to abortion, which is frequently invoked in this context, is not a Human Right, as men cannot claim it. (The Black population under the Apartheid in South Africa could claim that their Human Rights were violated as they wanted only the rights the Whites had.) If women have certain needs that men do not, their fulfillment needs to be protected on a different basis than Human Rights. The same goes for all kinds of minorities. One cannot logically substitute any "minority group's rights" for "Human Rights" to make a legitimate claim that theirs are Human Rights.[102]

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which must otherwise be done by revolution. It is also the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man, and improving him as a rational, moral, and social being." To Elbridge Gerry, 1799.

[97] "People [...] being competent to judge of the facts occurring in ordinary life, they have retained the functions of judges of facts, under the name of jurors: but being unqualified for the management of affairs requiring intelligence above the common level, yet competent judges of human character, they chose, for their management, representatives, some by themselves immediately, others by electors chosen by themselves." To Dupont de Nemours, 1816. And: "Trial by jury, the best of all safeguards for the person, the property and the fame of every individual." To Coray, 1826. "In truth, it is better to toss up cross and pile in a cause, than to refer it to a judge whose mind is warped by any motive whatever, in that particular case. But the common sense of twelve honest men gives still a better chance of just decision, than the hazard of cross and pile." *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 14.

[98] "Freedom of person, securing every one from imprisonment, or other bodily restraint, but by the laws of the land. This is effected by the well-known law of *habeas corpus*." To Coray, 1826

[99] To Mr. A. Donald, 7 February 1788.

[100] To Monroe, 1797.

[101] While Mill thought the sales tax was the only source of a State's revenues, Jefferson (and Hamilton) made it a matter of congressional approval.

[102] It is commonly assumed that a total or limited abortion ban is a violation of women's human rights. But so is homework, or too much homework for children. As a certain human rights advocate, a sixteen-year-old Polish student, argued on national television (a Warner Brothers channel; 30 January 2024, "Fakty po Faktach"), "students' rights are children's rights, and children's rights are Human Rights. It is a violation of Human Rights to assign homework which makes children exhausted. The most important thing is psychological health."

One can ask why Human Rights, which fifty years ago were an effective weapon in fighting (or embarrassing) Communist governments for mistreating the anti-Communist opposition and dissidents, are used today in the most absurd and cynical way. This double-standard approach can be seen on a daily basis: human-rights advocates fight for freedom of speech in oppressive regimes but are silent on the same issue in liberal societies where conservative critics are ostracized, banned from media, or lose jobs for saying something. This of course means that human rights are human so long as they express a liberal point of view. If freedom of speech is a human right, it must *by definition* include those who have views that stand in opposition to the views of the liberal elites. To make things worse, those views are often branded as "hate speech." They are called this not because they express genuinely hateful attitudes or call on violence but because they run counter to the consensus of what is acceptable and what is not.

Conservatives are right in pointing out that the social, political, and legislative chaos that is characteristic of liberal societies is due to the concept of rights with which the new liberals fight their wars against tradition. However, by refusing to make classical liberal rights their own, conservatives or right-wingers appear to play a reckless game of forfeiting the very idea of rights and a weapon against the radical liberal elites that cut themselves off from their own tradition. The Bill of Rights is a great achievement of Western political thought, and the First Amendment to the American Constitution, which makes it legally impossible for the government of the United States to imprison an American citizen for his opinions, is its ultimate jewel.[103] One needs to remind the liberals that if they continue to violate basic rights, especially freedom of speech, the consequence will be more dire for the future of liberalism than for its ideological competitors.

[103] On the one hand, America prides itself on the First Amendment and, on the other, it is the country in which freedom of speech is hardly existent. The paradox is not as paradoxical as it would at first appear, and it was described by Tocqueville who saw uniformity of opinions to be a result of democracy where fear of social ostracism reigns supreme.

Jeff Love

CARL SCHMITT IN THE UNDERGROUND

Carl Schmitt's *Hamlet or Hecuba*: *The Intrusion (Irruption) of Time into the Play* (1956) appears, at first blush, to be a rather conventional account of the strain between historical reality and artistic representation. What exactly is time breaking into or intruding into the play? There are many well-worn responses to this question such as the intrusion of time into the atemporal realm of the arts, of literature, as *l'art pour l'art* or as a "reality" that art modifies, parodies, or distorts, defamiliarizing what we have come to take as always already the case. The supposedly free realm of the imagination lets itself be violated by the restrictions of temporal structure and the "noise of time" as Osip Mandel'shtam has it. But not only that – the noise of time silences the purity of the play or disturbs and unsettles it. One can imagine all manner of variation on these themes and others that build upon them such as the relation of myth to modern narrative, the holism of the political as against the autonomy of the aesthetic typical of the bourgeois order and the like. While I pursue these questions in this essay – one would be hard pressed not to do so – they are more peripheral to my approach to the issue as framed in Schmitt's enigmatic text, a relatively minor work from Schmitt's productive post-war period that has gained attention from those eager to identify in it signs of a more profound struggle. Yet, if there is profound struggle to be found, I locate it more firmly as one between commitment and a reticence to commit to any action whatsoever. The essence of play is to be liberated from what is "serious," determined, and direly pressing; Schmitt emphasizes the distinction between the serious and play as between commitment and non-commitment, belief and unbelief, admonishment and mockery. What is truly sovereign here? Is it the capacity to commit or never to do so? Is Hamlet's famous indecisiveness a sign of superiority or pusillanimity, even cowardice, or a fearlessness that courts contradiction?[1]

In the following, I outline this interpretation by coming directly to Schmitt's text after a preliminary discussion of two fascinating nineteenth-century Russian

[1] The fundamental loss of seriousness is a significant issue for Schmitt, as Strauss points out in his notes on *The Concept of the Political*. The question may well be whether the absence of seriousness is in fact a sign of decay or rather something else, a "new kind of fortitude." See Leo Strauss, "Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*," in Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans., intro., and notes George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 100-101. See also Leo Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, trans. Eve Adler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 37.

interpretations of Hamlet that, in my view, have considerable relevance to it, if not genetically, most certainly thematically. Moreover, they offer a productive interpretive lens through which to examine the most radical implications of Schmitt's text. These interpretations were developed by Ivan Turgenev and Fyodor Dostoevsky in the form of superfluous or underground indecisive figures that have no shape, no time, no personality – as Dostoevsky's underground man argues, he is an essentially characterless being. On this basis, I seek to put in question the intrusion of time into the play of Schmitt's brief work, if for no other better reason than to unsettle it, to unsettle all interpretations that would seek to make of it a useful text for the purposes of action (even and especially where theory is action). We may discover that the call to action in Schmitt's text rings hollow for us and reflects on a possible blind spot in the edifice of Schmitt's thought now that it has become so popular throughout the world with its insistence on action, struggle, and the political as perhaps the highest and most comprehensive manner of thought.[2] Yet, we may also argue that Schmitt's account of Hamlet reveals no blind spot at all but rather what I might call a "cosmic" view or a view that finds itself neither above nor totally within the fray, possessing neither neutrality nor total engagement, a view that is not always associated with Schmitt nor one that evinces the vulnerability Leo Strauss identified in Schmitt's ostensibly neutral explanation of an inherently non-neutral doctrine. For genuine neutrality requires a rejection of merely human attitudes that is fatal to commitment of any kind, that is perhaps the highest form of play, that which may be attributed to God and which human beings attempt to imitate, both disastrously and wondrously.[3]

I. A RUSSIAN HAMLET

Indecision, failing commitment, and tedium were grand themes in nineteenth-century Russian literature and thought. Three significant works mark the horizon of thematic treatment: *Diary of a Superfluous Man* (1849), *Oblomov* (1859), and *Notes from Underground* (1864). For the purposes of this essay, I deal only with Turgenev and Dostoevsky, whose work seems more directly related to Hamlet than does Ivan Goncharov's novel.

While Turgenev's novella is indeed celebrated as creating a certain sub-genre, that of the impotent or indecisive man, his direct treatment of Hamlet is less so and worthy of note in this respect. His public talk, "Hamlet and Don Quixote," was given in 1860, several years before the appearance of Dostoevsky's decisive novella and anticipating its central thematic axis.[4] Turgenev compares Don Quixote to Hamlet as a man of rapturous action, even optimism, to the gloomy and reflective Hamlet. There may be little more than charitable cliché in some aspects of Turgenev's presentation that contrasts "southern exuberance" with the tenebrous inclination to doubt and inaction that Turgenev does not only apply to Hamlet but to the Northern spirit as a whole (a contrast emphasized of course by Nietzsche as well). The more interesting point, perhaps even a philosophical

[2] Strauss, "Notes," 106-7.

[3] Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*, trans. David Pan and Jennifer Rust (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2009), 38-40. See Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 165-68. Heidegger's play on the Greek δεινόν (wondrous/terrible) reflects an entire tradition.

[4] Ivan Turgenev, "Hamlet and Don Quixote," trans. Moshe Spiegel, *Chicago Review* 17, no. 4 (1965): 92-109.

one, is Turgenev's insistence on the sheer idealistic ridiculousness of Don Quixote, who acts with conviction in pursuit of his ideal, firmly "aware of the why and wherefore of his existence"[5] and capable of acting precisely based on this conviction. Questions are not for Don Quixote, nor are doubts, and, in precisely this sense, he may seem ridiculous as if he would simply ride over a cliff in pursuance of his ideal without any concern for his own safety or, indeed, for the veracity of the ideal itself. Quixote is not one who sifts, considers, and deliberates – all these, according to Turgenev, are completely foreign to him. Not so, Hamlet. For Hamlet deliberates to excess; he is the model of what Turgenev identifies as a distinctly modern consciousness that may treat all action itself as ridiculous. If there is an element of Schopenhauer that may peek through here, this is of no surprise since Turgenev's thinking had so much in common with Schopenhauer.[6] Regardless of claims of direct influence, Turgenev might well have assented to lines like these: "although death must conquer in the end, we pursue our futile purposes 'as we blow out a soap bubble as long and as large as possible, although we know perfectly well that it will burst.'"[7] Don Quixote ignores these dark premonitions, and this capacity to ignore – or forget – is his strength if not also his ridiculousness for it is ridiculous to act as if there is no such thing as death or time. Hamlet, imbued with this premonition, cannot goad himself to act, cannot believe, cannot affirm any cause, even that of the revenge of his father, without hesitations, without a sense of irony, in Turgenev's words, a "force" that emanates from him and counters the kind of enthusiasm exemplified by Don Quixote.

If we shift to *Notes from Underground*, we find ourselves in the presence of what seems almost a parody of Turgenev's Hamlet or a sort of absurd philosophical *opera buffa*. In the reception, the underground man has often been associated with the type of the superfluous man, the hero of existential boredom and gloom remarkably similar to the Hamlet that Turgenev describes in his brief talk. Yet, the underground man is quite a different creation, ironic, to be sure, but far more philosophically probing insofar as the underground man bases his sense of gloom and inaction (or almost unmotivated action) on a conception of the infinite, perhaps latent in Turgenev and quite explicit in the later Tolstoy. The power of the infinite, not only to terrify but to beguile, was openly acknowledged by Pascal and takes on most interesting form in the *Notes*. In a well-known passage the underground man sets out the fundamental point:

> Deep in one's soul it's hard to believe one is suffering, mockery is stirring there, but all the same I suffer, and in a real, honest-to-god way; I get jealous, lose my temper...And all that from boredom, gentlemen, all from boredom;

[5] Ibid., 95.

[6] Sigrid McLaughlin, *Schopenhauer in Russland: Zur literarischen Rezeption bei Turgenev* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1984).

[7] Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 74. Dostoevsky alludes to an image of this kind in the *Notes from Underground*: "But try getting blindly carried away by your feelings, without reasoning, without a primary cause, driving consciousness away at least for a time; start hating, or fall in love, only so as not to sit with folded arms. The day after tomorrow, at the very latest, you'll begin to despise yourself for having knowingly hoodwinked yourself. The result: a soap bubble, and inertia." See Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1993), 18.

> crushed by inertia. For the direct, lawful, immediate fruit of consciousness is inertia – that is, a conscious sitting with folded arms. I've already mentioned this above. I repeat, I emphatically repeat: ingenuous people and active figures are all active simply because they are dull and narrow-minded. How to explain it? Here's how: as a consequence of their narrow-mindedness, they take the most immediate and secondary causes for the primary ones and thus become convinced more quickly and easily than others that they have found an indisputable basis for their doings, and so they feel at ease; and that, after all, is the main thing. For in order to begin to act, one must first be completely at ease, so that no more doubts remain. Well, and how am I, for example, to set myself at ease? Where are the primary causes on which I can rest, where are my bases? Where am I going to get them? I exercise thinking, and, consequently, for me every primary cause immediately drags with it yet another, still more primary one, and so on ad infinitum. Such is precisely the essence of all consciousness and thought. So, once again it's the laws of nature. And what, finally, is the result? The same old thing.[8]

Here is Turgenev's Hamlet: "doubting everything, Hamlet pitilessly includes his own self in those doubts,"[9] but with an added dimension because of the presence of the infinite, and a very intriguing infinite in the sense that Dostoevsky seems to associate the infinite with the laws of nature. Now it is not inconceivable in itself to consider an infinity of laws, but it is hard to square an infinity of laws with finite cognition. For even the dependance on laws is a sign of finitude – an infinite being would have no need of laws nor would it be bound by them at the cost of losing its infinity. Hence, affirming an infinity of laws amounts almost to acquiescence in the futility of any cognitive construct, any category, any identity at all. Surely, one would be very hard pressed to imagine an infinity of laws or create a structure from them. If laws there are, these are finite and make sense as such. Law is in this respect an imposition of a finite structure; a law offers a finite set of operations covering a finite field of objects and thus produces and can reproduce predictable patterns, the very patterns we associate with law and law-abiding behavior. If law is infinite, we cannot ask what it is in any case because no explanation would ever suffice, escaping a potentially vitiating partiality. And I do not mean the case where a finite set of relations can reproduce themselves infinitely or potentially infinitely. This is not likely the infinity to which the underground man refers because the underground man's infinity is groundless; it is an infinity that offers no ending spot, no repeatable sequence. Without repeatable sequence or ending spot, we might wish to ask what it indeed is to be infinite in any sense because an infinity of this "kind" is little more than a word for what we cannot possibly grasp because it outstrips patterns and, at its most extreme, undermines the notion of pattern itself. After all, it is important to keep in mind that memory and pattern work together to establish some underlying form of repetition, even if varied, and such cannot be possible in an unconditioned, that is unlimited or unrepeating, infinite.

[8] Dostoevsky, 17.
[9] Turgenev, "Hamlet," 96.

The underground man introduces a durable form of doubt that cannot be easily overcome or overcome at all. And he connects this notion of doubt explicitly with consciousness, as "an infinite echo chamber of reflection" that would have to overcome itself or eliminate itself in order to be free of doubt and an openness that cannot be grasped in its own terms: the ground of our thinking, as ground, cannot be identical with that thinking itself, a point made more elegantly by Leo Strauss:

> The comprehensive view of the whole cannot be validated by reasoning, since it is the basis of all reasoning. Accordingly, there is a variety of such comprehensive views, each as legitimate as any other: we have to choose such a view without any rational guidance. It is absolutely necessary to choose one; neutrality or suspension of judgment is impossible. Our choice has no support but itself; it is separated from nothingness, the complete absence of meaning, by nothing but our choice of it. Strictly speaking, we cannot choose among different views. A single comprehensive view is imposed on us by fate: the horizon within which all our understanding and orientation take place is produced by the fate of the individual or of his society.[10]

Dostoevsky's underground man cannot decide, nor can he accept his fate – he insists on a refusal, a hesitation, a decision not to decide. And we may say that same of Hamlet as viewed in this Russian prism. What is more, echoing Turgenev, Dostoevsky's underground man opposes himself to the man of action who is by definition stupid because he can act based on the kind of conviction that the underground man cannot achieve. Conviction is purchased, however, at the cost of closing oneself in or rejecting any further need for questions that are not of the wholly technical sort. He does not open himself up to infinity or thought as does the underground man. Dostoevsky in effect opposes the underground man and the man of action who "charges like a bull"; this opposition aligns rather effectively with that between Hamlet and Don Quixote as Turgenev distinguishes them, though its philosophical – or shall we say "cosmic" – dimension is more pronounced.

II. SCHMITT

Why would this Russian prism be of any significance for Schmitt? The strain between freedom from decision and a simple fate imposed on human beings is evidently a primary aspect of *Hamlet or Hecuba* and offers a way of interpreting its title with precision. For we may argue that the fate imposed on human beings has everything to do with the "intrusion" of time into the play, if play is grasped broadly enough to include imagination, consciousness, a manner of looking at the world imposed on us (or into which we are born having no other choice) that subverts the power this world has over us, a power that is not only "cultural" but very direct, natural, and physical in the sense of our own death. The tragic, as such, involves the acceptance of our destiny both as determined by the historical dimension of our lives, our "thrownness" in to a given context that we cannot simply reject,

[10] Leo Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 117.

and by our mortality that threatens and awaits us at any moment: as Melville put it, no one is too young to die. The nobility of tragedy inheres in fact in the capacity to accept these necessities, no matter how bitterly, and not to try to shirk them. Yet, this is patently not the case with Hamlet, who attempts to avoid his tragic destiny just as the play that forms around him. For the remarkable point is that the play, as play, as diversion, seeks a way out of the tragic or a way to reject tragic necessity in favor of a play, invention, and deviation from necessity. Hamlet, as tragedy, is subversive of the tragic, not only in a way characteristic of the work of art as preserving a realm of agency for human beings, "outside of time," but as a tragedy itself – the unusual or even *sui generis* exceptionalism of *Hamlet* is that it is a tragedy at odds with itself.

Schmitt takes this into account at the beginning of his text by recognizing the peculiar fact that Hamlet as a play does not follow the traditional structure of a revenge drama, neither of the Greek nor of the Nordic type. Specifically, he notes that the choice offered in these differing traditions, the avenging murder of the usurper, either as the duty of the son or as the duty of the son and the deceived mother together, is not followed at all in Hamlet. Not only does Hamlet fail to act in the expected manner, Schmitt touches on the pronounced ambiguity in the play about his mother's involvement in the murder, an ambiguity that is unusual in Schmitt's mind as well. Most important, however, is that Hamlet takes neither path of this standard dramatic plot and he thus resists his destiny if measured by this standard plot.

Here Schmitt introduces historical context as offering a potential analytic or explanatory tool for the unusual aspects of the text he identifies. He alludes to the murder of Mary Stuart's husband in which she was likely complicit and the quick remarriage to Count Bothwell in 1603 months before the accession to the throne of her son, James I. He continues by remarking on the more general similarities in Hamlet's situation to that of James and the difficult dynastic politics of the waning years of Elizabeth I's reign. This reference is one of the pivotal moments in Schmitt's text, it is the veritable "intrusion" of time into the play as the incorporation into the play of certain limitations either for prudential purposes or, perhaps, for other purposes as well. Schmitt adds:

> Next to the fleeting allusions and the true mirrorings, there is yet a third, highest kind of influence from the historical present. These are the structurally determining, genuine intrusions [*Einbrüche*]. They cannot be common and ordinary, but their consequences are that much stronger and deeper. The involvement of Mary Stuart in the murder of James' father and the transformation of the figure of the avenger in view of King James belong to this category, which bestows on the actual revenge drama the special character that we associate with the name of Hamlet today.[11]

[11] Schmitt, *Hamlet*, 25; *The Concept of the Political*, 23. While there seems to be little doubt that Schmitt questions the autonomy of art, associating such autonomy with liberalism, it is not so clear that Schmitt thereby denies any autonomy to considerations of art whose primary criteria for identification and evaluation are not clearly political. Indeed, this question leads to the principal question as to whether there is some agency ("play") that is not purely determined by history and nature itself as developed in history. For if such agency exists – and how could it not without eviscerating the politics of significance? – then how can one eradicate the freedom on which politics

The bald argument is that the play, far from being merely a play, is imbued with the history and the dynastic politics of its era, both reflecting them and perhaps even making a contribution to them as a commentary of some necessarily veiled kind. In terms of modern literary criticism, such claims about the political and historical contexts of literature and, particularly Shakespeare, are no longer novel in the Anglosphere, but Schmitt's argument surely has broader significance than simply to highlight the intrusion of history into the play as a description of its possible factual content and relation to the high political actions of its day. If this account were taken as adequately complete and satisfactory, we might find in Schmitt an advocate, *avant la lettre*, of something akin to the Socialist Realism that had been developed in the Soviet Union as Stalin tightened his grip on power in the 1930s. This argument, perhaps overly schematic, is not without merit since Schmitt attacks the attitude to works of art as autonomous, self-enclosed worlds having little or nothing to do with the contexts within which they arise.[12] And the most powerful modern school that took art, and especially literature, as a wholly autonomous linguistic organization with its own principles of construction was Russian Formalism, the movement ultimately obliterated by Stalin and the ascent of Social Realism as a properly "socially responsible" form of art, adopted and enforced by the Soviet state.

Here arises indeed a first argument, namely, that Schmitt seeks to return the play to the political role it had in the Greek polis where tragedy could be said to have had a fundamental civic role, as education and warning to the city.[13] It is well to remember that the tragic plays were financed by the city of Athens and shown to a public of many thousands of citizens, guests and others alike. Tragic theater was a thoroughly public event, not a private entertainment or some form of pastime for a private person in the sense Schmitt decries.[14] In this respect, if Hecuba's acceptance of her tragic destiny proves acceptable to the requirements of civic duty and propriety, Hamlet is, to put it mildly, something of an affront to civic duty – Hamlet, unlike Hecuba, appears to place his private sphere over that of the city or his kingdom merely by hesitating to carry out what would seem to be his tragic (and historical) duty. Hamlet, in turning against his own duty in the play, thereby provides an example of an attempt to avoid destiny and responsibility. Hamlet is a work in which the "play is the thing," preserved and protected from the city and the sway of politics. Thus, the play, if it alludes to the dynastic succession taking place in England in 1603, does not provide a responsible public answer by not providing

depends to attain the fullest expression of politics that would have to eradicate any purely "private" or "non-political" possibilities, that is, any possibility at all and freedom with it? The tragic should eliminate, not impose, history. And if it imposes history, it is not tragic.

[12] Schmitt, *Hamlet*, 32-33:

> Another difficulty stems from a broadly prevailing philosophy of art and aesthetics. Its relation to the problem of the division of labor need not concern us here. In any case, philosophers of art and teachers of aesthetics tend to understand the work of art as an autonomous creation, self-contained and unrelated to historical or sociological reality – something to be understood only on its own terms. To relate a great work of art to the actual politics of the time in which it was created would presumably obscure its purely aesthetic beauty and debase the intrinsic worth of artistic form. The source of the tragic then lies in the free and sovereign creative power of the poet.

[13] See *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, ed. John J. Winkler and Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[14] As Strauss suggests; see Strauss, "Notes," 101.

any clear answer at all, and a lack of clarity is destructive. Rather than taking part in the public things, the play may even be read as mocking them through Prince Hamlet's complex reaction to his duty, to his place in history, to his life itself. He dithers, waxes poetic, jesting madly. We may be bolder and argue that, instead of prudence, which Schmitt seems to assume as explaining the reticence of the drama in regard to its political content, one may find not so concealed mockery, even malice.

Several fundamental questions follow upon this. Is it the responsibility of the play, a public act in itself, to participate in the politics of its day? Is the play a manner of participating in politics that has no other significance than this participation? In other words, is art more comprehensively understood as a human activity, a *tekhnē,* exclusively in service to the city as it seems to have been in the days of the Athenian Republic? (And here we return to the question of "obedient art," "socialist realism," and engaged art as well.) The alternative attitude is that which has tended to dominate in the modern age where art becomes confined largely to the private sphere, with the novel, a text one reads alone, as the paradigmatic literary work, along with the lyric poem? Moreover, is this orientation of the play in the sense of *das Spiel* to the private realm not a way of opening up a "space" that is freed of politics, of the city, and, finally (and most importantly), of historical destiny itself? *Hamlet* may be a revolutionary work in this sense, declaring in the guise of tragedy the end of tragedy or the beginning of a tragic hero who is tragic precisely because he is unable to accept his destiny nor free himself of it, able neither to reject nor to enjoy the freedom of the play, of fiction in the face of the crushing, oppressive intrusion of time into play.

III. TIME AND PLAY

We may ask whether there is truly any place for play that is not merely a place for idle illusion, an escape from a pressing temporal reality that is always too pressing. While Schmitt appears to raise this question in his account of *Hamlet*, he does so on the shoulders of Nietzsche whose claim for the salvific vocation of art is nested in the not only pleasing but life-giving illusions it offers. And this Nietzschean idea brings us even closer to a more central point as to the capacity of illusions to fulfill their salvific vocation if one is aware of illusions precisely as being illusions. Here Hamlet's "gloomy" and "skeptical" attitudes are likely of the utmost relevance because we may argue they prohibit the very exit from the intrusion of time into the play that illusions understood as fictions hope to provide. If one knows one is escaping into "artificial paradises," one is surely still stuck in the necessity one seeks to conceal from oneself, no matter how boldly or elaborately – is an "innocent" escape ever possible?

Schmitt's almost palimpsestic structuring of different attitudes to the text and primarily of the historical reality as a model for the plot and structure raises these questions in a particularly urgent way. *Hamlet* creates in effect a "hybrid" drama that cannot decide itself whether its role is public, and perforce political, or private in the sense I have mentioned, not only as the potential creation but the cultivation of a world or space that is not open, or, rather, vulnerable, to public consumption. Let me be somewhat more direct with my allusion to Nietzsche.

In the first treatise of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche engages in a sharp polemic against the slave revolt in morality, associating this revolt with the Jews and,

especially, with their creation of a world that is other than the world of the supposed here and now in which the values of the slave triumph over those of the master, the high-born, the aristocratic warrior.[15] As a historical narrative, Nietzsche creates a fantasy of revenge against oppression and duty, revenge against necessity itself and frames it as servile and Jewish. More important for our purposes is that the key seductive fiction is precisely that, a figure of fiction in the redeemer, in the Christ-figure, that overcomes and indeed appears to topple the hitherto stable values of a warrior elite. In this sense, it is a competing priestly elite that comes to victory through cunning – fiction not only rejects "history" but creates a new history in its stead with the further suggestion that history itself is not so stable as an imposition of "reality." To the contrary, perhaps the most corrosive impact of Nietzsche's thinking is to claim that in some way the world of the warrior is as fictive as the world of the slave that comes to supplant it. More incisively, Alexandre Kojève later suggests that the warrior in fact has no concept of narrative or culture or fiction – these all belong to the slave, and it is the slave who triumphs over the warrior – or "master" – because the slave first creates the world that the warrior is finally obliged to live in to the extent he lives. The one who tells the story creates the world and the heroes that inhabit it, and only slaves tell stories. The narrative of the warrior hero is the beginning of his undoing, of his stepping away from the innocence of Don Quixote (presuming that innocence is indeed his lot) to the sinuous reflections of Hamlet.

To return further to the terms of my previous discussions, we may consider the intrusion of time into the play as a polemical response not only to the play as creating a world insulated from politics, but also to the dangerous political implications of the play itself in terms of its capacity to transform and undermine politics as a project of commitment and responsibility. If Schmitt may reproach the play for its supposed release from tragic duty, he does so, it seems to me, in full knowledge of the transformative gesture that this notion of release carries with it – the end of an order, perhaps merely of a given historical order, or the end of traditional order itself in terms of a firm and stable basis for the understanding of reality. The fluidity of modernity (which some attribute to Don Quixote)[16] is that of Hamlet, the forerunner of both the Romantic hero and the endless forms of parody undergone by the Romantic hero in his unending death throes, from Manfred to Molloy. Schmitt's own gesture of imposing historical circumstances on the play as an explanation of two of its peculiar characteristics seems itself an attempt to bring the play within the purview of history, of duty, of necessity, and thereby neutralize Hamlet's most dangerous gesture – the creation of an alternative world in which not only one authority is not recognized, that of the tragic revenge network itself, but in which no

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swenson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 17-24. While Nietzsche has been remarkably well insulated from claims of antisemitism, his argument that Jewish hate created the most supreme and seductive "ideal" of all is strikingly extreme and serves a notion, hardly uncongenial to Schmitt, of using the ideal as a covert mode of combat in a depoliticization that is merely a disguise for warfare hiding behind neutrality and universality. The destiny of this argument reverberates to this day, especially in discourses that deny universality any legitimacy other than as a seductive propaganda of empire.

[16] There is a literature on Don Quixote's irony exemplified by Milan Kundera's essay on the novel; see Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 3-23.

order is recognized as sovereign. Hamlet is, in this sense, the founder of the very school of genius and the Romantic hero against which Schmitt otherwise orients his text.

Hamlet is an ever-wayward force to be reigned-in and returned to the historical destiny he cares nothing about carrying through.

IV. HAMLET, NIHILIST

Is the Hamlet of the play, of play itself, not the most formidable nihilist of all? What does the child playing care of duty, of the "hard" determinations of the world? Perhaps the child playing is the purest freedom from duty and from death and therefore a dangerous model for those who would seek to impose on us through duty, responsibility and destiny. The child may throw off the tragic or resist the tragic. To confine this resistance to fiction or the play, as Schmitt seems to seek to do, is a gesture of a politics, not conservative so much as of conservation. For conservation of the tragic is itself a conservation of respect for tradition, for time, for death. There is no insouciance in these three, no irreverence, no fantasy; and I think one can safely say that there is no comedic edge to Schmitt's discussion of *Hamlet*, though the same cannot be said of the play itself.

Circuitously I return to the beginning and to the underground man who is, no doubt, an avatar of Hamlet, a most perspicuous one. The failure of respect is what animates Hamlet as much as respect itself. Leo Strauss says of another unusual character, Niccolò Machiavelli, that he combined in a most unusual way both gravity and levity, showing respect for the gravity of tradition and its import, a gravity we would associate with tragedy, with the most unbridled levity in terms of all things weighty and solid – Hamlet reflects exactly this unusual and inherently unstable combination of tragic gravity and comic levity, and a levity that shows no respect for any conventions at all. In this respect, Hamlet is the dangerous precursor of the blackest of black humor capable of mocking all human things, all that we consider grave and weighty. Hamlet's restlessness and unusual revolt against his assigned roles is a form of comic violence, and it is this violence that Schmitt does not care to accept or legitimate. For this violence suggests a coruscating nihilism.

What term has been more incautiously used in the twentieth century? We may blame Nietzsche's influence or the influence of wars and brutalities of the most horrific kinds, all calling us to take on our duty and become responsible to others, to the environment, to reality itself, to be moral and predictable and civil rather than dangerous, vicious, animal. For if the slave revolt in reality is taken seriously, the end result is merely a change of master from warrior to priest, a change that has not yet fulfilled itself. The other alternative, the underground man's delight in thumbing his nose at the crystal palace, a gesture more profound than ever now in light of the immense and imposing palaces of technological domination that we build around ourselves as arenas and cages, is far more interesting – to call it nihilism, not the "re-evaluation" but the ridicule of all values, is unfair, perhaps litotes.

Hamlet's nihilism, an anachronistic claim to be sure, is, nonetheless clear: respect is due but not lasting, play is more rewarding than obedience and death in revenge the stupid reward for not being daring enough. Or perhaps this is quite wrong. Perhaps Hamlet's death is the point of the play itself, the point of the play as a game where no one wins because no one can – play cannot vanquish only anaesthetize. To hunker down in duty is of course

a most noble thing, but to mock that duty and all duties is far more divine, and the most divine, difficult, and acridly ironic gesture of all is to run headlong into death without expressing the proper dread, fear, and gnashing of teeth, as if to do so were nothing more than part of the play. Who might dare be so bold as to mock suffering and death, thus mocking the revenge plot, the tragic as a determining factor in our attitude to the world, if not mocking the play of the world itself? The innocence of becoming in Nietzsche's phrase, the harsh innocence of any concern for duty, for life or death, the most powerful and disturbing insouciant possible *sanza alcuno rispetto* – these are the fleeting, slippery essences of the play. Who could ever come to terms with them?

V. FEAR EVISCERATED

Hamlet fears his father's ghost we are told. Schmitt claims that this fear is an operative feature of the play. But is this really so? Perhaps it would be more illuminating to argue that Hamlet's lack of fear is most fearsome. For why is it that we fear the one without fear? And the one without fear is the nihilist, the one *sanza alcuno rispetto*, who may find that there is nothing to do or nothing to do without some degree of irony in the sense that merely continuing one's life indicates a fear or purports to. Does it? Hamlet's evident disregard for his own life is the question that should animate the discussion of the play and play as such. Here again gravity in the guise of history returns us, as it does Schmitt, to the tragic, to the nobility of the tragic as respect for order and propriety – the tragic is decorous until it descends into the kind of gore Euripides unleashed in it. Still, for Schmitt's history, if violent, creates a thread of destiny which it is our lot to respect and obey – one must remain serious at all costs. What then of Hamlet if he is the progenitor of the fearless? What if Hamlet is the one who declares the absurdity of our seriousness, not as some bitter aside against the terms of our existence, though it can be that, but as a challenge to think not bridled by the necessity imposed upon us, to think, in other words, in a way that Schmitt should not want to admit because this thinking itself strips Schmitt's edifice of its seriousness that arises wholly and one-sidedly from the threat of death.

Turgenev compares Hamlet to Don Quixote. Is not the latter equally fearless? What in fact is the difference between the two? While Turgenev's distinction at first seems to fit that of the underground man and the man of action, or the man of duty and the indecisive Hamlet, are these descriptions in fact fitting? They are not, at least in Turgenev's sense because Hamlet is not a man of faith or conviction or only capriciously so – play for Hamlet is not tempered or hampered by the need to believe whose origin, we may assume, lies in fear.[17] For if Hamlet is the progenitor of the fearless for whom the play is the thing, none of Schmitt's cautions can properly apply to him. Hamlet in this sense resists the attempt not only by Schmitt to place a historical frame on his identity as if to limit and form it, or even to "humanize" it, but by any interpreter who, as all interpreters, is eager to find the proper frame or, just as easily, deny that such a frame exists. For all that, however, Hamlet is not merely a character of "oscillation," "*in der Schwebe*" as Schmitt says.[18] This

[17] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, chap. 7 (London: Penguin, 1992), 44: "But faith, like a jackal, feeds among the tombs, and even from these dead doubts she gathers her most vital hope."

[18] Schmitt, 19. For the German text, see Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet oder Hekuba: der Einbruch der Zeit in das Spiel*, 6th ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2017), 22.

would be rather too simple insofar as oscillation itself describes a regularity or at least two poles between which a character or identity wavers or hovers (*schwebt*). Even the notions of gravity and levity may well be too rudimentary since they, too, suggest a form of oscillation with the hint that the oscillation may in the end be mapped out or exhausted as a "ground" of interpretation.

These attempts to define Hamlet by not defining him too arduously miss the mark. The blackest of black humors is defiantly resistant to interpretation; the play at its most refined hints at rules that it does not necessarily subvert (for this would at best admit some dependance) but that have, as Hamlet's father, a ghostly role that is never and cannot be well-defined. For the ghost, the dead, rule us, to be sure, only to the extent we accept them and, if one of the great issues of the play is the acceptance of Hamlet's ghostly father as a "sign" of destiny, then the playful and not readily mapped attitude to the ghost is merely another emblem of Hamlet's endless insouciance, the play of the play, and the resistance to the stern spirit of seriousness that is so important to Schmitt and to any system of rule that needs fear, feeds on fear, and distributes fear as its foundation and justification. Hamlet's father is a specter that haunts, if one is afraid of such specters only. Otherwise, what is the ghost if not risible? How are we to know the difference between the serious and the risible – only fear directs us, and freed of fear, the truest and most enduring nihilism arises as the truest gesture of anarchy, of the refusal of all lords and masters, of all gods, of all tabus as Schmitt puts it. We may call this the play of Hamlet or the "monstrous power of the negative" as the abolition of restraints on human action as showing respect for the tragic destiny of human beings. The fearsome modern lack of fear or revenge against fear comes to recognize itself as the untrammeled pursuit of power, a pursuit that Hamlet may express but to which Hamlet is not truly prone, and in this aspect of his legacy Hamlet is less of a believer than those who would strive to be fearless.

Eva Odzuck

"HALF-IRONIC, RESPECTLESS, AND WITHOUT FEAR": ON CARL SCHMITT'S LITERARY STRATEGIES IN HIS *DER LEVIATHAN IN DER STAATSLEHRE DES THOMAS HOBBES* (1938)[1]

According to some scholars, Carl Schmitt's book *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes: Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols*, published in 1938, is crucial to the understanding of Schmitt's work as a whole.[2] First, personal circumstances in Nazi-Deutschland changed for Schmitt after 1936. Having wished in the early 1930s for a military dictatorship that could outlaw the subversive Communist and National Socialist parties and their paramilitary organizations,[3] he was disappointed when Hitler succeeded to power. He wrote in his diary on the 31 January 1933, "Wut über den dummen, lächerlichen Hitler." Although Schmitt thought of Hitler as a "stupid, ridiculous man," he joined the NSDAP in 1933 and became the prime jurist of the National Socialist state. He became president of the Union of National-Socialist Jurists. He even defended murders by the regime by arguing in his publication *Totaler Feind, totaler Krieg, und totaler Staat* that Hitler was entitled "to create law" by assassinating persons dangerous to him.[4] But in 1936, Schmitt was severely attacked by the SS organ *Das Schwarze Korps*. He lost

[1] I thank the organizers and participants of the 2015 APSA panel "Universality, Spatial Order, and Exclusion in the Thought of Carl Schmitt," among them Jürgen Gebhardt, Clemens Kauffmann, David Ragazzoni, Aaron Roberts, Lars Vinx, and especially Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, for helpful comments to earlier versions of this paper.

[2] See, for instance, Jacob Taube's "Leviathan as Mortal God: On the Contemporaneity of Thomas Hobbes," trans. and ed. Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, *Telos* 181 (2017): 40-47; and J. Freund's "The Contemporaneity of Thomas Hobbes," trans. and ed. Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, *Telos* 181 (2017): 48-64.

[3] John Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan: Schmitt's Hobbes, National Socialism, and the Enigmatic Ambiguity of Friend and Foe," in *Thomas Hobbes and Carl Schmitt: The Politics of Order and Myth*, ed. John Tralau (London: Routledge, 2011), 179.

[4] Ibid.

his privileges and his position, and some scholars maintain that such attacks from *Das Schwarze Korps* were life-threatening.[5] Although not all scholars would go this far, there is some agreement concerning the claim "that 1936 constitutes a watershed for Schmitt."[6] Furthermore, the development of the Nazi regime took another direction than Schmitt had written for and hoped for. To quote Tralau: "By 1937, Schmitt's complete failure was all too evident. He had not domesticated the NSDAP by subjecting it to the state; on the contrary, the state was under the yoke of different National Socialist factions, the kind of 'indirect powers' against whose influence Schmitt had preached for many years."[7] Tralau concludes that Schmitt was not only marginalized when writing his Hobbes book but that "Germany had become a state that he, for statist reasons, could no longer identify with."[8]

So the first pressing question about Schmitt's Hobbes book is whether (and if so, to what extent) his changed standing within the National Socialist state and the development of this state (which Schmitt didn't favor) is reflected in the content of Schmitt's writings.[9]

Second, and essentially related to the first question, is the question of how to read Schmitt's text. In his Hobbes book, Schmitt describes Hobbes as an esoteric thinker who does not openly profess his opinions but has some secret teachings hidden in his text.[10] In his later writings and letters, Schmitt declares that he wants his Hobbes book to be understood as an esoteric book and a document of resistance to the Nazi regime, like the *Marmorklippen* by Ernst Jünger.[11] It is unclear to what extent one may believe Schmitt's claim of having written a document of resistance to, or at least of distancing from, the Nazi regime.

Like the existing interpretations of Hobbes, the interpretations of Schmitt's Hobbes book are diverse, to say the least. One could, indeed, say that almost nothing is excluded in the various interpretations of this book. On the one hand, some interpretations take it to be "an eloquent defense of the Führerstaat"[12] or stress the continuity of Schmitt's National Socialist thinking.[13] On the other hand, some interpretations understand Schmitt's Hobbes book as an implicit critique of the National Socialist state,[14] and finally, some scholars hold

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[5] Günter Maschke, "Zum 'Leviathan' von Carl Schmitt," in Carl Schmitt, *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes. Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols* (Köln: Hohenheim, 1982), 184.

[6] George Schwab, "Introduction," in Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes. Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein, new foreword by Tracy B. Strong (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), xxxi.

[7] Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 189.

[8] Ibid.

[9] On this, see Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, "Propaganda und Kritik: Eine Einführung in Carl Schmitts *Land und Meer*," *Politisches Denken Jahrbuch 2017* 27 (2017): 115-44.

[10] Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein, new foreword by Tracy B. Strong (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26 (hereafter cited as LST).

[11] Carl Schmitt, *Ex Captivitate Salus: Erfahrungen der Zeit 1945/47* (Köln: Greven Verlag, 1950), 22 (hereafter cited as ECS).

[12] Gershon Weiler, *From Absolutism to Totalitarianism: Carl Schmitt on Thomas Hobbes* (Durango, CO: Hollowbrook Publishing, 1994), 3.

[13] Reinhard Mehring, *Carl Schmitt zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2001), 79.

[14] John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 276ff., esp. 276n59; Heinrich Meier, *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts. Vier Kapitel zur Unterscheidung Politischer Theologie und Politischer Philosophie*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2012), 165n114.

that the Hobbes book is "both his most Nazi and least Nazi intellectual effort in the 'Third Reich.'"[15] However, both sides of the spectrum are convinced that Schmitt wants to take a political standpoint in his Hobbes book, so they agree that an interpretation of Hobbes's *Leviathan* is not the real (or at least not the only) intention of Schmitt's Hobbes book.

Suppose Schmitt's Hobbes book has an eminent political dimension and function (rather than only a philosophical book aiming to offer a sound philosophical analysis). In that case, it might be pointless to consult the work of Hobbes and ask if Schmitt's Hobbes interpretation is correct. This approach, however, neglects what I consider central aspects of the text. According to my reading, a return to Thomas Hobbes's political philosophy might indeed be helpful to develop a better understanding of Schmitt's Hobbes book. In the following, I argue for the claim that Schmitt's Hobbes book is informed methodologically by the political philosophy of Hobbes. In other words, Schmitt's Hobbes book can be seen as a book that follows some hermeneutical principles found in Hobbes's political philosophy. So even if Schmitt's book does not primarily intend to deliver a sound or complete interpretation of the *content* of Hobbes's political philosophy (which I think is the case), it might nevertheless be seen as a book that follows Hobbes's hermeneutical principles. Thus, the turn to Hobbes can help encrypt and understand Schmitt's text.

I shall begin (1) by presenting some puzzling passages that make it possible to question whether the intention of Schmitt's Hobbes book is primarily philosophical. I will argue that Schmitt wanted his Hobbes book to be understood as a book with an eminent political dimension and function and that instead of formulating a guideline for how he wanted to be read, he pointed in the direction of Hobbes. In the second step (2), I will present passages from Hobbes's *Leviathan* that could be understood to contain general hermeneutical principles or, in a broader way, serve as instruction on communicating secret thoughts. In the third step (3), I will argue that Schmitt's Hobbes book can be read as one that follows some of Hobbes's hermeneutical principles. Moreover, some of Schmitt's literary strategies – including being silent about one's intention, working with contradictions, and playing with the meaning of words – are borrowed from Hobbes. Finally (4), I will summarize my results and put them in the broader context of Schmitt's book and the latest research on Schmitt's Hobbes book.

(1)

To begin with, allow me to draw attention to some extraordinary passages that make it possible to question the idea of Schmitt's having a primarily philosophical intention. The reader of the book begins with the title: *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*. The title indicates that Schmitt wants to examine the role of a symbol in Hobbes's state theory. That goal presupposes that it is also a book that seeks to understand Hobbes's state theory. The subtitle "meaning and failure" implies that Schmitt wants to explore the meaning of the symbol and the supposed function of the symbol *for Hobbes*. To be able to judge the function of a symbol as a failure

[15] John P. McCormick, "Teaching in Vain: Carl Schmitt, Thomas Hobbes, and the Theory of the Sovereign State," in *The Oxford Handbook of Carl Schmitt*, ed. Jens Meierhenrich and Oliver Simons (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 270.

presupposes a hypothesis regarding the intention of the author and the intended function of the symbol. So having read the title, the reader expects an analysis of the Hobbesian state theory and an examination of Hobbes's intention in using the Leviathan symbol.

Schmitt, however, confronts the reader with a puzzling remark. In the preface, Schmitt writes that he tried to do justice to the topic through "scientific objectiveness" without phantasy but simultaneously without "trite analysis." The reader who has been expecting a philosophical interpretation of Hobbes (which presupposes a solid analysis of Hobbes's premises and arguments) might wonder at this crude description: How can a philosophical analysis try to avoid "analysis" and describe analysis as "trite" (the German text has *billige Zergliederungen*)? Besides, every good philosophical analysis presupposes a question. So as a reader of Schmitt's Hobbes book, one is looking for the main question underlying the analysis. What is the central question in Schmitt's Hobbes book? The reader becomes more confused because Schmitt formulates several questions while sidestepping others. The book starts not with a question but with the claim that Hobbes's fame and infamy stem from using the symbol "Leviathan." After several pages reporting vastly different meanings of the symbol in the Middle Ages and the Jewish tradition, Schmitt says, "it is fitting to dare to present an opposite interpretation,"[16] which can shed light on the *Leviathan* of Hobbes.

The first question in the book comes a few pages later and is "whether Hobbes, who is considered the 'prophet of the leviathan,' has in this connection and with this symbol staked out a clear and definitive position."[17] A little later, Schmitt reformulates the question as "whether the myth of the leviathan forged by Hobbes withstood the test of being the politico-mythical image battling the Judeo-Christian destruction of the natural unity."[18]

To answer the first question, Schmitt himself pretends to conduct an analysis. He looks for the utterances and explanations of the symbol in Hobbes's book and concludes that the image's sole meaning is to illustrate "by means of an animal, the strongest temporal power."[19] Schmitt claims this conclusion must be tested by examining the "linguistic-historical use of the word" (LST, 22). This is a strange hypothesis. Why would an examination of the development and usage of the word in Hobbes's time be helpful for an understanding of the meaning the word has for Hobbes? Schmitt himself said that "numerous interpretations and transformations belong to the nature of mythical images" (LST, 7) and that Hobbes created a *new* myth (LST, 11) – that means that Hobbes used the image in a hitherto unusual way and tried to give it a new meaning.[20] Given these assumptions about Hobbes's intention to create a new myth, it would not make sense to ask for the word's usage in Hobbes's times to understand Hobbes's very own meaning. Schmitt himself seems to have doubts about the usefulness of his linguistic-historical investigation because he describes it as "not [...] an exhaustive philological exposition" and admits that the question (of the meaning of the symbol for Hobbes) is

[16] Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, 9.
[17] Ibid., 10.
[18] Ibid., 11.
[19] Ibid., 22.
[20] For a rich and nuanced discussion of Thomas Hobbes's visual strategies, see Horst Bredekamp, *Leviathan: Body Politic as Visual Strategy in the Work of Thomas Hobbes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

"not exhausted by merely considering the word in its historical setting."[21] He further claims to have made this linguistic-historical investigation to explain a puzzling remark of his previous paper "Der Staat als Mechanismus bei Hobbes und Descartes," in which he describes Hobbes's usage of the image as a "half-ironic literary idea born out of a fine sense of English humor."[22]

But after this linguistic-historical examination (which Schmitt declared should serve as proof of the image's restricted meaning), Schmitt doubts his previous conclusion about the meaninglessness of the symbol. He concedes that it might be possible that there is indeed a deeper, secret meaning hidden behind the image and that Hobbes was a thinker who had a sense for esoteric disguise. He admits that efforts in this direction could detect secret teachings that use the leviathan as an esoteric symbol. The reader is curious and hopes that Schmitt will go in this direction and try to answer the question of the symbol's meaning for Hobbes. Unfortunately, however, Schmitt does not take this direction. Instead, he says that this direction would not help answer his question. And here it is that he reformulates the question: He is no longer interested in the symbol's meaning for Hobbes but in "the influence of the political myth as an arbitrary historical force."[23]

By now, the reader is confused: With the title of his book, Schmitt indicates that a philosophical analysis of Hobbes's state theory and of Hobbes's intention in using the image of the leviathan is the topic of his Hobbes book. In the preface, however, he states that he wants to avoid trite analysis. Furthermore, Schmitt changes his questions and begs a crucial question: Getting so close to an answer to the symbol's meaning for Hobbes and of Hobbes's intention of the usage, Schmitt suddenly stops. He maintains that he is interested in "the influence of the political myth as an arbitrary historical force."[24] Things then become more puzzling still: In the following line, the opening line of chapter 3, Schmitt asks precisely the question he had previously sidestepped – namely, the question of the meaning of the image in the conceptual and systematic construction of Hobbes's theory of the state.[25] Schmitt develops an answer during the following two chapters (3, 4). He concludes that Hobbes combines three meanings in his image and that these are contradictory: the mythic image of the leviathan, the juristic image of a sovereign person, and the image of the state as a machine. As he has done before in his paper on Descartes and Hobbes, he claims that "the gist of his philosophy of state" is the image of the state as a machine.[26] Chapters 5, 6, and 7 again turn away from Hobbes and Hobbes interpretation and explore the question of the "political fate of a mythical image" instead.[27] The book concludes that Hobbes's usage of the image was not successful. Hobbes "failed to realize, however, that in using this symbol, he was conjuring up the invisible forces of an old, ambiguous myth."[28] Furthermore, the image was wrong because it couldn't

[21] Schmitt, LST, 29n13.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 26.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 31.
[26] Ibid., 32.
[27] Ibid., 53.
[28] Ibid., 81.

visualize an enemy in a safe and unambiguous way.[29] Although the fate of Hobbes's image was tragic, according to Schmitt, Schmitt ends his book with the claim that the teaching of Hobbes was not in vain. Hobbes is described by Schmitt in a eulogy as a "great teacher in the battle against all sorts of indirect powers," a "great political thinker," and a "true teacher of a great political experience."[30]

So even if the book ends with a particular conclusion concerning the failure of the symbol and thus gives the impression of a purposeful, target-orientated philosophical analysis, the way to the conclusion is a little strange because Schmitt declared that he wasn't interested in deep analysis, because Schmitt formulated different questions (Hobbes's intention and the meaning of the symbol for Hobbes versus the power that inheres in the mythic image), and because he chose methods for the answering of his questions that he himself found questionable (e.g., the historical-linguistic examination).

The hitherto slight skepticism as to whether Schmitt really intended a sound philosophical analysis of Hobbes's *Leviathan* grows when one compares the claims of the Hobbes book with the claims in Schmitt's later publications on Hobbes. In his review article "Die vollendete Reformation,"[31] Schmitt himself confesses that his Hobbes book from 1938 contains a serious gap because it did not consider the usage of the image of leviathan in the work of John of Salisbury and that precisely this usage is of utmost importance for the interpretation of Hobbes. As we have seen, Schmitt himself declared in a footnote in his Hobbes book that his "historical-linguistic investigation" was "not exhaustive" and served only to explain the claim (which he himself later doubted) that the symbol in Hobbes is meaningless. Furthermore, in his review article, Schmitt revises his previous claim – also stated in his paper on Hobbes and Descartes and in his Hobbes book – that the gist of Hobbes's state construction is the image of the state as a machine:

> In Wirklichkeit ist Hobbes kein Scientist und kein Technokrat. Sein Denken ist schon deshalb einem Zeitalter wissenschaftlich-technisierter Zivilisation im Kern inadäquat und sogar inkommensurabel, weil eine Frage wie das Hobbes'sche *Quis iudicabit?* die technischen 'Sachgesetzlichkeiten' überhaupt nicht trifft.[32]

That is a stunning confession: Whereas Schmitt had claimed in his Hobbes book and his paper on Descartes and Hobbes that the image of the state as a machine is of utmost importance (the "gist of Hobbes's state construction"), Schmitt confesses in his later work that such thinking is un-Hobbesian. In his Hobbes book, Schmitt does not highlight the decisionistic elements of Hobbes's theory of the state, which he has done

[29] Carl Schmitt, *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes. Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols*, ed. Günter Maschke (Köln: Hohenheim, 1982), 130 (hereafter cited as LSL).
[30] Schmitt, LST, 86.
[31] Carl Schmitt, "Die vollendete Reformation. Zu neuen Leviathan-Interpretationen," in Carl Schmitt, *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes. Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols*, ed. Günter Maschke (Köln: Hohenheim, 1938), 177 (hereafter cited as VR).
[32] Schmitt, VR, 173: "In reality, Hobbes is no scientist and also no technocrat. His thinking is inappropriate for and indeed incommensurable with an age of scientifically engineered civilization because a question like the Hobbesian *Quis iudicabit?* does not meet the technical modus operandi" (trans. EO).

before and does afterward, but stresses the institutional aspects and maintains that the image of the state as a machine would be a good image for these elements. Therefore, it is implausible that Schmitt has changed his mind from a mechanistic interpretation of Hobbesian state theory to a decisionistic one. Since Schmitt claims before and after his Hobbes book that the decisionistic understanding is crucial, it becomes questionable why Schmitt should have promoted a mechanistic interpretation in his Hobbes book and the previous paper on Hobbes and Descartes. These two examples show that Schmitt himself later indicates his reservation concerning earlier claims about Hobbes's political philosophy in his Hobbes book. At least in the case of the mechanistic interpretation, it is implausible to explain this reservation with a simple development of thought hypothesis.

One possible explanation for the strange setting and Schmitt's reservations might be that Schmitt's intention in writing his Hobbes book was deeply political (rather than only philosophical) and that some of his claims serve a political purpose rather than a philosophical one. Nitschke, for example, argues that the state as a machine image in Schmitt's Hobbes book serves, instead, Schmitt's ideological purposes.[33] Tralau argues that "Schmitt's careful twisting and turning of Hobbes's state monster can be interpreted as his way of distancing himself from Hitler's state."[34] Similarly, Strong argues that by highlighting the law-state elements of Hobbes's theory of state and the "no punishment, no crime without law" doctrine, Schmitt sets himself apart from the official Nazi doctrine.[35] But what does it mean to say that Schmitt has written a book with an eminent political dimension and function? And how should one read such a book if this is one? Are there hints in Schmitt's book regarding how he wants to be read?

I think there are. In his Hobbes book, Schmitt himself, as we have seen, refers several times to Hobbes as a teacher. Schmitt makes it clear that even if Hobbes failed with his supposed function of the symbol, he succeeded in teaching some lessons. At the end of his book, Schmitt calls Hobbes a "great teacher in the struggle against indirect powers" but also a "true teacher of a great political experience," a "great political thinker," a member of the "immortal community of great knowing persons," and "a sole retriever of an ancient prudence."[36] But what are the lessons Hobbes taught Schmitt? Schmitt indicates that Hobbes taught him not only about a particular content – for example, the dangers of indirect powers – but also, in a more existential way, "the teacher of a great political experience." At the end of the second chapter, Schmitt claims that, as a great thinker, Hobbes had a unique understanding of esotericism:

> Like all the great thinkers of his time, Hobbes had a taste for esoteric cover-ups. He said about himself that now and then he made "overtures," but that

[33] Peter Nitschke, "Der Maschinenstaat des Carl Schmitt. Die Hobbes-Interpretation als Ideologiekritik," in *Der Hobbes-Kristall. Carl Schmitts Hobbes-Interpretation in der Diskussion*, ed. Rüdiger Voigt (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009), 129, claims that the image of the state as a machine serves ideological purposes in Schmitt's Hobbes book. For this reason, I do not understand why he criticizes Schmitt for having developed a wrong interpretation of Hobbes: "Offenkundig hat sich Schmitt mit seiner Interpretation der Theorie des Leviathan verrannt" (Nitschke, "Der Maschinenstaat des Carl Schmitt," 138).

[34] Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 190.

[35] Strong, "Forward, 2008," in Schmitt, LST, xxiff.

[36] Schmitt, LST, 86.

> he revealed his thought only in part and that he acted as people do who open a window only for a moment and close it quickly for fear of a storm. The three references to the leviathan that appear in the text of Hobbes's book could symbolically be conceived as three windows opened for a moment.[37]

Several scholars have argued that these lines have to be understood as a description of Schmitt's own text,[38] and Schmitt himself wrote in a letter to Ernst Jünger in 1938 that his Hobbes book is esoteric.[39]

There is still further evidence that Schmitt claims to have learned much about esotericism from Hobbes. In his small book *Ex Captivitate Salus* (published in 1950), Schmitt claims that there are only two ways of avoiding the danger that accompanies his activity as a law scholar. One way would be "indem er sich in abgelegenen Randgebieten mit historischer oder philosophischer Schutzfärbung ansiedelt,"[40] that is, to position oneself in marginal areas with historical or philosophical camouflage. The other way would be "dadurch, daß er die Kunst der Vorbehalte und Verschleierungen zur höchsten Vollkommenheit entwickelt,"[41] that is, to develop the art of reservations and of concealment to the highest degree of perfection. In this respect, Schmitt claims to have learned a great deal from Hobbes:

"[Hobbes hat] das Verhalten, das sich für ein unabhängig denkendes Individuum empfiehlt, wenn es sich auf ein so gefährliches Thema einlässt, [begriffen],"[42] that is, Hobbes has understood the behavior that is advisable for an independently thinking individual who deals with such a dangerous subject. Schmitt admires Hobbes for having thought, spoken, and written on dangerous subjects, always as a free mind and always keeping his personal views well hidden: "Er hat über diese gefährlichen Dinge nachgedacht, gesprochen und geschrieben, stets in unverlierbarer Freiheit des Geistes und immer in guter persönlicher Deckung."[43]

As we have seen, Schmitt makes clear in the preface to his Hobbes book that he is "aware of the danger implicit in the subject."[44] What is the appropriate behavior for dealing with dangerous subjects that Schmitt has learned from Hobbes? Is there more to it than the "briefly opened windows," the metaphorical characterization of a writing style Schmitt himself uses? Perhaps some hermeneutical principles in Hobbes might help encrypt Schmitt's Hobbes book? I think they might.

(2)

I come to my second step, where I will identify some hermeneutical principles in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Four passages in this work could be relevant for our purpose here – four

[37] Schmitt, LST, 26.
[38] E.g., Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 191.
[39] See ibid., 192n20.
[40] Schmitt, ECS, 55.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 66.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Schmitt, LST, "Preface."

passages in which Hobbes speaks directly about specific problems connected to speaking freely and to the art of interpretation. These passages could be understood as a guideline for communicating secret thoughts in writing and detecting such thoughts upon reading what has been written.

Hoekstra highlighted the first of these passages and argued for its relevance to an interpretation of Hobbes.[45] It occurs at the end of chapter 43, at the end of book 3 of *Leviathan*, in the context of the problem of different biblical interpretations. Despite this seemingly *particular* context, Hobbes formulates here a *general* hermeneutical principle that he claims is relevant not only to Holy Scripture but to "any writing." Hobbes writes here that it is sometimes necessary to ignore a passage's bare words and to analyze the purpose of the writing instead. More precisely, he claims that the purpose and the pragmatic context are more important for the understanding of the text than the bare words: "For it is not the bare Words, but the Scope of the writer that giveth the true light, by which any writing is to be interpreted; and they that insist upon single Texts without considering the main Designe, can derive nothing from them cleerly."[46]

In a related passage in the thirtieth chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes must answer a tricky question. The context of the chapter is some striking policy recommendations concerning, for example, the reform of the universities and the education of the people. The problem in this chapter is that, in Hobbes's theory, only the sovereign is allowed to appoint university reformers and teachers because the indoctrination of the ordinary people is of utmost importance for the stability of the state. Hobbes sees the problem that, in his giving recommendations for reform, he grants himself a position only the sovereign can grant him. He consequently does not answer the question of whether he intends to reform the universities but recommends that the reader observe his actions instead: "But to the later question, it is not fit, nor needful for me to say either Aye, or No: for any man that *sees what I am doing* may easily perceive what I think."[47]

The latter passage suggests that silence about one's real intentions could be a good strategy when under the scrutiny of people whom the writer should obey. So, in both passages, Hobbes suggests that sometimes the writer's intention is not expressed plainly in the text. In the second passage, Hobbes tells the reader that silence about one's real intentions is an excellent strategy for hiding subversive and forbidden thoughts from the sovereign. He conveys to the reader that these secret and subversive thoughts can nevertheless be detected and thus formulates a specific hermeneutical principle: A reader of a text should concentrate not on the bare words of a text but on the author's actions. He should try to reconstruct the writer's purpose by analyzing the concrete actions of an author in a text and by concentrating more on what an author is doing than on what he is saying. Let us call this hermeneutical principle the *pragmatistic-intentionalistic principle*.

A third passage is worth considering in looking for hermeneutical principles in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. In the eighth chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes discusses the different intellectual capacities of different people and mentions a problem concerning secret

[45] Kinch Hoekstra, "The End of Philosophy: The Case of Hobbes," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, n.s., vol. 106 (2006): 32.
[46] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Noel Malcolm, chap. 43 (London: Clarendon, 2012), 954 (hereafter cited as L).
[47] Hobbes, L, chap. 30, 534 (my emphasis).

thoughts. In a discussion, one should not confess one's secret thoughts openly; one should deliberate when, where, and to whom one tells which of these thoughts. Thus, Hobbes clearly warns about publicly sharing secret thoughts. Nevertheless, it seems to be possible to communicate secret thoughts even in public or concerning people to whom we owe reverence. This possibility consists in a playful usage of words:

> The *secret thoughts* of a man run over *all things*, holy, prophane, clean, obscene, grave, and light, without shame, or blame; which *verball discourse cannot do*, farther than the Judgement shall approve of the Time, Place, and Persons. [...] Again, in profest remissnesse of mind, and familiar company, a man may play with the sounds, and aequivocall significations of words; and that many times with encounters of extraordinary Fancy: but in a Sermon, or in publique, or *before persons* unknown, or *whom we ought to reverence***,** there is no *Gingling* of words that will not be accounted folly: and the difference is onely in the want of *Discretion*.[48]

So, in this passage, Hobbes addresses the problem of how to communicate secret thoughts – even in front of persons we ought to revere. And even if the double negation "there is no gingling [...] that will not be accounted folly" suggests at first sight that it is impossible to communicate secret thoughts in front of persons whom we ought to reverence, it is possible to understand that the sentence says that we actually can share secret thoughts through a jingling of words, that is, through the careful, playful usage of words because they will be "accounted folly" – and it is better, is it not, to be accounted a fool than to be prosecuted or, indeed, executed.[49]

Let us call this second hermeneutical principle the *jingling principle***.** This tells the reader to take note of a playful usage of equivocal significations of words because this could be a way of communicating secret thoughts.

One last passage is relevant when looking for hermeneutical principles in Hobbes. In the *Review and Conclusion*, Hobbes concedes that his book contains contradictions. However, he maintains that only some readers will detect these contradictions because only some readers are sensible of and therefore looking for objections and contradictions. He goes further and tells the reader that almost all ancient authors have contradicted themselves, and he makes clear that he admires these writers as teachers and wants to be seen in the tradition of these ancient writers:

> And as to the whole Doctrine, I see not yet, but the Principles of it are true and proper; and the Ratiocination solid. [...] And therefore I am persuaded, that he that shall read it with a *purpose onely to be informed*, shall be informed by it. But for *those* that by Writing, or Publiquc Discourse, or by their eminent actions, have already engaged themselves to the maintaining

[48] Hobbes, L, chap. 8, 108 (my emphasis).

[49] For a full exploration of this passage and its relation to Hobbes's answer to the fool, see Eva Odzuck, *Thomas Hobbes' körperbasierter Liberalismus. Eine kritische Analyse des "Leviathan," Beiträge zur Politischen Wissenschaft*, vol. 184 (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2015).

> of *contrary opinions, they will not bee so easily satisfied*. For in such cases, it is naturall for men, at one and the same time, both *to proceed* in reading, and to lose their attention, in the *search of objections* to that they had read before: Of which, in a time wherein the interests of men are changed (seeing much of that Doctrine, which serveth to the establishing of a new Government, *must needs be contrary* to that which conduced to the dissolution of the old) there cannot choose but be *very many*. [...] There is scarce any of those *old Writers*, that *contradicteth* not sometimes both *himself*, and others; [...]. Lastly, though *I reverence those men of Ancient time*, that either have written Truth perspicuously, or set us in a better way to find it out our selves; yet to the Antiquity itself I think nothing due: For if we will reverence the Age, the Present is the Oldest. If the Antiquity of the Writer, I am not sure, that generally they to whom such honor is given, were more *Ancient* when they wrote, than *I am* that am Writing.[50]

In this passage, Hobbes tells the reader that his book contains contradictions, that one can detect the contradictions in his book, and that this is an ancient manner of writing. Furthermore, one could conclude that the contradictions might be a path to the truth – if the ancient authors either have written Truth perspicuously (which they have not because, Hobbes says, they have contradicted themselves) or have set us in a better way to find it out ourselves, one might assume that it is the contradictions that lead the way to the truth.

So let us call this third hermeneutical principle the *principle of contradiction*. Contradictions might be a way to veil one's real intentions. But the first step in detecting the truth or the author's real intention would be to look for and be sensitive to contradictions.

Thus far, I have shown that in *Leviathan*, which Schmitt praises as a political book, Hobbes informs the reader about possible ways to communicate secret thoughts. Being silent about one's intention, bedazzling the reader with contradictions, and using "jingling words" are all viable strategies for sharing secret thoughts undetected. The first corresponding hermeneutical principle, which allows the reader to detect hidden thoughts and intentions, is to pay attention to the author's actions and look more at what he is doing than what he is saying. This I called the *pragmatistic-intentionalistic principle*. The second principle is to watch out for "the gingling of words," which means watching out for passages in which the author plays with words that have two or more meanings (playing with equivocations). This I called the *jingling principle*. Finally, Hobbes tells the reader to look for contradictions because they could be a path to encrypting the truth or an author's real intention. In my opinion, Hobbes has formulated three literary strategies, all aiming at silently communicating secret thoughts, and he has developed three corresponding hermeneutical principles that allow the reader to detect the secret thoughts. Let us now return to Schmitt's Hobbes book and come to step three of the paper.

[50] Hobbes, L, "Review," 1140 (my emphasis).

(3)

How far can the three Hobbesian hermeneutical principles help us understand the political dimension of Schmitt's Hobbes book?

Let us look first at the doubt regarding Schmitt's supposed intention to write a primarily scholarly book on Hobbes. The *pragmatistic-intentionalistic principle* tells the reader to pay attention to what the author is doing in his text. Suppose one looks not only at the declared intention but at the pragmatic context – that is, the action and the method of Schmitt's Hobbes book. In that case, one can perhaps explain the puzzle of the unphilosophical impression of the book. Schmitt's declared intention to write a scholarly Hobbes book might then be a half-truth, or it might be meant half-ironically: if one looks at the action and the greater pragmatic context of the writer – a formerly highly regarded legal scholar who had lost his standing in the Nazi regime and who was being attacked in the SS publication *Das Schwarze Korps* – it seems possible that philosophical claims are not the only motivation for Schmitt. Schmitt characterizes Hobbes's *Leviathan* as a primarily political book.[51] There is good reason to assume that Schmitt chose the camouflage of a Hobbes interpretation to veil a book with a more political or dangerous subject. As we have seen, Schmitt describes in *Ex Captivitate Salus* several ways of avoiding the danger inherent in some topics – one of these ways was to position oneself in marginal areas with historical or philosophical camouflage. Writing a Hobbes book, a work on an early modern philosopher, might be seen as Schmitt positioning himself in such a marginal area of the history of philosophy, which provides more cover than writing a book whose declared intention is a critical evaluation of the current regime. Not only the topic of the book but also parts of the method of the book might be seen as a sort of camouflage. Schmitt himself claims that his historical-linguistic investigation in chapter 2 "is not exhaustive" but is intended only to explain his claim that Hobbes's use of the leviathan image "was a half-ironic literary idea born out of a fine sense of English humor."[52] He admits that Schelsky's hypothesis – that Schmitt's own claim regarding the meaninglessness of the symbol for Hobbes is such a "half-ironic literary idea" – is not entirely wrong.[53] Thus, the action of placing a sort of historical-linguistic investigation (which Schmitt himself declares to be inexhaustive) in the middle of his Hobbes book can serve, first, to show the reader that Schmitt has some other intentions than only those of linguistic, scholarly analysis. Second, it might be that the historical-linguistic investigation is a camouflage for some messages Schmitt intends to present in the disguise of a linguist.[54]

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[51] Carl Schmitt, "Der Staat als Mechanismus bei Hobbes und Descartes," *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 30 (1937): 625 (hereafter cited as SMHD).

[52] Schmitt, LST, 29n13.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Interestingly, scholars who defend the "distance claim" with respect to Schmitt's Hobbes book, as well as scholars who doubt this distance claim, agree in their evaluation of the historical-linguistic analysis as superfluous and as not really contributing to Schmitt's goals. Compare Volker Neumann, "'Esoterische Verhüllungen'. Carl Schmitt verrätselt Thomas Hobbes," in *Der sterbliche Gott. Thomas Hobbes' Lehre von der Allmacht des Leviathan im Spiegel der Zeit*, ed. Thomas Lau, Volker Reinhardt, and Rudiger Voigt (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 231: "In der Leviathanschrift erstaunen und erschrecken die breiten Auslassungen zu mythischen, theologischen und kabbalistischen Deutungen"; with Günther Maschke, "Zum 'Leviathan' von Carl Schmitt," in Carl Schmitt, *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes. Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols* (Köln: Hohenheim, 1982), 203: "Lässt sich vom Sinn und Gebrauch des Symbols überhaupt ein Zugang zu Hobbes

Can the historical-linguistic investigation be meant also to transport secret thoughts under the scrutiny of people whom "we ought to reverence"? In chapter two, when Schmitt examines the passages of Hobbes's *Leviathan* where Hobbes mentions the image, he pays a great deal of attention to the fact that Hobbes describes his usage of the image as "not completely reverent." "This is, says Hobbes, the coming into being of the great leviathan or, he adds, 'to speake more reverently,' of the deus mortalis, of the mortal god [...]."[55]

Schmitt not only highlights the parenthesis with quotation marks, but he also adds a long footnote in which he offers his view that "the designation 'leviathan' as a characterization of the state by Hobbes was perceived as less respectful."[56] In this footnote, Schmitt refers to his previous paper on Hobbes and Descartes, where he first expressed the "half-ironic literary idea claim." In that paper, Schmitt praises Hobbes for his *attitude* in treating the image. He writes that there can be no doubt that Hobbes did *not* take this image seriously in a conceptual, mythical, or demonical manner. Hobbes's usage of the image is somewhat ironical, revealing more about Hobbes's *attitude* than about the image itself: According to Schmitt, Hobbes uses the image without fear and respect.[57] Could it be that Schmitt's praise of Hobbes's irreverent, fearless, and ultimately ironic *attitude* toward the leviathan symbol serves as a metaphor for the correct attitude concerning the "stupid and ridiculous man Hitler" or other influential persons and groups in the National Socialist regime that he "ought to reverence"?

This is one possible interpretation of the text. The camouflage of a historical-linguistic examination allows Schmitt to present an ironic or mocking attitude towards an acting sovereign and influential people in the disguise of a historian of ideas. In describing the different meanings of a symbol in a scholarly manner – which he does highly selectively, as some contemporary scholars have pointed out[58] and which Schmitt himself confesses in describing the investigation as "inexhaustive" – Schmitt can propagate an attitude of distance, hostility, and finally an attitude of disrespectful irony toward powerful people in the world. For instance, Schmitt cites Luther's *Table Talk*, in which Luther declares that the behemoth, the whale, and the leviathan are "*disguised words* and figures or images with which to indict the *devil*.'"[59] Furthermore, Schmitt mentions a cabbalistic interpretation

finden [...]? Man könnte die Diskussion Schmitts über die mythische und symbolische Dimension als 'überzogen' ansehen." See also Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 189, who calls "Schmitt's own work on the mythic image [...] bewildering to say the least."

[55] Schmitt, LST, 19.

[56] Ibid., 27n2.

[57] The German text reads, "Er bedient sich des Bildes ohne Schauder und ohne Respekt" (Schmitt, SMHD, 626).

[58] See Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 182.

[59] Schmitt, LST, 22ff. (my emphasis). Schmitt's question of why Hobbes chose the image of Leviathan still puzzles contemporary Hobbes research, and there are a number of different answers to it (i.e., the thesis of an anti-clerical double game). See Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes's Biblical Beasts: 'Leviathan' and 'Behemoth,'" *Political Theory* 23 (1995): 353-75; Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes and Schmitt on the Name and Nature of Leviathan Revisited," *Critical Review of International Social & Political Philosophy* 13 (2010): 297-315; Kim Ian Parker, "That 'Dreadful Name, Leviathan': Biblical Resonances in the Title of Hobbes' Famous Political Work," *Hebraic Political Studies* 2 (2007): 424-47; Noel Malcolm, "The Name and Nature of *Leviathan*: Political Symbolism and Biblical Exegesis," *Intellectual History Review* 17 (2007): 29-58; M. Kristiansson and J. Tralau, "Hobbes's Hidden Monster: A New Interpretation of the Frontispiece of Leviathan," *European Journal of Political Theory* 13, no. 3 (2014); and Paul Sagar, *The Opinion of Mankind: Sociability and the Theory of the State from Hobbes to Smith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). I can't list or discuss all relevant alternatives here. For

that indicates "a certain *irony* with respect to the powers of this world": "That god *plays* daily a few hours *with the leviathan* is an original, obviously cabbalistic interpretation of the passage in *The Book of Job* in which a certain *irony with respect to the powers of this world* is already apparent."[60] Schmitt claims that "the essentially demonic content of the image vanishes between 1500 and 1600" – a claim that he himself deems unlikely and characterizes as "mysterious" at the end of that same chapter.[61] In the description of this mysterious development, Schmitt constantly emphasizes that the new *attitude* in the usage of the image is irreverent, without fear, and with an ironic distance: "The popular medieval belief in demons, which was still alive in Luther, disappears; the evil spirits change into *grotesque or even humorous ghosts*."[62]

Schmitt reports a certain ironic distance concerning the great and powerful people of the world:

> In Sanderson's *Sermons* (II/310) of around 1630, God deals "with the great leviathans of the world." Here the leviathans are simply "the greats" of this world. This colloquial use evolved further. [...] *The leviathan finally becomes a humorous description of all sorts of unusually large* [the German word is "*groß*," EO] *and powerful men and things*.[63]

A historical sketch of different meanings of a symbol that culminates in a disrespectful attitude of mocking irony is a relatively safe way of propagating this attitude undetected. Suppose a man who has lost his standing in a regime has been attacked by powerful people and declares scholarly activities in marginal historical areas as a proper way of dealing with dangerous subjects reports such a development. In that case, one could perhaps understand this report regarding various meanings of the leviathan image as *a jingling of words*, making it possible to express secret thoughts "before persons whom he ought to reverence." A report on the historical development of the meaning of a symbol could simultaneously be seen as playing with the equivocation of the word leviathan and thus a "gingling of words," as Hobbes defined it.

Another "jingling of words" that makes it possible to communicate secret thoughts even in front of people whom we "ought to reverence" could be Schmitt's strikingly overuse of and his playing with the adjective "*groß*" (which is not always translated with the same word "great" in Schwab's translation). If the leviathan became an image for "the great and powerful people of this world" and Schmitt is writing a book about this symbol, then Schmitt might have wanted to tell his readers something about contemporary "great and powerful people of this world." Perhaps it is no accident that Schmitt opens and closes his book by mentioning some great people. In the preface of his Hobbes book, Schmitt quotes a Latin phrase from the Roman poet Lucan: *Stat nominis umbra*. This quotation

a recent contribution, see Lothar R. Waas, "The Name 'Leviathan' – or the Shadow That Fell on a Work," *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 108, no. 2 (2022): 191-208.

[60] Schmitt, LST, 23 (my emphasis).

[61] Ibid., 26.

[62] Ibid., 24 (my emphasis).

[63] Ibid., 25 (my emphasis).

is remarkable in two respects: First, the context of the Latin phrase is critical: the epic poem "Pharsalia" or "De bello civili" tells the story of the civil war between Julius Caesar and the forces of the Roman Senate led by Pompey. The quotation stems from a passage describing the diminishing power of Pompey. The passage implies that Pompey, who owned the spectacular cognomen of "Magnus" (meaning "the Great"), did not deserve this cognomen anymore.[64] The passage reads thus:

> His former glory cared not to renew,
> But joyed in plaudits of the theatre,
> His gift to Rome: his triumphs in the past,
> Himself the shadow of a mighty name.[65]

Did Schmitt know about this context of the undeserved name "the great" and therefore quote that phrase? We do not know for sure. But we do know that the quotation is also remarkable in another respect: it is an incomplete, selective quotation. While the original phrase still contains the (undeserved) adjective of "magnus" and runs "Stat Magni Nominis Umbra," Schmitt silently removes the adjective "magnus" – perhaps to further indicate that it is a cognomen that is not deserved.[66]

So, at the very beginning of his Hobbes book, which deals with the development of the leviathan image and thus with the "great and powerful people of this world," Schmitt places a quotation that implies that one powerful person who once owned the cognomen "the great" does not deserve this cognomen or is not really a great person.

This could be chance, or it could be by design. We cannot be sure. However, we can be certain that Schmitt also ends his book by mentioning great people. The adjective "*groß*" appears three times on one page. Interestingly, however, the adjective here relates not to the powerful people of this world but to scholars. It relates to Hobbes in his function as "a great teacher in the struggle against indirect powers," as a "great political thinker," and as a member of "the immortal community of the great scholars of the ages."[67]

To summarize: Schmitt writes a book that he opens with a quotation implying that a powerful person doesn't deserve the adjective "great" and ends his book with a eulogy to a scholar and to scholarly people in general who, in his opinion, clearly deserve the adjective "great." One might take this composition as a silent critique of powerful

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[64] Compare D. C. Feeney, "'Stat magni nominis umbra': Lucan on the Greatness of Pompeius Magnus," *Classical Quarterly* 36 (1986): 239ff.: "In Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, such plays of the *cognomen* are elevated into something of considerable power, testifying to a consistent controlling design, of the sort which many still deny the poem. [...] The crucial conceit comes next, when Lucan tells us that Pompey is a paper tiger: 'stat magni nominis umbra' (135). He is 'the shadow of a great name'. [...] Pompeius' name of 'Magnus' is an anachronism, a reproach, a promise which he has outlived and can no longer fulfil."

[65] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, trans. Sir Edward Ridley, bk. 1, ll. 149-52, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0134%3Abook%3D1%3Acard%3D33 (hereafter cited as P).

[66] The same strategy is used in the so-called letters of Junius, a collection of letters from the anonymous publicist Junius written between 1769 and 1772 and holding the motto "stat nominis umbra." Benjamin Waterhouse, *An Essay on Junius and His Letters* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1831), 1, suggests that this phrase is clearly borrowed from Lucan and can be understood as "He exhibits a faint image of his former greatness." Whether Schmitt refers to Lucan or Junius is not relevant for the argument I develop here.

[67] Schmitt, LST, 86.

contemporaries. Showing that someone whom we "ought to reverence" doesn't deserve to be called "great" implies an attitude without respect and without fear. Perhaps this is another "jingling of words" – playing with equivocations – of the kind Hobbes had in mind when he told the reader that it is possible to communicate secret thoughts even in front of people we "ought to reverence." Thus far, I have aimed to show that the *pragmatistic-intentionalistic principle* and the *jingling principle* I derived from Hobbes might help unveil the political dimension of Schmitt's text.

I will not here deepen the discussion of the third principle, the *contradiction principle*, because I think there's an easy way to show the relevance of that, as well. Several scholars have argued plausibly that Schmitt's critique of the technical structure of the modern state serves an ideological purpose – namely, to criticize the de facto rule of different National Socialist factions over the state and the fact that the state had become a mere tool in the hands of indirect powers.[68] As we have seen, Schmitt's claim that the technical image of the state is the "gist" of Hobbes's theory of the state contradicts Schmitt's later claim that a technical understanding of the state is un-Hobbesian (and contradicts his declared intention to defend Hobbes against "the superficial labeling [...] as a rationalist, mechanist [...] or any other 'ist.'"[69] This contradiction might be explained with the hypothesis that Schmitt's interest is primarily not to provide a detailed and consistent interpretation of Hobbes's political philosophy but to place a political message. Thus, in maintaining the importance of the technical image for Hobbes, Schmitt might have intended to open a space for a broad discussion of the characteristics of a mere technical state and thus for a critique of the contemporary regime. The claim that the technical meaning is of utmost importance for Hobbes – even if this claim contradicts previous and subsequent claims by Schmitt about Hobbes – gives Schmitt the possibility of repeating the critique that he had formulated in 1932 in his *Über das Zeitalter der Neutralisierungen* and to refer this critique to the current regime. Besides, the idea of a machine securing freedom and guaranteeing survival corresponds well, as Schmitt himself claims, with the dominant thinking of his audience: "[Die] Vorstellungswelt des heutigen Großstädters [...] [begreift] den Staat als einen technischen Apparat [...]."[70] Highlighting the importance of the machine image[71] may thus serve as an easy way to show his audience that the current state does not fulfill the function of a lawful, calculable machine and thus enable his audience to evaluate and criticize the current regime: "Die Staatsmaschine funktioniert oder sie funktioniert nicht. Im ersten Falle garantiert sie mir die Sicherheit meines physischen Daseins; dafür verlangt sie unbedingten Gehorsam gegen die Gesetze ihres Funktionierens."[72]

[68] See Meier, *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*, 165n114; Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 189; McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*, 276ff., esp. 276n59.
[69] Schmitt, LST, 11.
[70] Schmitt, LSL, 62.
[71] "Aber der Gedanke des Staates als eines technisch vollendeten, von Menschen geschaffenen *magnum artificium*, als einer ihr 'Recht' und ihre 'Wahrheit' nur in sich selbst, nämlich in der Leistung und in der Funktion findenden Maschine, wurde zuerst von Hobbes erfaßt und als klarer Begriff systematisch gestaltet" (Schmitt, LSL, 70).
[72] Schmitt, LSL, 69.

As Strong claims,[73] "the apparent approval of the 'law-state elements of Hobbes's theory of State' [...] constitutes a setting himself apart from official Nazi doctrine." Perhaps the veil of a Hobbes scholar – even a self-contradicting Hobbes scholar – not only served the purpose of defending Hobbes against misleading totalitarian interpretations but served as well the purpose of criticizing aspects of the contemporary regime (even with the help of misleading, reductive mechanistic interpretations).

The last sentence of his Hobbes book – *Non jam frustra doces*, Thomas Hobbes, that is, that Hobbes doesn't teach in vain – suggests that Schmitt indeed claims to have learned something from Hobbes: The lesson might have been that it is possible to communicate secret thoughts even in dealing with dangerous subjects. The lesson might have been how a sole retriever of an ancient prudence might compose an esoteric piece of writing that remains silent about the author's real intention – an intention that employs contradictions and jingling of words to criticize aspects of the contemporary regime – and how such a retriever, given Schmitt's emphasis on Hobbes's fearless and half-ironic attitude, should silently create a subversive power against which some "great persons" look ridiculous. Schmitt's Hobbes book carries the title *Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, and it is true that Schmitt, to a certain extent, provides arguments for the failure claim (i.e., the lack of a distinct enemy). But the failure claim and the arguments presented are rendered obscure by Schmitt's claim that Hobbes's real reason for choosing the leviathan symbol might have been born out of "a fine sense of English humor" and that there might indeed be a deeper meaning to and function of the symbol. One main function of the symbol, for Hobbes, might have been to transport a certain attitude silently. Since the term "mortal god" is, according to Hobbes, meant "more reverently," the word "Leviathan" might, by contrast, be the sign of an attitude of speaking *less reverently* or even mockingly. Hobbes, who presents himself in his book *Leviathan* both as "a most humble, and most obedient servant" and as "a man that love[s] my own opinions, and think all true I say,"[74] might have chosen the symbol also to transport a half-ironic attitude.[75]

Schmitt's Hobbes book might thus be understood as a Hobbes book more in its form than in its content and thus as a book that tells us more about Schmitt and Schmitt's political context than about Hobbes.[76] Schmitt tells the reader that Schelsky considered Hobbes "a theorist of political action who takes pains to present a political reality and

[73] Strong, "Forward, 2008," LST, xxiff.

[74] See Hobbes, L, "The Epistle Dedicatory," 6.

[75] By combining a de facto theory of authority with a consensus theory of authority (see Kinch Hoekstra, "The De Facto Turn in Hobbes' Political Philosophy," in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, ed. Tomm Sorell and Luc Foisneau (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Hobbes created a squaring of the circle that may be useful politically and practically but remains theoretically challenging and personally existentially dangerous. As Helmut Schelsky (*Thomas Hobbes. Eine politische Lehre* [Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1981], 5) rightly points out, Hobbes supported the absoluteness of the respective sovereign but in doing so wanted to subject him to normative, legal, and philosophical regulations of the exercise of power (thus placing himself above the respective sovereign) and attracted enemies on both sides.

[76] Cf. Tralau, "Order, the Ocean, and Satan," 191. For Schmitt's selective usage and his deliberative silence on certain aspects of Hobbes's thought, compare also Peter Schröder, "Carl Schmitt's Appropriation of the Early Modern European Tradition of Political Thought on the State and Interstate Relations," *History of Political Thought* 33, no. 2 (2012): 348-71.

whose writings are political action tracts."[77] Schmitt tells the reader that Schelsky shares the claim that "mortal god" is a more respectful term than "Leviathan," and Schmitt explicitly adds a possible conclusion of this difference in respectfulness in footnote 1 of chapter 2, which is crucial for my reading – namely, that Hobbes chose a less respectful term with full intention: "Although two quantities belong to every comparison, this need not necessarily preclude that the designation 'leviathan' as a characterization of the state by Hobbes was perceived as less respectful."[78] Schmitt goes on to inform the reader that the Leviathan image can be explained "contextually" (*zeitgeschichtlich*) as "a half-ironical literary idea borne out of good English humor"[79] and that Schelsky considered Schmitt's reading of Hobbes's usage of this Leviathan image as a similar thing – that is, "a half-ironical literary idea borne out of good English humor" that can be explained "contextually." This hint to the context (via the mouthpiece Schelsky) might be one key to understanding the political dimension of Schmitt's Hobbes book. Maybe Schmitt used his Hobbes book (and his claim that Hobbes's selection of the term "Leviathan" expressed an attitude of mocking disrespect toward alleged great people in the world) to express a similar attitude of half-ironic disrespect and distance in his own age.

(4)

Let me briefly summarize my method and my results and put them in a broader context: I started my paper by pointing to some questions regarding the philosophical intention of Schmitt's Hobbes book (1). After that, I agreed with some Schmitt scholars and their thesis that Schmitt's Hobbes book can be seen as a book with an eminent political dimension and function that evaluates the Nazi regime in which Schmitt had lost some official functions. I claimed that Schmitt himself points towards Hobbes and that it might be useful to get some help from Hobbes in reading Schmitt (2). Therefore, I turned to Hobbes's *Leviathan* and to some passages that contain "hermeneutical principles" or some guidelines for the reader regarding how Hobbes wants to be read. After that Hobbes excursus, I returned to Schmitt (3) to see whether Hobbes's principles might help unveil the political dimension of Schmitt's Hobbes book. I concluded that it is possible to detect some literary strategies in Schmitt's Hobbes book that he might have borrowed from Hobbes. By doing so, my analysis provides further plausibility for the thesis that Schmitt's Hobbes book is a book with an eminent political dimension and function. Also, it might contribute to understanding how Schmitt's Hobbes book was written and how it must be understood as a complex mélange of political and philosophical dimensions. These results should thus be seen as a contribution to describing the method and the literary strategies of Schmitt's Hobbes book and thus make possible a more complex and complete image of Schmitt as a political thinker. I consider the book to be a work of political philosophy in that it is written carefully, reflecting the political context of writings and the limits and possibilities of free thinking. But even if my results provide further evidence for the claim

[77] Schmitt, LST, 11.
[78] Ibid., 27n1.
[79] Ibid.

that Schmitt distances himself from the Nazi regime he lives under, I certainly do not wish to claim that Schmitt has written a genuine "resistance book."[80]

For example, the awkward and hostile passages on the Jews and their contribution to murdering the Leviathan and the growth of the liberal state remain an essential and abhorrent part of the book. They remind us that despite Schmitt's growing distance from the NS regime for statist reasons, the so-called "architect of the Third Reich" still shared important principles with it. Schmitt's antisemitic attacks and the rigid antisemitic framing of his Hobbes book have nothing to do with "a fine sense of English humor" and may not be misunderstood as mere lip service but may signal a dangerous (and, in their consequences, deadly) anti-liberal attitude.[81] Exploring several subversive and, in this sense, liberal strategies in one's art of writing does not, of course, imply that one is a liberal in the whole philosophical and political meaning of the word.

[80] Although Hobbes's *protego ergo obligo* formula, which Schmitt primarily used to criticize the role of the party in the NS state (cf. Herfried Münkler, "Carl Schmitt und Thomas Hobbes," *Neue Politische Literatur* 3 (1984): 352), might have provided a starting point for writing one.

[81] For a further discussion, see Strong, "Forward, 2008," xivff., and the publications of Raphael Gross, *Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The "Jewish Question," the Holocaust, and German Legal Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007) and Vilho Harle, *The Enemy with a Thousand Faces: The Tradition of the Other in Western Political Thought and History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000) cited there. For recent discussions of the nature and development of Schmitt's antisemitism, see Hubertus Buchstein, "Five Stages of Antisemitic Political Thought: Review Essay about Carl Schmitt, Gesammelte Schriften 1933-1936, Duncker & Humblot," *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory* 24, no. 2 (2021): 172-77; and Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, "Indirection and the Rhetoric of Tyranny: Carl Schmitt's *The Tyranny of Values* 1960-1967," *Modern Intellectual History* 18 (2021): 427-50. For a nuanced discussion of Schmitt's antisemitism that both reveals the differences with National Socialist thought and resolutely warns against treating Schmitt's own antisemitism in the Hobbes book as mere lip service, see Meier, *Die Lehre Carl Schmitts*, 231ff.

Szymon Wróbel

NONDIALECTICAL NEGATIVITY

PREMISE (EXCLUDING DISJUNCTION)

The premise for this topic of "nondialectical negativity" is the firm belief that, apart from the theoreticians of coherence and the principle of non-contradiction of dialectical thinkers who postulate the "reality of contradiction" but at the same time seek the possibility of transcending or abolishing it, a new group of philosophers has been formed defending the excluding disjunction. This is a group of philosophers who seem to have lost faith in the power of mediation, representation, sublimation, synthesis, and reconciliation.

We say that disjunction is the negation of conjunction. We also say that a disjunction is a sentence made up of two sentences using the conjunction "or," where "or" means that only one of the two sentences is true. Disjunction in its classical form is a "simplifying disjunction," an "eliminative reduction" to the "alleged unity." After "resolving the dramatic alternative" and differentiating "either or," there remain two solutions – either only one element of the alternative is true (which means exclusion), or a new synthesis can take the contradiction to a higher level (which means reintegration).

For dialectical or categorically ultra-logical thinkers, it is unacceptable for two alternative truths or contradictions that are irreconcilable by dialectical abolition to persist. This was roughly expressed by the famous Hegelian category, *Aufhebung*. This category also inaugurated the beginning of the politics of recognition based on the dialectic of Master and Slave and the "struggle for recognition" of previously excluded identities. The problem, however, is that the logic of *Aufhebung*, as Schelling, Adorno, and Žižek have already noted, is never complete and final.[1] There is always a remnant, a certain archaic element that turns out to resist the logic of progress. For these thinkers, dialectics, which is not yet speculative, is the vibrant domain of the tremor of reflection and reflexive reversals, the move of negativity in which "all that is solid melts into air" – this is dialectics as eternal warfare, as a movement that ultimately destroys everything it gives birth to. In Marxist terms, we are dealing here with materialistic dialectics and not dialectical materialism; in Hegelian terms, with determinate reflection and not reflexive determination.[2]

Schelling deployed the idea of nondialectical negativity in his basic insight that, prior to its assertion as the medium of the rational Word, the subject is the "infinite lack

[1] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973); Slavoj Žižek and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Abyss of Freedom/The Ages of the World*, trans. Judith Norman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2014).

[2] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970).

of being" (*unendliche Mangel an Sein*), the violent gesture of contraction that negates every being outside itself. What sustains Schelling's reasoning is a simplified notion of the dialectical movement as a progress in which the previous "lower" element or level is "sublated" into the next higher element or level. For Schelling, the lower level cannot ever be sublated; it persists forever and can only be brought into harmony with the higher level.[3]

What conclusion should we draw from this anti-Hegelian thought? Well, for a long time, we were left with two policies: the policy of pluralism; and the coexistence of differences within one cultural liberalism and the politics of identity, which took place under the banner of expanding inclusivity to the horizon (the promise) and full inclusion of otherness within the mainstream legal culture (entirely). As a result, two political utopias coexisted. One talks about the coexistence of differences within one society. And the second one talks about the community that is becoming capable of abolishing dependence and subordination under a common ontology of univocity or the annihilation of all differences in the idea of "whatever being." "The coming being" – in Agamben's dictionary – is "whatever Being." As Agamben said, "*Quodlibet ens* is not 'being, it does not matter which,' but rather 'being such that it always matters.'"[4] Whatever being is, it is not a being without any significance whatsoever; it is precisely a being that has significance and, therefore, always refers to will; any being remains in a primary relation to desire.

With the advent of non-inclusive disjunction, we have the postulate and outline of a third position in politics, not so much, in Agamben's words, "exclusive inclusion," that is, catching the *homo sacer*, the victim who is hunted with impunity, but rather, not susceptible to interpellations and any "invitations" to become a person or a subject of law. This new rebellious element is *hostis*, that is, the social and political enemy, partisan of choice, who, at his own will, refuses to assimilate to the whole and the mainstream, refuses to give his body the status of a subject of law, a subjugated subject. At first glance, this *hostis* seems to be an irrational element, a madman.

This should not surprise us because the legal system has served this purpose of domestication and humanization for centuries. The purpose of the law was to neutralize the dangerous body; a population that was potentially socially harmful, explosive, undeveloped, useless, immature, incapable of rational action, remaining outside the system, supervision, observation – that is, outside the eye of the State. The law does not value what constitutes a wild reservoir belonging to no one.

Beyond the politics of identity and pluralistic difference, a politics of subversive difference is born, not so much of the convergence of differences but of their divergence, a policy of asymmetry that does not aim at expanding *Pax Romana* or the logic of the Commonwealth. A politics is born that does not praise pluralism, cosmopolitanism, dialectical ambivalence, and ultimate inclusion. The policy of asymmetry prohibits us from collaborating with the system in any way and forbids us from making concessions and compromises. This

[3] Žižek and Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 169-70.

[4] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. M. Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 8.

policy also takes away the hope that certain products and institutions created under capitalism will be able to serve the future society of communism. Andrew Culp concludes: "To put it suggestively but crudely: instead of promoting a convergence culture that puts everything into communication, exclusive disjunction seeks a divergence culture that spins things off to pursue their own paths."[5]

Moreover, Culp clearly declares in an anti-Hegelian spirit: "As long as the dialectic of recognition remains, the sovereign view of power persists, even after we have cut the head off the king."[6] Dismantling the logic and politics of recognition, therefore, seems even more important than beheading the king or dismantling the king's empty throne. Culp adds, "The failure of previous revolutions is not that they have insufficiently wielded power, parties, and the state, but that they have proven incapable of breaking with them (hence the failure of state socialism ever bringing about communism or withering away of the state and private property, and neoliberalism's ostensibly minimal state larding up agrobusiness subsidies and police budgets)."[7] Dictum "Never desire power" this time means let the object of your desire never become the state, party, or any corporation.[8] So, what should become the object of our desire? Foucault's introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* was an introduction to a nonfascist life, but to what kind of life do nonfascist philosophers invite us?

The key question is, why write a paper on questionable third politics and nondialectical contradiction or exclusionary disjunction? It can be argued that since this policy wildly rejects all known institutions, it is preparing its own destruction. One could argue that this policy is also ostentatiously unintellectual since it promotes action rather than intellect and persuasion. Well, there are many reasons that go significantly beyond logic and dialectics. I would say they go beyond philosophy, at least beyond speculative philosophy.

ACADEMIC PUGACHEV (THE NEW WORLD'S SPIRIT)

It seems that Carl Schmitt was the first to try to think through the historical figures of hostility in our culture, with the figures of the revolutionary and the partisan at the forefront. In Schmitt's opinion, there are three phases of hostility.[9]

In the first, states are sovereign subjects of *jus belli*, but no state treats another as a criminal; war is a gentlemen's duel, and war itself – from the Peace of Versailles to the Napoleonic wars – is limited by legal conventions. In the second, the post-revolutionary phase, armies do not want to defeat the enemy so much as to change the rules of the political system. This is also when the partisan first appears. The partisan appears on the stage of history when the conventional struggle of the state is defeated and the partisan

[5] Andrew Culp, *A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022), 69.
[6] Ibid., 4.
[7] Ibid., 8.
[8] Michel Foucault, "Introduction," in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
[9] Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2007); Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

continues to fight. For Schmitt, the partisan is a tragic figure: he is not subject to the law of war and regulations and does not respect the regulations. The partisan risks falling into crime as a result. The hostility of the guerrilla is real hostility. His telluric character, his connection with the land, and his connection with the people protect him from turning real hostility into absolute hostility. The connection with the land, territorialism, does not allow the guerrilla to be transformed into a nihilistic figure of terror.

However, a third wave of hostility occurs, and global revolutionary ideology introduces absolute hostility. It is Lenin who detaches hostility from territory, making it the total hostility of a world war, the aim of which is the destruction of the current world order. The guerrilla is deterritorialized and becomes an instrument of global politics. He ceases to be a defensive figure and becomes a tool of global aggression. The differences between guerrilla resistance and political terror are blurred. The guerrilla becomes not only a cold-war technician but also a free anarchist element. The guerrilla always operates at the molecular level, perforating molar structures.

Schmitt explicitly claims that the old theories of the guerrilla do not exist. In the classical law of war, there is no place for the guerrilla. Guerrillas are either light, mobile units – as in the cabinet wars of the eighteenth century – or people outlawed, particularly heinous criminals. In the classical law of war, the guerrilla is *hors la loi* (outside the law). It could not be otherwise since war was a knightly duel. The introduction of universal compulsory military service made war a people's war in principle. Improvised formations became key as units from the general conscription, freelancers. In this context, the inherent feature of the guerrilla is that he is not protected. He cannot expect either law or mercy. He is the embodiment of true hostility, which leads to destruction through terror and counterterror. Only civil and colonial wars are related to the guerrilla.

The theory of the partisan is closely related to the Napoleonic wars. The history of Russia knows the guerrilla war against the Napoleonic army. It was Tolstoy who raised the Russian peasant to the bearer of the power of the Russian land, who destroyed the invaders like vermin. The illiterate peasant in Tolstoy is not only stronger but also more intelligent than all the strategists and tacticians and Napoleon himself, who becomes a mere puppet of history. Stalin took up this myth and used it in the war against Germany. According to Schmitt, the same myth is repeated in the case of Mao Zedong's China, in Indochina, the Philippines, Algeria, Cyprus, Greece, the Balkans, Cuba (Che Guevara), Laos, and Vietnam.

It was no different in Prussia, where the nation's hatred of Napoleon was used. The Prussian edict signed by the King of Prussia on the general levy of 1813 called the entire nation to guerrilla warfare. This edict was the most astonishing legal act of all the acts in the world. Every citizen was obliged to oppose the invader. Every Prussian was obliged to disobey the enemy. For Schmitt, this is a kind of Magna Carta of guerrilla warfare. It was the first official document to strengthen the guerrilla. Previously, the guerrilla remained an unknown figure of the world's spirit.

In this context, the partisan was discovered for philosophy, and his theory became possible. In the seventeenth century, the partisan could only be a figure of a picaresque novel. In the eighteenth century, in the time of Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great, he became a *pandur* and a hussar. But in Berlin in the years 1808-1813, he was discovered

not only for technical and military reasons but also for philosophical ones. After the wars, Hegel's philosophy, which sought a compromise between revolution and tradition, prevailed. Hegel's philosophy preserved not only tradition but also revolution.[10] It provided a weapon more powerful than the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This weapon fell into the hands of Marx and then Lenin.

In this period, the very concept of the political undergoes a fundamental turn. The classical concept of the political defines it as hostility between states; war is fought in defense of territorial sovereignty. Since the nineteenth century, territorial war between states has been replaced by revolutionary war between parties. Engels still hoped that universal suffrage would cause the proletariat to gain a majority in parliament and, as a result, the bourgeois class state would be transformed into a classless society. In contrast, Lenin recognized the necessity of revolutionary violence. In 1906, Lenin wrote a text titled *Guerrilla War*.[11] The same year, Georges Sorel published his *Reflections on Violence*.[12]

This is how the history of the professional revolutionary began. Lenin turned against the thesis that revolution can come about by itself. The goal was a socialist revolution in all countries of the world. For Lenin, only a revolutionary war is real because it results from absolute hostility. All others are a game of convention. But who is the absolute enemy? The absolute enemy is the class enemy! It is the Western capitalist and his social order. Lenin's striking power lies in the ability to recognize the enemy. The irregularity of the class struggle not only questions the front lines but also the entire edifice of the political and social order.

Schmitt, citing the authority of Joseph de Maistre, recalls the concept of "academic Pugachev,"[13] that is, the alliance of philosophy with the forces of insurrection. Pugachev was the leader of the peasant and Cossack uprising against Catherine II, posing as the deceased husband of the tsarina. The academic Pugachev was supposed to be a Russian who would start a revolution in a European way. The idea of linking the Western intelligentsia with the Russian rebellion is born.

According to Schmitt, just as piracy was a prescientific stage of naval warfare, so the guerrilla is a prescientific stage of land warfare. The guerrilla is disappearing today because, for a fantasy focused on technology, it is no longer a problem for the police and has ceased to be a philosophical and legal problem. However, Schmitt asks what will happen if the man who gave life to the guerrilla learns to live in a technological civilization, learns to use new tools, and becomes an industrial guerrilla? The last guerrilla figure for Schmitt was the figure of Raoul Albin Louis Salan. Salan was the French co-founder and chief commander of the terrorist organization OAS, Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (the Organization of the Secret Army). For Schmitt, Salan was symptomatic because he changed

[10] George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold Vincent Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[11] Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin), *Guerrilla Warfare*, in Walter Laqueur, *The Guerrilla Reader: A Historical Anthology* (London: Wildwood House, 1978), 172-78.

[12] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, in *Cambridge Texts of the History of Political Thought*, ed. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[13] Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, 53.

from being a legal general into being a guerrilla who declared war on his state (government). If a militant communist had been in Salan's place, he would have made different decisions.

Byung-Chul Han sees only noise or din in the contemporary digital society, which is a sign of the decline of power and the disintegration of charisma. Han recalls in this context that Schmitt feared radio waves, which is symptomatic. After the First World War, the sovereign decided on a state of emergency. After the Second World War, the sovereign decided on waves in space. After the digital revolution, the sovereign will be the one who will manage storms in the network. Schmitt might no longer find his place in this world.[14]

FROM PARTISAN TO TROUBLEMAKER

The question then arises: Who are the anarchists today? What are their goals? Does anarchism today still have anything in common with the anarchism of Bakunin or Kropotkin, who did not know the power of the media, consumer seduction, cyberspace, and telecommunications? Is anarchism still anarcho-syndicalism today? From Bakunin to Chomsky, the goal of anarchism was to dismantle the state and its institutions but also to seek places free from domination. It seems that the condition for anarchist activity is to maintain a minimum of autonomy. Andrew Culp writes, "Guerrilla logic distills escape in three basic principles for defeating a superior enemy: an autonomous way of life, the advantage of terrain, and indistinguishability. In particular, the urban guerrilla leverages contingency, density, and clutter."[15] An anarchist is a terrorist; a terrorist is a masked strategist who, however, does not reveal his political goals. Does this satisfy us? Does this secrecy of political demands or their vagueness and deliberately enigmatic nature satisfy us?

Is the goal of anarchists still the same today as it was in the era of cyber manifestos? Today, when we are aware that "everything is bourgeois" and Capitalism leaves no one outside, can we hope for spheres of autonomy? Moreover, how should we dismantle the state so as not to be tempted to reassemble it? Will anarchists be tempted to use the state or its elements to implement post-patriarchal and post-humanist policies? What comes "after the state" is the main object of desire for all famous policies.

Andrew Culp suggests that the guerrilla, by establishing an indistinguishability between himself and everyone else, establishes a new policy.

> Once the guerrilla becomes imperceptible, actions are no longer viewed as the actions of a crank, madman, or criminal against the public, but as the concrete expression of sentiments held by many [...]. The guerrilla, therefore, lives as the expression of others or dies as a solitary individual, which is to say that the guerrilla renounces the notion of the revolutionary subject and instead gives force to the non-subject as it is becoming revolutionary.[16]

[14] Byung-Chul Han, *The Crisis of Narration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2024).
[15] Culp, *A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal*, 27.
[16] Ibid., 44.

This one sentence would require more comment: How does a criminal entity become a revolutionary entity and renounce its subjectivity in order to give agency to the community, the collective?

What ultimately characterizes a troublemaker is how they live life. For the troublemaker, life is not about survival but escape – escape from the causes of suffering, escape to a better world, and, most importantly, escape as a form of struggle. The troublemaker dreams of freedom by imagining politics as a utopian space where "we could possibly go somewhere that exists only in our imagination." His freedom is without shape, as it is only the notion that things must change. Such belief is founded on the revolutionary demand to live a life without compromise. So, it demands a world that has made a revolutionary break from anything that collaborates with the reactionary forces of the present.

This brings us to the issue of "political goals," which in this case are praise of the politics of deceit, insinuations, and falsehood. The new anarchists and subtractive communists no longer say that the truth will set us free. This is not a policy based on the power of evidence, facts, and a sense of being in the truth. Factuality is not the main weapon of this policy. And that is not its goal, either. Instead, the goal seems to be to deepen anomie, to trigger failures in the system so severe that they become more than failures – they become disasters.

THE MASKED PHILOSOPHER (*LARVATUS PRODEO*)

René Descartes, in *Cogitationes privatae*, writes that, like comedians who take on roles so that the shame that rises to their brows may not be seen, he walks upon the stage of the world disguised (*larvatus prodeo*).[17] It seems that following the path of the masked philosopher is still an attractive option.

In her famous text *Truth and Politics*, Hannah Arendt wrote that no one counts truthfulness among the political virtues.[18] Lies were considered necessary and justified tools. Arendt prophetically asked whether truth is powerless and power deceitful by nature. Is powerless truth not just as worthy of contempt as power that does not attach importance to it? For Arendt, the conflict between truth and politics results from two extremely opposing ways of life: the life of a philosopher and that of a citizen. The opposite of truth has always been opinion. However, it is opinion, not truth, that is the basis of all governments. The right to interpretation is the right to situate facts in one's own perspective, not to violate the matter of facts itself. However, Arendt sadly concluded that war on truth lies in the nature of politics, and defending truth is considered an antipolitical attitude. Today, this seems to be changing.

The masked philosopher is, therefore, counting on a cumulative effect, cascading errors that will turn into something apocalyptic. A masked philosopher does not want to build the world as we know it or even reform it, much less improve it. The anarchist seeks ways to bring this world to destruction. This is a serious problem for all those who

[17] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: The Correspondence*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[18] Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 227-65.

feel connected to this world and do not see any way to fix it; for those who see the "world as we know it" as the only space for self-realization and fulfillment; and for those who want to regain the world for people and treat man as a world creature. Anarchists are about destroying the world of global capital, not keeping it alive, resulting in the multiplication of failures, disruptions, and entropy, not negentropy. There is also the deep negativity of this attitude. In the end, I would say that it resembles Machiavelli's politics in the *Florentine Histories* more than it does Marx in *Das Kapital*.

This brings us to the problem of the politics of insinuation, intrigue, lies, gossip, and launching streams of information whose sole purpose is not to connect people or inform them but to create a flood of randomness. Sabotage, destruction, seizure of other people's goods, annihilation – these are the methods of anarchist action. An anarchist is neither a prince nor a king, nor even a sovereign or dictator. Rather, the anarchist is a schemer and a man of action – a terrorist who works by staging coups or programming explosions.

Who is the intriguer today? Is he a hacker? Is he a fraud, a "modern-day robber," or a highwayman who establishes new regimes of justice and new local prestige rankings? The fame and power of the intriguer does not result from "legal power." His power comes from delegitimizing and ridiculing all legitimate claims to power. The trickster, the schemer, demonstrates that the fight for recognition is always a false fight for recognition. As in the Hegelian scheme, there was never an initial duel to the death. Power is always a usurpation of power, not its fairy-tale legend. In the past, genealogy was supposed to oppose the legend; today, it is an intrigue and dismantling not only of the current government but also of all inclinations to take the empty place left by the king. Anarchists, intriguers, and tricksters talk about justice as opposed to the model of law. But what kind of justice is this? And how can we distinguish good and bad intrigues and good and bad conspiracies in the world of post-truth and generalized populism?

Culp, in *A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal*, writes that "The only point of even uttering the name of the Imaginary Party is to have something to call the unspoken solidarity of all who seek to make society pay for all of the crime it spawns, a sort of revenge on behalf of those who have been deprived and excluded from visibility and recognition."[19] Can justice be marked by the spirit of revenge? Can revenge serve as the greatest act of love? Do we not feel the spirit of resentment here, the spirit of the "weak" who take revenge on the "strong"?

POLITICS OF INVISIBILITY

After the period of fear of violence and the inclination of our attitudes toward deliberative politics and the hopes associated with it, we are returning to the confrontation with naked violence. "Enough talk" – we say, let's get to action. We begin to doubt the advantages of deliberation over direct action and negotiation over decision and agency. Even ecological movements, which for years seemed to be faithful to pacifist models, are now taking action, not avoiding acts of disobedience and even vandalism, ranging from the destruction of cars and vans to blowing up or damaging energy infrastructure. The German movement reinvented the climate-camp formula and brought it to a higher level of mass challenge:

[19] Culp, *A Guerrilla Guide to Refusal,* 58.

Ende Gelände, meaning roughly "here and no further," was born. End of story, I have nothing to add.

I am concerned about this ethical acceptance of violence and acting outside the law. On the other hand, perhaps without these actions, the emancipation movement would not have been launched at all, much less realized. Andreas Malm, in his latest book, demythologizes violence and shows the limits of pacifism. Perhaps we are maturing in the belief that capitalism will not die a natural death but should be helped in seeking the day of its destruction.[20]

Is there any point in talking about benevolent violence? There are certainly reasons to talk about the decline and neutralization of revolutionary politics. From around the years 1789 to around 1989, revolutionary politics retained its relevance and dynamic potential, but since the 1980s it has been defamed, outdated, unlearned, and devoid of reality. It is not even about war itself and its theories in the form of strategy or the idea of absolute war as the embodiment of absolute conflict; it is rather about the return to the famous inversion of Clausewitz's formula "War is merely the continuation of policy with other means" (Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln).[21] It is, therefore, about rethinking war and the model of war that is at the heart of politics, which never finds a day of peace or reconciliation. It is, therefore, about treating peace as another instrument of war and law as a more sophisticated weapon.

However, all this still sounds enigmatic, especially if someone wants to build some ethics on this destructive model. What is certain is that the dictum "Visibility is a trap," as Foucault warns in *Discipline and Punish*, means that we must prevent recognition.[22] How? Well, by becoming imperceptible. But what is this mysterious property of the body – imperceptibility? Is it the invisibility of the assailant hiding behind multiple false identities? Is it just about the art of disguise, the art of walking around in disguise? Or is it about something more and reaching a place where the question is about who writes, who speaks, and who acts? Who no longer makes any sense? So, is it about the art of multiplying identities or the art of subtraction until we reach what is called subtractive communism? Subtraction is the political science of the underground. Deleuze and Guattari define it precisely as the operation "$n - 1$."[23]

The key question, then, seems to be what it means to become invisible. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that becoming is not evolution, especially evolution understood through descent and kinship. Becoming is not based on kinship either and always comes from an order other than that of lineage. Becoming does not mean imitating or identifying, either. However, there is an order of becoming – becoming a woman, becoming a child, becoming an animal, a plant, a mineral, and finally becoming a molecule. It seems, therefore, that "invisibility," "becoming imperceptible" is in some sense the end of becoming. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari can decree that "all becomings are molecular."[24] Imperceptibility is

[20] Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire* (London: Verso, 2021).
[21] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.
[22] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977).
[23] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 6.
[24] Ibid., 232.

the immanent end of becoming. However, imperceptibility can mean many things. Are we not clear about the relationship between physical (anorganic) imperceptibility, semiotic (meaninglessness) indistinguishability, and non-personality (a-subjective)?

We know, however, that in becoming we want to be like everyone, but not like anyone. Deleuze and Guattari write, "To become like everybody else; but this, precisely, is a becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody."[25] To become imperceptible means to be like everyone else. But to become everyone/everything (*tout le monde*) means to enter the world (*faire monde*), to create the world (*faire un monde*). It seems that the key difference lies in the distinction between two levels: molar and molecular. For "being everybody/everything," what is crucial is the molar aggregate, but "becoming everybody/everything" is another matter, one that brings into play the cosmos with its molecular components. How can this be achieved? This can only be achieved by subtraction, not by addition. In the process of elimination, we are no more than an abstract line or a piece of a puzzle, which is itself abstract. However, for Deleuze and Guattari, becoming imperceptible is becoming the world, not its destruction. Becoming means escaping the eye of molar apparatuses and entering an entirely new molecular plane, where no forms or developments exist; there are no subjects or their imitations. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformatted elements, particles of all kinds, where we encounter subjectless individuations. Thus, we reach the unconscious, which no longer signifies a transcendent principle of organization but a process of an immanent plane of coherence. Once again, becoming invisible is becoming worldly; it is worldliness, which means merging into the background, rejecting what is superfluous.

The relation between the molar and the molecular turns out to be crucial in the process of becoming. There are not only two levels of existence but also two levels of perception. Panoptic optical devices from the molar level want to observe the molecular existence that eludes it. The imperceptible becomes perceived at the same time as what is subject to perception transforms into a molar being. Perception is the perception of edges, not content; perception reaches the intervals between matter, colors, and sounds that absorb lines of flight, lines of transparency. The image of perception is not like a coloring book, with drawn edges and an interior to fill with colors. The image of perception seeks the edge of greatest sharpness, the strongest difference, the threshold.

As a result, two spaces are created: smooth (invisible) and grooved (perceptible). Smooth space and grooved space are, respectively, nomadic space and settled space. Therefore, the space in which the war machine develops and the space established by the state are not of the same nature. Although Deleuze and Guattari state that one should never believe that smooth space alone is enough to save us, they seem to believe that it is the space of the sea that is the smoothest surface and, therefore, most susceptible to the demands of increasingly strict grooves. "Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory," we read in *A Thousand Plateaus*. "But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries.

[25] Ibid., 218.

Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us."[26] Deleuze and Guattari believe in liquids, not solids, they believe in the pirate, the privateer of the land, not the warrior. The pirate fights neither in the open field nor on the front; he rather forces the enemy to go to an unfavorable space for him – a polished, if not smooth, space.

Andrew Culp suggests that becoming imperceptible is only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody. This difference between anybody and nobody is central. The imperceptibility must function as a movement, not a model, which means that we have no model of being imperceptible, only practices of disappearing. We never have the right to copy or repeat anything, although we have the right to develop, produce, and intensify something. We have no right to become hostages of the machines of truth or the ultimate real, although we have the right to multiply and divide ourselves infinitely. Is it not paradoxical in some sense that the very concept of being subtractive is not communism? Since Culp, I declare that all of these culminate in the proposition that, on the one hand, we want to live in communism and, on the other, to spread anarchy. Everything becomes imperceptible; everything is becoming imperceptible on the plane of consistency, which is nevertheless precisely where the imperceptible is seen and heard. Becoming minoritarian is a political matter and necessitates a labor of power (*puissance*), an active micropolitics. This is the opposite of macropolitics, and even of History, in which it is a question of knowing how to win or obtain a majority.

Is there another version of thinking about the invisible? Yes, and it is the apocalyptic version. For Paul Virilio, with the emergence of the cinema, another sun has risen, changing vision radically: its light will not be long in changing life due to the double projector, producing speed and propagating images. Visibly, everything is alive. Then the disintegration of vision commences, preceding slightly that of matter and bodies, which was foreshadowed already with the first studies of the technology of least resistance. With this technology, with cinema, speed and the elements combine to give form to the appearance of machines, anticipating the total re-creation of their movement field, the aeolian erosion doubled from now on by that of a speed that sculpts vehicle and landscape at the same time, while waiting to acclimate the passengers. Although we can no more hide the speed of light than we can the sun with our hands, the disintegration of the transmission of the cinematographic image and the transmission of cinematic bodies will be speedily accomplished, to such an extent that soon no one will be astonished at visual disturbances provoked by rapidity: the locomotive illusion will be thought of as the truth of vision, just as the illusions of optics will seem to be like those of life.[27]

ACHERON (WAR IS INEVITABLE)

In his later text *Why War?* Freud claims that the relationship between law and force is complex.[28] Law and violence seem to us to be opposites today, but for centuries, conflicts of interest between people have been resolved by the use of violence. In the past, force decided who owns what or whose will is to be fulfilled. In time, force was replaced by

[26] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 500.
[27] Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Phil Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991).
[28] Sigmund Freud, *Why War?* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 22 (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 197-218.

cunning. Force was replaced by mental superiority, but the goal of the fight remains the same: one of the parties should be harmed, so that it is paralyzed and renounces its claim. This goal is achieved when the opponent is eliminated. The intention of destruction can only be opposed by the reflection that instead of killing, it would be better to use the opponent. Instead of annihilation, we have enslavement. According to Freud, the path to law ran through the fact that the greater strength of an individual can be defeated by the alliance of many weaker ones. The alliance of many can break violence, and the strength of allies constitutes law in opposition to the violence of an individual. Law is simply the strength of the community. However, it is still violence that is ready to turn against any entity that presents itself to it. The unification of many must be permanent and lasting. If the unification only served to combat a strong opponent, it would not be effective. The community must organize itself, create regulations, and establish bodies to oversee the observance of regulations and the execution of legitimate acts of violence.

For Freud, war is not an inappropriate means of establishing eternal peace because it can create larger organizations within which further conflicts are difficult. However, conquest alone cannot guarantee lasting peace. Prevention of wars is possible only when people unite to use a central authority to which, in the event of all conflicts of interest, the legal claim will be transferred. Two postulates must be met: the requirement to create a superior authority and the postulate to equip it with the necessary strength.

According to Freud, two forces hold the community together: the compulsion of violence and emotional ties. The Pan-Hellenic idea did not stop the Greeks from wars. Similarly, the Christian idea of community did not prevent people from turning to the sultan for help. In our times, however, there is no unifying idea. The attempt to replace real force with the "power of ideas" today seems doomed to failure. As a result, even today, the law cannot renounce seeking support in force.

Freud assumes that there are two types of drives in man: (1) those that desire to preserve and unite, which are the equivalent of Eros, and (2) those that desire to destroy and kill, which is the equivalent of the polarity of attraction and repulsion in physics. Both of these drives are equally necessary, and life is created from their cooperation. In the real world, alliances are formed between drives. The self-preservation drive is erotic in nature, but it is not devoid of aggression. The love drive requires the addition of the drive to possess, if it wants to possess its object at all. Rarely is any human act the work of only one of the two drives of Eros or Thanatos. Through extensive speculation, Freud concluded that the death drive works to introduce everything that lives into the state of inanimate matter. The death drive becomes a destructive drive when it turns against external objects. According to Freud, a living being preserves its own life by destroying the life of others. What does this mythology of Eros and Thanatos mean to Freud?

It means that the desire to eliminate aggressive tendencies has no prospects for success. Freud considers the hopes of the communists to be an illusion. The communists must arm themselves, and what unites them is hatred for all who do not belong to them. One cannot count on the annihilation of aggression but on its reversal in such a way that it does not have to manifest itself in the form of war. Only one force can be called against war, and that is Eros. Everything that establishes emotional bonds must counteract war.

One type of bond is a love reaction with the object. The second type of bond is achieved through identification.

At first glance, Freud asks a scandalous question: Why does war arouse such great indignation in us? Why do we simply not accept war? Freud answers brusquely: war is in accordance with nature, biologically justified, practically inevitable. Every person has the right to life, while war destroys the promise of life and forces man to murder others. As long as there are states ready to destroy others, those others must be ready for war. According to Freud, a cultural process has been going on since time immemorial, which may lead to the annihilation of humanity because it negatively affects sexuality. The changes that occur with the development of culture are spectacular and unambiguous. They consist of the progressive shifting of instinctual goals and the limitation of instinctual impulses. However, this means that everything that promotes the development of culture works against war but also against the biological forces of reproductive life.

Acheron (Ἀχέρων) is the personification of the river in Hades in Greek mythology, one of the five rivers of Hades. It is called the river of sorrow or "Lament." It has two tributaries: Pyriphlegethon (Πυριφλεγέθων, "Burning Like Fire") and Cocytus (Κωκυτὸς, "Accused"). The other rivers of Hades are Styx (Στύξ) and Lethe (Λήθη, "Forgetfulness"). In the final fragments of *The Theory of the Partisan*, Schmitt returns to this Acheron figure, writing that one can disappear in darkness.[29] However, turning darkness into a space of struggle to destroy the theater of empire and the public sphere is something that "technical intelligence" is not able to organize. Unfortunately, modern Acheron is unpredictable and does not listen to any pleas. Perhaps today, the enemy of humanity is humanity itself. Certainly, the absolute enemy is immanent in the nuclear age. Half of humanity becomes hostage to the other half armed with nuclear weapons. The logic of defending values tells us to use ever stronger means of discrimination and criminalization, until all life is destroyed.

[29] Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, 93.

Monika Gabriela Bartoszewicz

EPISTEMIC SECURITY AND THE MONOPOLY ON KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

If there is one universally known quote from Thomas Hobbes, it is his assertion that without security "there is no place for industry [...] no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Indeed, in the Western context, security is typically construed as freedom from harm and/or the threat thereof, serving as a prerequisite for a thriving and prosperous society. Furthermore, in accordance with the logic presented in *Leviathan*, security is commonly perceived as something guaranteed by the state, thus rendering it the primary provider of security.

It is unsurprising, then, that since at least the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, security debates have been dominated by the idea of national security, often focused on militarized interpretations that traditionally viewed security as both the highest end and the ultimate means. Broadly speaking, security has been understood in terms of how well a particular state or group of allied states fares in the struggle for power, or how stable the overall balance of power appears. Concurrently, national security has become firmly entrenched as a politically expedient tool for a wide range of factional interests, serving as a justification for various actions and policies. This status quo persisted until the end of the Cold War, when two significant developments emerged: widening of the security realm and its riskification. In the most general sense, riskification refers to the process or tendency of placing increasing emphasis on the perception of risk across various aspects of society, the economy, or decision-making processes. We shall now examine both of these phenomena.

RISK: THE NEW FRONTIER OF SECURITY

The traditional approach to security was confined to a single dimension, primarily focusing on the military context, and was characterized by its "vertical" structure, extending narrowly across three main levels of analysis: the individual, the state, and the international system. A notable example of this perspective is Kenneth Waltz's seminal work *Man, the State, and War*.[1] Dissatisfaction with this limited understanding and a sense of its inadequacy in the post–Cold War era led to the emergence of a new approach. In

[1] K. N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

1991, in response to Waltz's canonical text, Barry Buzan penned "People, States, and Fear,"[2] initiating a debate between proponents of "broad" and "narrow" approaches to security.[3] This discussion ultimately paved the way for the Copenhagen School, a group of scholars who advocated for a more "horizontal" approach to security.[4] In addition to the military dimension, they identified four other sectors of security: political, economic, environmental, and – last but not least – societal.[5]

Simultaneously, in 1992, the distinguished German scholar Ulrich Beck caused quite an uproar with his ground-breaking work on the concept of the risk society.[6] Beck posited that risk, an intrinsic component of modernity, has facilitated the emergence of a global risk society. Central to this concept is the understanding that risks are not confined to individual nations; in the era of globalization, threats transcend borders, impacting all countries and social strata, and possess a dynamic nature. Crucially, these risks yield global repercussions, extending beyond individual consequences. Individuals and nations alike are therefore compelled to continuously respond and adapt to these evolving challenges. While Beck's background lies in sociology, his thesis carries profound implications for security studies. The notion of the risk society suggests that attention must be directed not only toward existing security threats but also toward the potential occurrence of high-risk events, irrespective of their perceived distance or hypothetical nature. This shift is captured by the extensive measures taken to mitigate potential terrorist threats, such as the installation of massive concrete barriers in locations devoid of any history of terrorist attacks or structural vulnerabilities conducive to such occurrences. This example illustrates how policymakers increasingly view not only actual threats but also highly speculative risks of potential threats as driving forces in shaping security-related decision-making processes.

This distinction may appear as a trivial nuance; however, its significance becomes apparent upon consideration. Traditionally, a security crisis denotes the presence of a genuine existential threat – an imminent danger that fundamentally jeopardizes the existence, survival, or fundamental identity of an individual, group, society, state, or even humanity as a whole. Existential threats typically manifest on a scale that poses a substantial challenge to the continued existence or operation of the targeted entity as they possess the capacity to disrupt or undermine life's very foundations, presenting significant hurdles to the affected entities' ability to endure, regenerate, or adapt. In response, representatives of the relevant authority usually declare a state of emergency, thereby asserting the right to employ all necessary means to counter, mitigate, or eradicate this threat.[7]

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[2] B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2007).

[3] For details, see K. Krause and M. C. Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies: Politics and Methods," *Mershon International Studies Review* 40, no. S2: 229-54, and J. Huysmans, "Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier," *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 2 (1998): 226-55.

[4] S. M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 211-39.

[5] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, and J. De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

[6] U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter, 1st ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

[7] M. G. Bartoszewicz, "Festung Europa: Securitization of Migration and Radicalization of European Societies," *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Studia Territorialia* 16, no. 2 (2016): 11-37.

Emergency measures, conversely, entail the suspension of normal regulatory frameworks (laws), permitting actions beyond the usual confines of political procedures, thereby circumventing existing checks, balances, and constraints imposed on power and its wielders. A classic example of emergency measures is the response to a state's invasion by an external aggressor, although similar mechanisms were observed during the "war on terror" (e.g., The Patriot Act), the 2014-15 migration crisis in Europe and most recently, from 2020-22, when the Sars-Cov2 virus was declared a pandemic. These emergency measures, including the declaration of a state of emergency, enactment of anti-terrorism laws granting extensive surveillance powers, deployment of military forces in civilian areas, or imposition of border controls and immigration restrictions, typically involve the allocation of additional resources, an expansion of executive powers, and the suspension of certain rights or freedoms or the implementation of emergency protocols to address perceived security risks. Nevertheless, it is essential to contemplate the meanings of the concepts of "existential threat" and "emergency measures" within the broader perspective of the horizontal approach to security. Not only does each of the five sectors encompass a plethora of distinct and varied threats, but also, due to the shift from "threat" to "risk," these threats need not even be tangible to serve as the basis for extensive actions. Thus, the amalgamation of broadening and riskification culminates in what Frank Furedi terms the sacralization of security.

In his book *How Fear Works: Culture of Fear in the Twenty-First Century*,[8] Furedi contends that the meaning of safety, as a side effect of security, has expanded to such a degree that it permeates nearly every aspect of social and political life. Put differently, security has evolved into a predominant societal value, acquiring a quasi-sacred status, with its moral authority often invoked to justify the implementation of various regulatory measures. Consider the readiness of Western citizens to relinquish their freedoms and embrace unprecedented security measures, such as lockdowns, which restrict movement and access to specific areas, buildings, or institutions, usually in response to immediate threats or emergency situations. In 2020, not only were buildings and institutions locked down, but entire cities and countries were also subject to stay-at-home orders. Demonstrating minimal opposition to the arbitrary imposition of these regulations, millions of individuals were prepared to forsake their way of life, their livelihoods, and surrender fundamental rights such as freedom of movement and assembly. Of particular note is the closure of schools and universities. Prior to 2020, educational institutions were never locked down, even during times of war. Suffice it to recall that, despite the atrocities of the brutal German occupation during World War II, entire clandestine educational networks persisted in Poland, with individuals risking their lives to attend these illicit classes.

Not only has the current situation drastically diverged from the past, but any critique of sweeping, preemptive safety measures, such as lockdowns, is frequently condemned as a threat to public safety itself. Consequently, engaging in debate regarding any issue categorized as a "threat," whether real, perceived, or potential, is regarded as a luxury that

[8] F. Furedi, *How Fear Works: Culture of Fear in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018).

society cannot afford. What Ole Wæver[9] termed securitization has now become a prevailing feature of public life. Everything is either dangerous or has the potential to be so. Since security has both a subjective and an all-encompassing quality to the point of encouraging a survivalist mode of behaviour, staying safe and surviving appears to have become the pivotal issue around which everything else evolves. According to Furedi, this descent into a form of survivalism – a mode of existence focused solely on survival – entails the failure by societies to establish future goals, fixating solely on the present. It necessitates broader structural remedies, often leading to an obsession with a particular form of security, to the detriment of all other dimensions of life. Moreover, survivalism strips fundamental moral values of their significance. This is crucial because security is always connected to the way society fears, with fear being mediated and regulated by moral norms. Presently, a fundamental disparity exists between our practiced primary value – security – and the moral values we nominally profess, such as freedom, justice, and courage.

SECURITY AS AN ONTOLOGICAL VALUE

As if the world were not obsessed enough with all the tangible and potential threats to security across all five sectors of human life, the "narrative turn" in the social sciences,[10] accompanied by the emergence of "ontological security," has brought normative threats to the forefront. The ontological theory of security (OST) has been proposed as a framework for comprehending societal behavior in the realms of security perception, threat identification, and community cohesion. Anthony Gidden defined ontological security as "sense of continuity and order in events."[11] To be ontologically secure, explained Giddens, is to have "answers to fundamental existential questions." The concept of ontological security has garnered attention because it elucidates how the impetus for certain behaviors can be traced to the imperative of maintaining or reconstructing positive identities anchored in consistent, self-reflective narratives about oneself and the communities with which one identifies, such as a nation.

In the opening paragraph of his 2008 "Essay on the Polish Soul," Ryszard Legutko writes:

> Poland, which I have known and lived in since birth, is a Poland of broken continuity. It was created from scratch, built consciously in opposition to everything it had been for centuries. Its modernity did not emerge gradually in the process of complex multi-dimensional historical changes that would transform social structures, customs, institutions, and human minds. The very essence of modern Poland is new as if it was created from a new embryo, unknown to previous generations and in previous centuries.[12]

[9] O. Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 46-86.
[10] I. F. Goodson and S. R. Gill, "The Narrative Turn in Social Research," *Counterpoints* 386 (2011): 17-33.
[11] A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (London: Polity Press, 1984).
[12] R. Legutko, *Esej o duszy polskiej* (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2008).

For Legutko, the point of rupture is the outbreak of the Second World War, while the lack of continuity was further perpetuated during the half-century of enforced communist rule. Not only did it affect national self-identity, but also the consciously rejected past annihilated the collective memories necessary for ontological security maintenance. He explains further:

> For seventy years, Poles have been almost exclusively an object, and only to a negligible extent, a subject of history. For seventy years, they have been referring not to what they are but what they are to become, accepting without reflection that achieving this future goal cannot succeed without shedding the burden of the past.[13]

This example from Poland is not unique. When Mona Sahlin, leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party from 2007 to 2011, announced that indigenous Swedes must be integrated into the new multicultural Sweden because the old Sweden will not return, she went straight for the jugular of ontological security.

Ontological security pertains to our sense of self, both as individuals and as members of larger societal groups. When this sense of self is unclear or unstable, it can engender feelings of insecurity. This type of uncertainty does not revolve around the physical threats implied by the traditional definition of existential threats; rather, it concerns unstable identity, confusion as to who we are and where we belong. The threats arising from the fear that our identity may not endure are not tangible; they are normative and reside in the realm of values. Viewed through the lens of ontological security, all the contentious debates about what it means to be French or British (or any other Western European nationality) or why "promoting our European way of life"[14] is one of the European Commission's strategic priorities, suddenly begin to coalesce. Ontological security prompts both history and culture to become security policy.[15]

For this reason, societies aim to establish and preserve a shared collective identity through institutionalized historical narratives and self-images; from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* to "Our Ancestors, the Gauls" and the Founding Fathers of the United States of America, these narratives inform both others and the community itself about its origins and identity. These narratives not only shape routine interactions with other actors but also create a platform for state influence at the political level. The significance of state-shaped historical memory for security is quite straightforward. In his prescient work *1984*, George Orwell illustrated that those who control the memory of the past wield genuine power over both the present and the future. Indeed, memory has become one of the most tangible means of exercising political influence in the contemporary world. Marek

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] European Commission, "Promoting Our European Way of Life. Protecting Our Citizens and Our Values," 2019, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life_en.

[15] M. G. Bartoszewicz, "Identity and Security: The Affective Ontology of Populism," in *Political Identification in Europe: Community in Crisis?*, ed. A. Machin, and N. Meidert (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021), 93-110.

Cichocki contends that mastery over memories facilitates effective control over public opinion, not only domestically but also on an international stage. [16] Consequently, from a security standpoint, what and how people collectively remember hold great significance. Simultaneously, historical narratives permeate discussions within the political sphere, not only influencing historical or symbolic politics but also actively shaping areas such as foreign policy. Thus, historical narratives serve as foundational elements of discursively constructed political reality and ontologically anchored security.

EPISTEMIC DIMENSION OF SECURITY

Let us contemplate the ramifications of transitioning from a tangible material danger to a potential ideological threat. The classic Weberian definition of the state asserts that it possesses a monopoly on violence. This signifies that citizens entrust the government with the exclusive authority to employ violence in exchange for safeguarding their lives and property. Ontological security expands the state's dominion to encompass a monopoly on controlling historical and cultural narratives. This progression aligns with the broader expansion of the state's functions that we currently witness. It entails a continuous endeavor to extend state control into new domains, with security serving as the primary currency for attaining this objective. Through the evolution from a warfare state to a welfare state, the system of managerial technocracy[17] has metamorphosed into what Helen Dale and Lorenzo Warby[18] identified as a social-imperial state, wherein the state's relationship with its territory is likened to colonization. This form of *inward* imperialism accepts territorial boundaries but not social ones, according to Dale and Warby.

To comprehensively grasp this shift, we must employ Jonathan Haidt's notion of "epistemic institutions":[19] encompassing the media – comprising traditional print and broadcast outlets as well as the burgeoning online and social media platforms – museums, and entertainment sectors. These industries wield considerable influence in shaping our beliefs and viewpoints, frequently leveraging emotional messaging for reinforcement. The outcome can be delineated as "epistemic tyranny," denoting the discursive dominance of emotionally validated knowledge. This marks the point at which ontology yields to epistemology in the realm of security.

In an attempt to delve deeper into this "epistemic turn," let us examine an educational system where two interrelated causal variables hold significance for epistemic security: oligarchization and homogenization. Despite the vociferous outcry from professional commentators lamenting "democratic backsliding" and other transgressions against the liberal rules-based order, the prevailing trend of concern today is oligarchization, observed worldwide across various spheres: social, political, business, entertainment, and cultural. This trend is pervasive and seemingly endless. For instance, four decades ago, there were

[16] M. Cichocki, *Władza i pamięć* (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2005).
[17] J. Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World* (Borough: Lume Books, 2021).
[18] H. Dale and L. Warby, "The Social-Imperial State," https://www.notonyourteam.co.uk/p/the-social-imperial-state.
[19] J. Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind, How to Become Intellectually Antifragile, and How to Lose Anger by Studying Morality," The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts (#644), https://tim.blog/2022/12/27/jonathan-haidt-transcript/.

14,469 commercial banks in the United States. According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, that figure dwindled to 4,135 by the end of last year.[20] A similar pattern emerges in the media landscape. The process of media ownership concentration, also known as media consolidation or convergence, refers to the phenomenon wherein fewer individuals or entities exert control over expanding portions of the mass media. Recent research indicates an escalating trend toward consolidation, with numerous media sectors already highly concentrated and dominated by a handful of entities.[21] An exemplification of this concentration of power lies in the expansive infotainment conglomerates and their sway over the content and structure of transmitted information. Helen Johnson notes that in 1983 there were 50 leading media corporations in the United States, whereas today that number has dwindled to five.[22] These conglomerates command approximately 90 percent of the American media landscape, spanning newspapers, magazines, book publishers, movie studios, and radio and television stations.

As another example, let us consider the realm of education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2019-2020 academic year, there were 3,982 post-secondary institutions conferring academic degrees in the United States. However, when factoring in demographic trends and contemplating whether such a vast number of institutions will remain necessary amidst the ongoing depopulocalypse,[23] a different perspective emerges. This trend converges with the profound crisis of meritocracy spurred by proponents of Critical Theory[24] and the pervasive culture of uncritical and unconditional "following the science,"[25] which gained prominence in 2020-21 and resulted in a plummeting trust in institutions of higher education,[26] accompanied by a general depreciation of the scientific profession.

The school lockdowns introduced as a measure to combat COVID-19 elevated remote teaching to the epitome of modern education, and the generation experiencing virtual education en masse was maned Zoomers,[27] in reference to the popular videoconferencing

[20] Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (bd), BankFind Suite: Find Annual Historical Bank Data, https://banks.data.fdic.gov/explore/historical?displayFields=STNAME%2CTOTAL%2CBRANCHES%2CNew_Char&selectedEndDate=2022&selectedReport=CBS&selectedStartDate=1934&selectedStates=0&sortField=YEAR&sortOrder=desc.

[21] For details, see Y. V. Vargas, "Media Consolidation," in *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*, ed. M. Kosut (London: Sage, 2012), 206-8.

[22] H. Johnson, "The unprecedented consolidation of the modern media industry has severe consequences," 2021, https://bit.ly/3GSfWyB.

[23] J. Carter, *Depopulocalypse*, 2023, https://barsoom.substack.com/p/depopulocalypse.

[24] D. Rozwadowski, *Marksizm kulturowy. 50 lat walki z cywilizacją Zachodu* (Warsaw: Prohibita, 2018).

[25] Science is not something that is believed in or followed blindly. As Marian Mazur reminds us, the essence of science is and has always been the discovery of new truths, and a scientist is one who seeks answers to questions that have not been answered yet, using methods that enable proving the answer. Ideas that do not withstand this test are rejected after negative verification because science – unlike religion – does not have dogmas. For elaboration of this thesis, see M. Mazur, *Historia naturalna polskiego naukowca* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970). Moreover, as Pawełczyńska observes, "science cannot be treated as an arbitrator in all matters important to humans" because its possibilities are limited. A. Pawełczyńska, *Głowy hydry: o przewrotności współczesnego zła* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Test, 2004), 32.

[26] A. Donadel, "Public confidence in higher education plummets by 20% in 8 years," University Business, 2023, https://universitybusiness.com/public-confidence-in-higher-education-plummets-by-20-in-8-years/.

[27] J. Zeng and C. Abidin, "'#OkBoomer, Time to Meet the Zoomers': Studying the Memefication of Intergenerational Politics on TikTok," *Information, Communication & Society* 24, no. 16 (2021): 2459-81.

platform Zoom. Given the exorbitant and ever-escalating tuition fees of American universities, more and more individuals are questioning the rationale behind accruing lifelong debt for a degree in gender studies. Furthermore, why opt for a local university when equivalent education, with a diploma from the most prestigious institutions, is available at the same price through online programs? Consequently, I envision the future of American education as an oligopoly comprising approximately 50 educational institutions offering a standardized array of degrees via digital platforms. While disparities may exist between America and Europe, I do not anticipate their being substantial enough to alter the trajectory of the ongoing transformation.

The oligarchization of education is of paramount significance as a vehicle for epistemic security. The consolidation of a select few universities into an oligopoly engenders homogenization and uniformity, foreshadowing a future wherein fewer institutions offer increasingly standardized educational programs. Uniform curricula, delivered by a handful of credentialed educational caste members, will provide fragmentary applied knowledge – a form of technocracy-driven education prioritized for immediate labor-market relevance. Such systems, rooted in partial knowledge, can serve as conduits for constructing social ideology, inadvertently facilitating indoctrination and manipulation. Consequently, societies become disempowered and more amenable to controlled governance – a thought elaborated by Pawełczyńska.[28] Within such an epistemic universe, the notion of "unity in diversity" loses its substantive meaning, relegating genuine diversity of thought to the sidelines while emphasizing superficial distinctions such as preferred pronouns or hair color.

The repercussions of this educational homogenization are profound. Any generation educated in this manner becomes susceptible to manipulation, lacking the ability to critically assess the mechanisms governing social, economic, and political life. Their education furnishes them with a shallow set of dogmas cloaked in newspeak, obscuring once-clear concepts and contexts. Such an educational paradigm serves to constrain individual autonomy and groom young minds for uncritical obedience, fostering compliant social cohorts while stifling individual autonomy. This phenomenon was meticulously examined by Anna Pawełczyńska, a Polish sociologist who personally endured totalitarianism – first as a prisoner in a German concentration camp and later for decades under a communist regime.

In our reflections on the evolution of security, a pertinent question arises concerning the true essence of modern university education, transcending the mere utilitarian pursuit of a "degree." Western universities are swiftly metamorphosing into glorified vocational institutions or, worse yet, factories churning out compliant apparatchiks, prompting us to ponder their value to the state. This value lies in control, acquired through the customary currency of security. In the information age, an ever-expanding state is not satisfied with the monopoly on violence but endeavors to establish also a monopoly on knowledge. Consider why French parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, barring the Rassemblement National, are drafting legislation to outlaw "climate skepticism" across the entire "audio-visual and digital landscape," encompassing traditional media and

[28] Pawełczyńska, *Głowy hydry*, 37.

the Internet.[29] This constitutes merely the latest episode in the ongoing battle against disinformation (which has supplanted the "war on terror"). Additionally, contemplate hate speech laws, thinly veiled in their aspirations for censorship,[30] such as Ireland's criminal justice Bill 2022 concerning "incitement to violence or hatred and hate offences," representing an authoritarian response to civic discontent regarding migration policy, which culminated in the Dublin riots following an assault on a five-year-old girl by a migrant. Moreover, the increasingly active involvement of "fact-checking" organizations in scrutinizing and clarifying falsehoods and half-truths in public discourse raises concerns. This is exacerbated by the fact that such endeavors are often entrusted to individuals who subscribe to beliefs such as the notion that men can become pregnant.

The assumption that the state is inherently motivated to provide its citizens with the highest-quality education is one that, I would argue, is fundamentally flawed. Many contend that governments are interested in and uniquely capable of securing quality education and that especially conservative governments can and should "do something about it." The notion that the state desires well-informed, critical, and reflective citizens is pervasive – but it is a fallacy. The reality is that the modern state does not seek to cultivate highly educated citizens. Such individuals pose challenges. They ask probing questions, harbor expectations, and espouse ideas that may run counter to prevailing policy agendas, such as Build Back Better, Net Zero, or any other ideology du jour. In contrast, stupid citizens are easily governed, ignorant citizens are readily controlled. The university cartel, masquerading as educational institutions but functioning more as factories churning out a more or less competent labor force,[31] comprising compliant drones who possess only carefully curated knowledge is not a systemic failure but rather a wet dream of the modern state. Unsurprisingly, states endeavor to peddle this vision to their populace, promising them a comforting realm of epistemic security, something that we can call the *freedom from doubt*.

FREEDOM FROM DOUBT: THE RISKS OF THE MONOPOLY ON KNOWLEDGE

Traditionally, the concepts of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" are closely associated with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, particularly in the context of his famous 1941 State of the Union Address. The idea that everyone should have access to the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and shelter was combined with the absence of fear caused by aggression, conflict, or repression, both at the national and at the international levels. Consequently, "freedom from want" and "freedom from

[29] J. Waintraub, "'Climatoscepticisme': les médias bientôt expurgés du débat?" *Le Figaro*, 2023, https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/climatoscepticisme-la-liberte-de-la-presse-sous-condition-climatique-20230921.

[30] M. G. Bartoszewicz, "Politically Incorrect or Necessary? Political Underpinnings and Ramifications of Religiously Motivated Hate Speech," in *Libertad de expresión y discurso de odio por motivos religiosos* (Zaragoza: Licregdi, 2019), 221-35.

[31] The reasons for which it tends to be less and less competent are elaborated by H. Robertson, "Complex systems won't survive the competence crisis," *Palladium Magazine*, https://www.palladiummag.com/2023/06/01/complex-systems-wont-survive-the-competence-crisis/, and G. Baltar, "Why Is the West So Weak (and Russia So Strong)? The Role of Human Capital and Western Education," 2023, https://gaiusbaltar.substack.com/p/why-is-the-west-so-weak-and-russia.

fear" became fundamental components of the global human-rights framework and the broader discourse on human security. However, as these freedoms were attained in the liberal West, prompting Francis Fukuyama to announce the end of history,[32] the security goalposts were moved along the path outlined in this paper: from material to intangible, from actual to potential, from ontological to epistemic.

Since epistemic security can only be achieved via a monopoly on knowledge, the epistemic institutions, with universities in the vanguard, will have to assault two modern dogmas: the notion of progress and the concept of relativism. Our current paradigm places great emphasis on progress, denoting the continual advancement beyond existing theoretical foundations to unearth novel forms of knowledge. This development of cumulative knowledge within a self-correcting framework hinges on the perpetual juxtaposition of dominant perspectives with alternative viewpoints. It is through this dialectical process that knowledge evolves, existing theories are scrutinized, expanded upon, or supplanted, and new paradigms capable of elucidating hitherto uncharted facts are forged. The transition into new paradigms necessitates the proposition of theories that challenge the prevailing orthodoxy, often deemed false within the established paradigm's assumptions. In essence, genuine progress, especially in matters of great import, thrives on the corrective influence of a pluralistic and multifaceted array of sometimes contradictory perspectives. In contemporary parlance, this rich tapestry of diverse perspectives is often labelled as "disinformation," especially if they happen to challenge the scientific consensus (as was the case during the recent pandemic, suffice it to mention the shoddy peer review practices of legacy journals and the influence of politics in the editorial practices of those journals).

Disruptive and radical paradigm shifts, the driving force behind progress, necessitate a divergence from established consensus. Achieving qualitative progress, entailing radical shifts that unlock new realms of facts and foundations for theory and practice, hinges on the proposition of theories and factual assertions that challenge prevailing viewpoints and worldviews. These are positions that would be deemed false when viewed through the lens of established paradigms, not in the epistemic sense but in the context of the conventional wisdom favored by the "fact-checkers." In this pursuit, even incremental progress requires the participation of "wrong-thinking" outsiders who dare to question the implicit assumptions woven into dominant perspectives, narratives, and modes of interpretation. The act of challenging these conventions has historically been integral to the advancement of knowledge. Increasingly, this is not possible under the new monopoly-on-knowledge epistemic security paradigm, which is hostile to conventionally understood progress.

The pursuit of epistemic security demands a structured framework that provides us with definitive, authoritative responses, leaving no room for diversity or the existence of relative truths. As William M. Briggs articulated, the obvious consequence of embracing an epistemic security model is that "If there is Official Disinformation there must necessarily exist Official Truths, and agencies charged with producing, promoting, and

[32] F. Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (Summer 1989): 3-18.

policing them."[33] This monopoly on knowledge perpetuates established paradigms in lieu of genuine exploration, research, and discovery.

What we call "cancel culture" and "deplatforming" are merely means to this end. Centralized and digitalized epistemic industries offer effective tools for an enforced consensus throughout every sphere of human activity. In the age of centralized and digitized epistemic industries, a conspiracy of government, large corporations, universities, and the media, powerful tools facilitate the imposition of consensus across all facets of human endeavor. From Google to Wikipedia to ChatGPT, these tools often replicate prevailing viewpoints in every conceivable field and on all matters. The monopoly on knowledge acts as an amplifier for the most influential perspectives, theories, and narratives. Consequently, it permits a select set of ideologies, knowledge traditions, or theoretical frameworks to potentially achieve a form of comprehensive dominance over the production of knowledge. Compounding this epistemic totalitarianism is the automated suppression of politically incorrect ideas and curtailment of "undesirable" content, which operates alongside extensive surveillance and social credit analogues. Collectively, these developments transport us into a dystopian terrain so surreal that no conspiracy theory (another distinct threat in the era of epistemic security) could adequately capture its reality.

[33] W. M. Briggs, "Meet the Experts Defining Official Disinformation and Official Truths," 2023, https://wmbriggs.substack.com/p/meet-the-experts-defining-official?utm_source=%2Fsearch%2Fofficial%2520truths&utm_medium=reader2.

Clifford A. Bates Jr.

OAKESHOTT'S CRITIQUE OF RATIONALISM IN POLITICS

I. INTRODUCTION

Michael Oakeshott's critique of rationalism in politics is not only a significant commentary on the pitfalls of modernist approaches to governance but also as a defense of the classical virtue of prudence. This concept, central to the political thought of thinkers such as Cicero and Aristotle, underscores a political philosophy that values practical wisdom over abstract reasoning. Oakeshott's opposition to rationalism is deeply rooted in a respect for tradition, historical experience, and the art of making wise political decisions based on specific contexts rather than on theoretical ideals. In this sense, his work presents an intellectual kinship with the Aristotelian and Ciceronian view that politics is not a science governed by immutable laws but a practical activity that demands prudence – the ability to navigate the uncertainties and intricacies of human society through experience, virtue, and sound judgment.[1]

At the core of Oakeshott's critique is his concern that modern rationalist political approaches often reduce governance to technical procedures and ideological frameworks. Rationalism, as he defines it, seeks to apply universal principles or abstract rules to political problems, assuming that society can be reshaped or improved by sheer intellectual design. According to Oakeshott, this mindset overlooks political life's inherent complexity and unpredictability, which theoretical models or rigid plans cannot fully capture. In Oakeshott's view, the essence of politics is not in its conformity to predefined principles but in the ability to make wise, context-sensitive judgments. In this practical dimension of politics, Oakeshott's ideas resonate with classical notions of prudence.

For classical political theorists such as Aristotle, prudence – or φρόνησις – is the practical wisdom necessary to make sound judgments in the unpredictable realm of human affairs. Aristotle understood that politics was concerned with the particular and contingent, meaning that no fixed rules or universal ideals could dictate the correct course of action in every situation. Instead, political leaders and citizens alike must rely on prudence to navigate the ever-shifting circumstances of public life, applying general principles in ways that are appropriate to specific contexts. Prudence, for Aristotle, was

[1] Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, new and expanded ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991); *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Skepticism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); "On Misunderstanding Human Conduct: A Reply to My Critics," *Political Theory* 4, no. 3 (August 1976): 353-67.

not merely a technical skill but a moral virtue, requiring both intellectual understanding and an ethical commitment to the common good.

Cicero, similarly, placed prudence at the center of his political philosophy, particularly in his work *De Officiis* (*On Duties*). For Cicero, political leadership was an inherently practical art that required a deep understanding of tradition, custom, and the moral obligations of leadership. Like Aristotle, Cicero rejected the idea that rigid ideological frameworks or abstract theories could govern politics. Instead, he argued that political decisions had to be made with prudence, taking into account the unique circumstances of each situation and guided by the wisdom accumulated through experience. Cicero saw prudence as the highest political virtue, enabling leaders to balance competing considerations – such as justice, expediency, and moral duty – in their decision-making.

Oakeshott's defense of tradition in politics is closely aligned with this classical conception of prudence. He argues that the knowledge required for sound political judgment is not theoretical or abstract but practical and rooted in a particular community's lived experiences and traditions. Traditions, in Oakeshott's view, embody the collective wisdom of generations, serving as a guide for political action that is more reliable than the rationalist's abstract blueprints. Political wisdom, for Oakeshott, emerges from participation in a society's ongoing practices and customs rather than from detached intellectual speculation. This focus on tradition as a repository of practical wisdom underscores Oakeshott's alignment with the classical political thinkers who valued prudence as the key to effective governance.

Furthermore, Oakeshott's critique of rationalism can be seen as a defense of the *limitations* of human reason in political life. In Oakeshott's view, rationalists exhibit a dangerous overconfidence in the power of human reason to control and direct complex social processes. They assume that political problems can be solved by applying universal principles without regard to the particularities of time, place, and circumstance. This rationalist hubris, Oakeshott argues, leads to rigid and authoritarian forms of governance as political leaders seek to impose their abstract designs on a society that resists such simplification. In contrast, the classical emphasis on prudence recognizes the limits of human reason and the need for practical wisdom in navigating the unpredictable and contingent nature of political life.

In this essay, I will explore how Oakeshott's critique of rationalism in politics functions as a defense of the classical virtue of prudence, as understood by such thinkers as Aristotle and Cicero. I will argue that Oakeshott's rejection of rationalist approaches to political order is grounded in a deeper appreciation for the complexities of political life and the need for practical wisdom in decision-making. In doing so, I will also contrast Oakeshott's defense of prudence with the rationalist's faith in abstract reasoning and demonstrate how Oakeshott's philosophy offers a more humane and realistic approach to political governance.

II. THE CLASSICAL CONCEPT OF PRUDENCE: CICERO AND ARISTOTLE

The classical concept of prudence – or φρόνησις as Aristotle terms it – occupies a central place in Greek and Roman political thought. It is a crucial virtue essential to making sound judgments in matters of human action. Aristotle, the principal philosopher articulating this

idea, defines prudence as practical wisdom, distinguishing it from theoretical wisdom. While σοφίᾶ deals with universal truths and abstract principles, prudence is concerned explicitly with everyday life's particular and contingent realities. It is the ability to discern the right course of action in specific situations, considering the complexities, uncertainties, and nuances that characterize human experience.

For Aristotle, prudence is especially critical in politics. Unlike other fields that may rely more heavily on fixed principles or theoretical models, politics is inherently contextual and demands constant decision-making in real time. In Aristotle's view, politics is not about applying static abstract ideals but about navigating concrete, often imperfect realities. Therefore, political leaders must be able to apply general principles to particular cases in ways that accommodate changing circumstances. These leaders must recognize that the nature of politics is fluid, requiring an adaptive form of reasoning that balances moral and practical considerations to serve the common good.

Central to Aristotle's understanding of prudence is the recognition that intellectual understanding alone is insufficient for sound political judgment. Prudence is not merely a technical skill but a moral virtue that requires ethical discernment. This combination of intellectual and moral capacities enables political actors to align their decisions with the common good rather than pursuing short-term expediency or narrow self-interest. To act prudently, a political leader must understand the theoretical aspects of justice, equity, and the law and have the practical wisdom to know when and how to apply these principles to best serve society under the circumstances.

Prudence, for Aristotle, is a virtue acquired through experience and cultivated over time. It cannot be reduced to a set of rules or formulaic prescriptions. A political leader must accumulate wisdom through community engagement, learning from successes and failures, and understanding how tradition, culture, and particular circumstances shape human behavior. This emphasis on experience makes prudence deeply contextual and resistant to the universalizing tendencies of rationalist thought, which often seeks to apply the same principles uniformly regardless of local customs, historical context, or specific needs.

In this way, Aristotle's conception of prudence is adaptive and sensitive to the diversity of human affairs. He argues that political decision-making requires a sensitivity to timing and appropriateness, what he calls καῖρος, the opportune moment to act. A prudent leader must recognize when a particular course of action is necessary or when it is better to delay or refrain from acting. Such decisions can only be made by a leader attuned to the political landscape and who understands that rigid adherence to ideology or theory can often lead to disastrous consequences when applied without regard for the situation.

Cicero, writing from a Roman perspective but drawing on Greek influences, similarly views prudence as the highest political virtue. In his work *De Officiis*, Cicero emphasizes the importance of balancing justice, expediency, and moral duty in political decision-making. He, like Aristotle, understands that politics is not a domain in which abstract rules can be applied indiscriminately; instead, each decision must be shaped by the particular circumstances and needs of the moment. Cicero stresses that prudence involves a keen awareness of context – the ability to evaluate the particulars of a situation and make decisions based on what is most appropriate for the common good at that time.

For Cicero, exercising prudence in politics requires a harmonious balance between different virtues. Justice, for instance, must always guide political decisions, but justice alone is insufficient. A leader must also consider the expediency of a decision – whether it is practical, timely, and beneficial to the community – and how it aligns with moral duty. In this sense, prudence is a kind of meta-virtue that orchestrates the application of other virtues in political life. It involves the capacity to balance competing moral and practical demands, weighing the potential consequences of different courses of action and determining which path best serves the common good.

Cicero, like Aristotle, places great emphasis on the role of tradition and experience in cultivating prudence. He argues that political leaders must draw on the accumulated wisdom of their predecessors, learning from historical examples and the customs of their community. In this sense, Prudence is not a solitary virtue that can be exercised in isolation; it is deeply rooted in political decisions' communal and historical context. By looking to the past, Cicero believes leaders can make better-informed decisions in the present, avoiding the mistakes of those who came before them while building on their successes.

Moreover, Cicero emphasizes the importance of understanding human nature in political leadership. Prudence requires a deep awareness of the motivations, desires, and limitations of the people whom a leader governs. Political decisions can only be made in the abstract concerning the realities of human behavior and the complexities of social life. Like Aristotle, Cicero rejects the rationalist idea that political problems can be solved purely through intellectual or theoretical means. Instead, leaders must have a practical understanding of how individuals and communities respond to different situations, recognizing that human nature is variable and often unpredictable.

Cicero's conception of prudence also involves a strong moral dimension. He insists that political leaders must be guided by ethical integrity, using their power not for personal gain but for the benefit of the community. Prudence, in this sense, requires constant vigilance against corruption and self-interest. A leader who acts prudently must always have the common good in mind, ensuring their decisions are practical and ethically sound. This is a crucial point where Cicero's notion of prudence converges with Aristotle's, both thinkers agreeing that political leadership demands an alignment between moral virtue and practical wisdom.

The moral aspect of prudence in Cicero's thought also extends to the leader's responsibility for the future. Prudence involves addressing the community's immediate needs and considering the long-term consequences of political decisions. Leaders must think beyond the present moment, weighing how their actions will affect future generations. This forward-looking aspect of prudence makes it a distinctly political virtue, as it requires the leader to balance short-term expediency with long-term stability and justice.

Both Aristotle and Cicero stress that prudence is an art of negotiation and compromise rather than applying inflexible laws. In their view, the political world is full of competing interests and conflicting demands, and a prudent leader must have the skill to navigate these tensions without succumbing to dogmatism or rigid ideological thinking. The ability to find a middle path between extremes, to mediate disputes, and to foster consensus is a hallmark of the prudent leader in classical political thought.

In contrast to the rationalist approaches that seek to impose top-down solutions or abstract ideals onto political reality, the classical notion of prudence acknowledges the limitations of human knowledge and the unpredictability of political life. Aristotle and Cicero understand that political leaders must be adaptable and willing to revise their strategies in response to changing circumstances. This flexibility, however, implies not a lack of principles but rather a deep commitment to aligning those principles with the community's particular needs in a given moment.

In summary, prudence in the classical tradition is an essential virtue for political leaders, enabling them to navigate political life's complex and contingent nature. It is a form of practical wisdom that balances intellectual understanding with moral virtue, allowing leaders to make sound judgments that serve the common good. Aristotle and Cicero emphasize the importance of experience, tradition, and an understanding of human nature in cultivating prudence, rejecting the idea that abstract theories or rigid rules can govern politics. Through prudence, leaders can adapt their decisions to the realities of the political world, balancing justice, expediency, and moral duty in their pursuit of the common good.

III. OAKESHOTT'S DEFENSE OF PRUDENCE AGAINST RATIONALISM

Michael Oakeshott's critique of rationalism in politics is, at its core, a defense of the classical understanding of prudence, particularly as articulated by such thinkers as Aristotle and Cicero. For Oakeshott, rationalism represents an overconfidence in the ability of abstract principles or technical knowledge to solve political problems. In his view, rationalists believe that political order can be designed from the top down, using reason and scientific methods to construct systems of governance that are detached from society's historical and practical realities. According to Oakeshott, this approach overlooks the complexity and unpredictability of human life, which cannot be reduced to fixed formulas or ideological schemes.

At the heart of Oakeshott's critique is the rationalist assumption that political problems can be approached like technical or scientific problems. Rationalists often assume that human societies function according to universal principles that can be discovered through reason and applied uniformly, regardless of context. For example, rationalist political ideologies – whether liberal, socialist, or technocratic – typically propose that society can be improved or perfected through the application of theoretical knowledge rather than through an understanding of the lived experiences and traditions that shape human communities. In Oakeshott's view, rationalists are enamored with the idea that political order can be engineered rather than that it is something that emerges organically.

In stark contrast, Oakeshott argues that political life is too complex and contingent to be governed by rationalist schemes. He contends that human societies are not like machines, where the proper functioning of the whole can be ensured by applying technical knowledge. Politics, for Oakeshott, is an art rather than a science. It involves navigating the intricate web of relationships, customs, and traditions that have developed over time. Like Aristotle and Cicero, Oakeshott believes that political decision-making requires practical wisdom, a knowledge rooted in experience and tradition rather than in abstract theory. This practical wisdom, prudence, is essential for making sound political judgments in a constantly changing world of uncertainty.

Oakeshott distinguishes between two forms of knowledge: practical knowledge and technical knowledge. According to Oakeshott, practical knowledge cannot be codified or reduced to a set of rules. It is learned through participation in the traditions and practices of a particular community rather than through formal education or the study of theory. This kind of knowledge is passed down through generations, embedded in the customs, habits, and institutions that make up the fabric of a society. Participating in these practices teaches individuals how to act prudently, adapting their actions to their specific circumstances.

In contrast, technical knowledge is what rationalists rely on – abstract, rule-based knowledge that can be taught and applied mechanically. While technical knowledge has its place in specific fields, Oakeshott argues that it is inadequate for the domain of politics. Political life is too fluid and uncertain to be governed by fixed rules or principles. Instead, political actors must possess the practical wisdom to understand when and how to apply general principles to particular situations, always with an awareness of the specific context in which they are acting. This, for Oakeshott, is the essence of prudence.

Oakeshott's defense of tradition is central to his critique of rationalism. He argues that the wisdom necessary for sound political judgment is found not in abstract theories or ideological blueprints but in the traditions passed down through generations. These traditions represent a community's accumulated experience and knowledge, serving as a guide for action that is more reliable than the theories of rationalist thinkers. Importantly, for Oakeshott, tradition is not a static or unchanging set of rules. Instead, it is a living process of adaptation and adjustment through which a community navigates the uncertainties of political life.

In this sense, Oakeshott's view of tradition is dynamic and flexible rather than rigid or dogmatic. He recognizes that traditions must evolve in response to changing circumstances. Still, he insists this evolution should be gradual and organic rather than imposed from above through rationalist designs. In Oakeshott's view, political order cannot be imposed from the top down; it must grow from a community's shared experiences and practices. Political leaders must be sensitive to the historical continuity of their society, understanding that the traditions and customs that have developed over time are the product of a complex interplay of factors that cannot be easily replicated or replaced by abstract theories.

Oakeshott's philosophy can be understood as profoundly conservative, but it does not defend specific institutions or policies. Instead, it is conservative in its respect for the limits of human reason and its recognition of the importance of prudence in political decision-making. Like the classical theorists, Oakeshott recognizes that political order is fragile and cannot be constructed through reason alone. Political leaders must be aware of the limitations of their knowledge and the dangers of attempting to impose rationalist schemes on a society that resists such simplification.

For Oakeshott, one of the critical dangers of rationalism is that it leads to a misunderstanding of politics. Rationalists often treat politics as a problem-solving exercise in which the right solutions can be found by applying reason and technical expertise. This view reduces politics to a matter of administration, neglecting political life's deeper moral and ethical dimensions. In Oakeshott's view, politics is not simply about managing resources or implementing policies; it is about the art of judgment and making wise decisions in the face of uncertainty and complexity.

Rationalism strips it of its moral and ethical significance by reducing politics to a technical exercise. Like Aristotle and Cicero, Oakeshott believes that politics is about more than efficiency or effectiveness. It is about creating the conditions in which individuals can live virtuous lives and pursue the common good. This requires political leaders with technical knowledge, moral character, and practical wisdom to make sound judgments. This is why Oakeshott rejects rationalism and defends a more humane and traditional approach to politics.

Oakeshott's skepticism toward rationalism is also tied to his view of human nature. He believes that human beings are not the rational, self-interested actors that rationalist theories often assume them to be. Instead, people are shaped by their cultural and historical context, by the traditions and practices of the communities in which they live. Therefore, political leaders must understand the human condition that goes beyond abstract theories of human behavior. They must be attuned to their people's particular needs and desires rather than attempting to mold them to fit a preconceived political design.

For Oakeshott, recognizing human limitation is crucial to a prudent political approach. Human beings are fallible, and political life is fraught with uncertainty. No political system, however well-designed, can eliminate the contingencies of life or predict the future with certainty. Political leaders, therefore, must be prepared to navigate the unexpected and adjust their actions in response to changing circumstances. This requires humility, which is often lacking in rationalist approaches to politics and tends to assume that all political problems have solutions if only the correct principles or policies are applied.

The contrast between Oakeshott's approach and rationalist thinkers is particularly evident in his discussion of political order. While rationalists seek to impose order through the design of systems and institutions, Oakeshott argues that political order emerges naturally from the practices and traditions of a society. Political order cannot be engineered or planned; it is the product of historical development and the result of countless minor adjustments made over time in response to specific circumstances.

Oakeshott's critique of rationalism also extends to how it treats political principles. For rationalists, principles are often seen as universal truths that can be applied uniformly across different societies and historical periods. On the other hand, Oakeshott believes that political principles must be understood in the context of the traditions and customs of a particular culture. Political principles are not timeless truths but guides for action that must be interpreted and applied in ways that are appropriate to the specific circumstances in which they arise.

In defending this view, Oakeshott draws on the classical conception of prudence, emphasizing the need for flexibility and adaptability in political decision-making. Prudence, for Oakeshott, is the ability to balance general principles with the particular needs of a given situation. It requires political leaders to be responsive to the context in which they act rather than to rigidly adhere to abstract ideals. This, Oakeshott argues, is the only way to navigate the complexities and uncertainties of political life.

Ultimately, Oakeshott's critique of rationalism is a defense of a more traditional and prudent approach to politics that values the wisdom of experience over the theoretical abstractions of rationalist thought. Like Aristotle and Cicero, Oakeshott believes that political judgment is an art, not a science, and that it requires the practical wisdom that comes from engagement with the traditions and practices of a community. In this sense,

Oakeshott's philosophy is a powerful reaffirmation of the classical virtues of prudence and humility in the face of the complexity of human life.

IV. NOMOCRATIC VS. TELEOCRATIC ORDERS: PRUDENCE IN PRACTICE

In *On Human Conduct*, Michael Oakeshott distinguishes between nomocratic and teleocratic orders, illustrating his broader defense of prudence in political life. A nomocratic order governs the state by laws that provide a framework for individual action rather than for specific ends the state seeks to achieve. The emphasis here is on the rule of law, where the role of the government is to maintain a system of rules that allow individuals to pursue their purposes and make their judgments. Oakeshott's concept of a nomocratic order reflects a deep respect for the complexity and uncertainty of political life, recognizing that politics should not be about achieving predefined goals but about creating a stable legal framework within which freedom and responsibility can flourish.

In a nomocratic order, the state does not impose a vision of the good life on society. Instead, it provides the institutional conditions for individuals to act according to their judgments. This notion is closely aligned with the classical understanding of politics, particularly as articulated by Aristotle and Cicero. For these classical thinkers, politics is not about imposing an ideological blueprint on society but about creating the conditions in which individuals can exercise their prudence to pursue their individual and collective good. It is through the careful maintenance of a legal framework – one that is flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of human life – that political order emerges. In this system, laws are designed not to achieve specific outcomes but to allow for the organic development of society as individuals pursue their various ends.

Aristotle and Cicero understood politics as the art of judgment, where the role of political leaders is not to define or dictate society's goals but to ensure that the conditions for sound judgment and prudent action are maintained. For Aristotle, this meant creating a legal system that allowed citizens to live virtuously, free from coercion, and capable of making wise decisions. Cicero, too, stressed that political leadership should focus on upholding the rule of law rather than achieving specific political goals. Both thinkers warned against the dangers of rulers imposing their visions of the good life on society, as doing so would stifle the ability of individuals to make their own judgments and lead to a form of political paternalism.

Oakeshott's preference for a nomocratic order is rooted in a similar understanding of human freedom and the limitations of human knowledge. He argues that the complexities of political life are too significant to be directed toward specific ends. Political leaders cannot foresee or control the many factors that shape society, and any attempt to do so risks undermining the freedom and autonomy that politics should protect. In a nomocratic order, individuals are free to pursue their purposes within a system of rules that ensure fairness and legal equality. This allows for a diversity of goals and ambitions, which is a more realistic reflection of the pluralistic nature of human societies.

In contrast, Oakeshott associates a teleocratic order with rationalist politics. A teleocratic order is one in which the state is directed toward pursuing specific goals, whether social justice, economic equality, or national greatness. In this kind of system, political leaders are seen no longer as guardians of the rule of law but as managers or

engineers tasked with designing and implementing policies that will achieve these desired ends. The focus shifts from maintaining a legal framework to achieving particular social, economic, or moral outcomes. This shift, according to Oakeshott, is fundamentally at odds with the classical conception of prudence because it subordinates individual judgment to the goals of the collective and replaces practical wisdom with technical expertise.

The rationalist mentality behind teleocratic orders assumes society can be reshaped by applying reason and technical knowledge. Political leaders in a teleocratic order see themselves as having the expertise to solve social problems and lead society toward a better future. Oakeshott is deeply skeptical of this approach, arguing that it reflects an overconfidence in the power of human reason to control and direct social processes. Rationalist politics tends to view political problems as technical challenges that can be overcome by correctly applying principles, models, or strategies. This technocratic mindset is at odds with the recognition, central to the classical tradition, that political life is inherently contingent, unpredictable, and shaped by countless factors beyond the control of any central authority.

In a teleocratic order, political leadership is less about making wise judgments in the face of uncertainty and more about achieving preordained goals. This approach to governance, Oakeshott argues, is dangerous because it elevates specific ideological goals above the actual needs and desires of individuals. Rather than allowing individuals to pursue their purposes, the teleocratic state seeks to mold society according to its vision of the good. The result is a paternalistic or even authoritarian form of governance, where political leaders assume they know what is best for the people and use the machinery of the state to impose their vision.

Oakeshott warns against the hubris of rationalist politics, arguing that attempts to impose rigid rules or ideological blueprints on the inherently contingent realm of human action are bound to fail. Like Aristotle and Cicero, he believes that prudence – the ability to make sound judgments in the face of uncertainty – is the key to successful political leadership. Prudence requires a recognition of the limits of human knowledge and respect for the complexity of social life. It involves adapting to changing circumstances and making decisions based on practical wisdom rather than abstract theories or predefined goals.

A fundamental danger of teleocratic orders, for Oakeshott, is that they tend to become overly rigid and inflexible. Because the state is directed toward achieving specific ends, it often becomes resistant to change or unresponsive to the needs of individuals. In a teleocratic system, pursuing social goals can narrow options and stifle individual freedom, as all political activity focuses on reaching the desired outcome. This can result in a form of bureaucratic governance that prioritizes efficiency and control over the richness and diversity of human life.

In contrast, a nomocratic order provides the flexibility needed to accommodate the pluralism of human societies. Because the state is not directed toward specific goals, it can remain responsive to individuals' changing needs and desires. The rule of law ensures that individuals are treated fairly and equally while allowing for a wide range of goals and ambitions. In this sense, a nomocratic order is better suited to the messiness of human life, where individuals have different and sometimes conflicting views about what constitutes the good life.

Oakeshott's critique of teleocratic orders is also a critique of the rationalist impulse to reduce politics to a set of technical problems that can be solved through the application of reason. He argues that this approach overlooks political life's moral and ethical dimensions. In Oakeshott's view, politics is not just about finding the most efficient way to organize society; it is about creating conditions where individuals can live well and pursue their goals. This requires recognizing that political life is shaped by a complex web of relationships, traditions, and customs that cannot be easily manipulated or controlled.

Oakeshott's defense of a nomocratic order is, therefore, a defense of a more humble and restrained approach to politics. It is a recognition that political leaders must respect the limits of their knowledge and the autonomy of individuals to pursue their own purposes. Just as Aristotle and Cicero emphasized the importance of prudence in political life, Oakeshott argues that political leaders must exercise practical wisdom rather than relying on ideological or technical solutions. They must be willing to adapt their policies in response to changing circumstances rather than pursuing rigid goals at all costs.

In the classical tradition, prudence is the virtue that allows political leaders to balance competing goods and make wise decisions in the face of uncertainty. Oakeshott's defense of a nomocratic order reflects this classical understanding of prudence. He argues that political life is too complex and unpredictable to be governed by grand designs or utopian visions. Instead, political leaders must focus on maintaining the conditions where individuals can exercise their prudence and pursue their goals.

Oakeshott's distinction between nomocratic and teleocratic orders illustrates his broader defense of prudence in politics. A nomocratic order governed by the rule of law provides the institutional framework for individuals to exercise their judgment and pursue their ends. In contrast, a teleocratic order, driven by the pursuit of specific goals, subordinates individual freedom to collective aims and replaces practical wisdom with technical expertise. Oakeshott's preference for a nomocratic order reflects his belief that political life is too complex and uncertain to be directed toward specific ends and that prudence – the ability to make sound judgments in the face of uncertainty – is the key to successful political leadership.

V. DEFENDING OAKESHOTT FROM STRAUSSIAN CRITICISMS

Defending Michael Oakeshott's political philosophy against the critiques leveled by students of Leo Strauss requires addressing the fundamental divergence between Oakeshott's emphasis on tradition and practical wisdom and the Straussian commitment to reason and nature, remarkably as grounded in logos. While Straussian critics argue that Oakeshott's view is anti-rational and overly reliant on accident and historical circumstance, a defense of Oakeshott can demonstrate that his critique of rationalism in politics does not reject reason itself but rather rejects a narrow, abstract, and technocratic view of reason. Oakeshott's understanding of politics as an art, guided by prudence and embedded in the lived experiences of communities, offers a compelling alternative to the Straussian focus on universal principles derived from nature and logos.

First, it is essential to recognize that Oakeshott does not reject reason outright. His critique of rationalism is directed against the belief that political life can be governed solely by abstract principles or scientific methods without regard to the particularities of

history, tradition, and context. Oakeshott argues that political decision-making requires practical reason, or what the ancients called prudence (φρόνησις), which operates in the realm of the contingent and the particular rather than the realm of universal truths. In this sense, Oakeshott's view aligns more closely with the classical conception of prudence, especially as developed by Aristotle, who also distinguished between theoretical and practical reasons. Aristotle's practical reason, like Oakeshott's prudence, is concerned with making wise judgments in complex, real-world situations that cannot be reduced to abstract rules.

Straussian critics, however, argue that, by prioritizing tradition and the lived practices of communities over abstract principles, Oakeshott undermines the authority of logos, the rational principle that Strauss and his followers believe is the foundation of natural law and universal moral truths. They claim that Oakeshott's reliance on tradition leads to a kind of relativism, in which political decisions are determined by historical accident rather than by a rational understanding of human nature. However, Oakeshott's emphasis on tradition does not entail the rejection of rational deliberation; instead, it recognizes the limits of abstract reason in navigating the complexities of political life. Traditions, in Oakeshott's view, represent the accumulated wisdom of generations, which provides a more reliable guide for action than the application of universal principles divorced from historical context.

Moreover, the Straussian critique overlooks that tradition can be a source of rational reflection. Traditions are not static or arbitrary; they evolve through continuous reflection and adaptation as communities encounter new challenges and circumstances. Oakeshott sees traditions as embodying practical knowledge passed down through generations that help individuals and societies navigate the uncertainties of political life. This practical knowledge is not opposed to reason but is a form of reason that operates in the context of lived experience. Rather than being irrational, traditions provide a framework for making reasoned judgments sensitive to the particularities of time and place.

The Straussian focus on nature and logos as the foundation of political life also risks an overly rigid understanding of reason, one that assumes that political order can be derived from universal principles applicable to all times and places. By contrast, Oakeshott's defense of prudence and tradition recognizes that political life is inherently variable and contingent. While Strauss and his followers believe that reason can discover timeless truths about human nature that should guide political life, Oakeshott is more skeptical of the ability of abstract reason to account for the complexity of human society. For Oakeshott, political order emerges organically from the lived practices of a community and attempts to impose a rationalist design on society often lead to unintended consequences.

Furthermore, Oakeshott's view of political order as nomocratic – based on laws that provide a framework for individual action rather than directing society toward specific ends – offers a more pluralistic and flexible approach to governance than the teleocratic visions often associated with Straussian political theory. In a nomocratic order, individuals can pursue their purposes within a stable legal framework, allowing for diverse goals and values. This pluralism respects the freedom of individuals to exercise their reason and make their judgments about how to live rather than subordinating them to a collective goal or vision of the good life. In contrast, a teleocratic order, which Oakeshott associates

with rationalist politics, risks subordinating individual freedom to a particular ideological agenda, whether it is derived from reason or tradition.

Straussians might argue that political life becomes aimless or morally directionless without an appeal to nature and universal principles grounded in logos. However, Oakeshott's emphasis on prudence does not lead to moral relativism or nihilism. Instead, it acknowledges that ethical and political judgments are context-dependent and that political leaders must exercise moral judgment in navigating the complex, contingent realities of political life. Oakeshott's rejection of teleocratic orders reflects his belief that no single vision of the good life should be imposed on a diverse society. Instead, the role of political leaders is to maintain the rule of law and create the conditions in which individuals can pursue their conceptions of the good.

Additionally, Oakeshott's critique of rationalism can be understood as a defense of the moral and ethical dimensions of political life, which he believes are often neglected in the technocratic focus of nationalist politics. Oakeshott does not reject logos as such, but he denies the overconfidence in human reason that assumes all political problems can be solved through rational deliberation. He advocates for a more humble and reflective approach to political leadership that recognizes the limits of human knowledge and the complexity of social life. This humility, far from being irrational or anti-intellectual, acknowledges the uncertainties and ambiguities inherent in human affairs.

Finally, Oakeshott's emphasis on tradition and prudence can be seen as a defense of practical wisdom as a form of reason that is deeply rooted in the human experience. While Strauss and his students may prioritize the pursuit of timeless truths derived from nature and logos, Oakeshott reminds us that political life is not lived in the realm of abstraction but in the particular and contingent realities of everyday life. The wisdom embedded in traditions provides a valuable source of knowledge for navigating these realities, and the exercise of prudence allows political leaders to make sound judgments that respect the freedom and diversity of individuals. In this way, Oakeshott's philosophy offers a more nuanced and flexible understanding of reason that recognizes its strengths and limitations in political life.

VI. CONCLUSION: THE ENDURING RELEVANCE OF PRUDENCE

Michael Oakeshott's critique of rationalism in politics can be understood as a robust defense of prudence rooted in the classical tradition of such thinkers as Aristotle and Cicero. Oakeshott, like these classical philosophers, views politics not as a science governed by fixed principles or universal laws but as a practical activity that requires the exercise of judgment and wisdom. He resists the modern inclination to treat political problems as technical issues that can be solved through abstract reasoning or ideological blueprints. Instead, Oakeshott emphasizes that political order should emerge organically from the accumulated wisdom of tradition and the prudent judgments of individuals rather than through the imposition of theoretical constructs.

In this sense, Oakeshott's defense of prudence reflects a deep appreciation for political life's contingent and unpredictable nature. Political decisions, he argues, cannot be made solely by appealing to abstract principles or general rules; they must be grounded in the specific *circumstances* and historical context in which they are made. Like Aristotle's

concept of φρόνησις, practical wisdom, Oakeshott's notion of prudence involves making sound judgments sensitive to a given situation's particularities. This view is in stark contrast to the rationalist approach, which assumes that reason alone can provide clear, universally applicable answers to complex political problems.

Therefore, Oakeshott's critique of rationalism is not a rejection of reason itself but a rejection of overconfidence in reason – the belief that reason can master all of the complexities and uncertainties of political life. In defending prudence, Oakeshott aligns himself with a tradition of political thought that recognizes the limits of human knowledge and the dangers of attempting to impose rationalist designs on society. Political life, he argues, is too fluid and complex to be governed by rigid ideological frameworks. Instead, it requires the flexibility and adaptability of prudential judgment, which is informed by tradition and shaped by experience.

This defense of prudence is particularly significant in modern politics, where the temptation to reduce politics to a set of technical problems is more pervasive than ever. In an age dominated by data-driven decision-making, algorithms, and technocratic solutions, Oakeshott's reminder that political life is irreducibly contingent and resistant to simplification offers a timely warning against the dangers of rationalism. Contemporary political discourse is often characterized by a belief in the power of technical expertise to solve societal problems. Still, Oakeshott cautions that no amount of technical knowledge can replace the need for human judgment in navigating the complexities of governance.

Moreover, Oakeshott's critique speaks to the moral and ethical dimensions of political life that are often overlooked in technocratic approaches. While data and expertise can inform decision-making, they cannot substitute for the prudential judgments political leaders must make when weighing competing values and interests. Politics, as Oakeshott and the classical thinkers understood, is not just about solving problems efficiently but about making decisions that reflect the moral and ethical complexities of human life. It is an art that requires a deep understanding of the human condition and the ability to make wise judgments in situations without easy answers.

By aligning his critique of rationalism with the classical virtue of prudence, Oakeshott offers a compelling argument for a more humble and restrained approach to politics. This approach recognizes human reason's limits and tradition's importance as a guide for action. Rather than imposing a particular vision of the good life on society, Oakeshott argues that political leaders should focus on creating the conditions for individual freedom – where citizens can exercise their prudence in pursuing their goals. This vision of politics, grounded in the nomocratic ideal, contrasts sharply with the rationalist tendency to direct society toward predefined ends.

The nomocratic order that Oakeshott advocates provides a framework within which individuals can make their own decisions, guided by a stable set of rules that are flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of human life. In such a system, the state's role is not to manage society according to a specific ideology or to achieve certain outcomes but to maintain the rule of law, allowing individuals the freedom to pursue their purposes. This respect for individual judgment and autonomy is at the heart of Oakeshott's defense of prudence and his critique of teleocratic orders, which subordinate individual freedom to collective goals.

By defending prudence and tradition against the hubris of rationalism, Oakeshott offers a valuable contribution to contemporary debates about the role of the state and the nature of political judgment. His argument underscores the dangers of relying too heavily on technocratic solutions or ideological blueprints that ignore the complexity of social life. In a world increasingly dominated by technological and bureaucratic governance, Oakeshott's insistence on the importance of prudential judgment provides a necessary counterbalance to the growing reliance on expertise at the expense of political wisdom.

Furthermore, Oakeshott's critique of rationalism can be seen as a defense of human freedom in the face of growing state intervention. In a teleocratic order, where the state is tasked with achieving specific goals – whether social justice, economic equality, or national greatness – individuals are often seen as means to an end, and their freedom to pursue their purposes is diminished. In contrast, a nomocratic order, as Oakeshott envisions it, respects the pluralism of human society and allows for the diversity of individual goals and values to flourish within a stable legal framework.

This vision of a pluralistic society governed by the rule of law rather than by the pursuit of collective ends is a powerful antidote to the centralizing tendencies of modern political systems. Oakeshott's defense of prudence reminds us that politics is not about solving problems through the imposition of ideology but about creating the conditions in which individuals can navigate the complexities of life with freedom and responsibility. His emphasis on tradition as a source of practical wisdom offers a compelling alternative to the rationalist belief in the power of reason to redesign society from the top down.

Ultimately, Oakeshott's political philosophy remains deeply relevant to contemporary debates about the limits of reason and the nature of political order. His defense of prudence challenges the modern tendency to view politics as a technical exercise, offering instead a vision of politics as the art of judgment, shaped by tradition and informed by the wisdom of experience. In an era in which the pressure to conform to ideological agendas is ever present, Oakeshott's reminder of the value of prudence calls for a more thoughtful, measured approach to political leadership – one that respects the complexities of human life and the limits of human reason.

Russell A. Berman

KONRAD WEISS'S *DER CHRISTLICHE EPIMETHEUS*: A POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF 1933?

In his 2006 text on "Religion in the Public Sphere," Jürgen Habermas, the philosopher of communicative rationality, makes a stunning concession to religious discourse. Far from dismissing the pertinence of religion to public discussion, far from marginalizing religion as a merely private matter or degrading it to an ideological embarrassment, he reserves a distinct place for it in the conversation about modernity. Habermas states with extraordinary clarity:

> It would not be rational to reject out of hand the conjecture that religions [...] manage to continue and maintain a recognized place within the differentiated edifice of Modernity because their cognitive substance has not yet been totally exhausted.[1]

In other words: it would be wrong to assume that religions have nothing to say to modernity, and this assertion is grounded in turn in the assumption that the content of religions, their "cognitive substance," may still hold valuable knowledge.

To be sure, Habermas quickly limits the ramifications of his assertion: "post-metaphysical thought" must remain "strictly agnostic," and any religious substance for the public has to be communicated in a "generally accessible," that is, non-confessional, language. Nonetheless, the genie, it would seem, is out of the bottle: religion gains recognition as a potential source for modern culture or, again in Habermas's surprising terms, "religions still bear a valuable semantic potential for inspiring other people beyond the limits of the particular community of faith."[2] Within the field of debates over church and state – the twain that standard liberalism would prefer to separate by an insurmountable wall – Habermas goes far beyond the standard, reluctant concession that, in the face of politicized religion, especially since the Iranian Revolution, an intermingling of religion and politics has become undeniable. Instead of bemoaning the contamination of the public

[1] Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," Lecture Presented at the Holberg Prize Seminar 29 November 2005: 12-13 (https://holbergprisen.no/sites/default/files/Habermas_religion_in_the_public_sphere.pdf).
[2] Ibid., 13.

sphere with sacred substance, Habermas challenges modernity and its advocates to be, at the very least, willing to listen to religious traditions, which may encompass truth-contents pertinent to the deficiencies of really-existing post-metaphysical thought. Modernity is a famously unfinished project; it therefore by definition has lacunae that religion might address. It follows then, if not inescapably then certainly potentially, that a secular and post-traditionalist modernity could benefit from a dialogue with political theology. To reject this possibility would mean to claim that only a thoroughly secularized culture in which religion is fully banished from the public sphere, perhaps banished altogether, can be successful. Habermas, for one, regards any such peremptory conclusion to be irrational.

While today the question of political theology cannot avoid addressing the work of Carl Schmitt, the Schmitt discussion itself often gets mired down in his Nazi years and his antisemitism, crucial issues to be sure, but problems that deflect from another consideration: his analytic interest, even obsession, with the congenital instability of the liberal, or liberal democratic, state. When does the *Rechtsstaat* fail to live up to its own norms? When does the state find itself unable or unwilling to act politically? These are questions of more than historical interest, although they do reopen salient historical questions about the collapse of Weimar, how it was understood in the period, and how we might rethink it today, especially if we are not willing to settle for SED propaganda about the divided working class.

It would of course be untenable to claim that all of Schmitt's shifting positions can be reduced neatly and monolithically to consistent political-theological arguments; juristic logic, historical events, and personal career agenda played key roles as well. However, the end of Weimar and political theology do converge in one figure of thought that became important for Schmitt, the "Christian Epimetheus," which he borrowed from the work of Konrad Weiss, a writer for whom he expressed strong and long-standing admiration. Schmitt designates himself expressly as the Christian Epimetheus in his postwar diary, *Ex captivitate salus*, and he invokes the figure again in his 1950 review of Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History*.[3] This paper tries to get at some of the underlying implications of the "Christian Epimetheus" through a consideration of Weiss's particular position in the 1930s. Is there a political-theological reading of the end of Weimar? How does a history of salvation map onto the crisis of the liberal democratic state? And can a political theology of Weimar shed light on religion, culture, and liberal democracy today?

Weiss (1880-1940) participated in the early twentieth-century debates around the rise of modern intellectual Catholicism in Germany. Beginning in 1905, he contributed regularly to Carl Muth's *Hochland*, where he eventually became the art editor; in 1920, he shifted to the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* (the forerunner of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*), where he joined the editorial board, contributing feuilletons on art and architecture. His writings include considerable advocacy for modern art and artists, especially for the work of his long-time friend, the painter Carl Kaspar. It was Kaspar who illustrated Weiss's one widely successful poetry volume, *Die kleine Schöpfung*, which was published in

[3] Carl Schmitt, *Ex captivitate salus: Erfahrungen der Zeit 1945-47* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2022), 12; Heinrich Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt: Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, trans. Marcus Brainard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 132-33; Carl Schmitt, "Three Possibilities for a Christian Conception of History," *Telos* 2009, no. 147 (Summer 2009): 170.

1926 by Georg Müller and republished in 1948 and again in 1990. Yet Weiss also wrote extensively on medieval and early modern art and architecture. The literary core of his oeuvre includes several volumes of demanding poetry, often of a liturgical character, sometimes described (insufficiently) as "post-expressionistic," a term similarly unequal to a small set of narrative fiction. In 1926, Rudolf Borchardt singled him out for praise as a "verkannter Dichter" in response to a feuilleton survey from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, placing Weiss in "dem unberührtesten altdeutschen Deutschland" (surely missing his modernism) and characterizing him as "dunkel aus Demut, undurchdringlich aus echter Bescheidenheit."[4] We know that when Hugo von Hofmannsthal visited Munich in 1927 for the premier of *Der Turm*, he made a point of seeking out Weiss.[5] Today, however, Weiss remains largely unknown, despite Botho Strauss's laudatory essay that appeared in *Die Zeit* in 2004.[6] Some insightful recent scholarship has begun to recognize his stature, but this difficult religious poet is not a candidate for wide popularity.[7]

From the standpoint of aesthetics and politics, Weiss turns out to be an intriguing if still enigmatic figure. Armin Mohler refers to him several time in his compendium on the conservative revolution, grouping him among the "reichskatholische Dichter" and identifying him, next to Theodor Däubler, as Schmitt's "dichterischer Inspirator."[8] Yet as early as 1931, the poet Weiss also engaged in a confrontational public controversy with the architect and cultural-political reactionary Paul Schultze-Naumburg. Schultze-Naumburg's attack on modern art, *Kunst und Rasse*, had appeared in 1928, and in 1929 he joined the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur, then under the leadership of Alfred Rosenberg; in 1930 he became a member the NSDAP, and in 1932 he would enter the Reichstag in the wake of the Nazi electoral victories. Schultze-Naumburg was clearly a rising cultural star in the Nazi movement when he delivered a lecture, "Der Kampf um die Kunst," in the Technische Hochschule in Munich in February 1931. Weiss reported on it in the *Neuesten Nachrichten*, with quite critical comments, in effect faulting Schultze-Naumburg and by implication Nazi cultural politics for a disregard for religious and even national elements; for Weiss, these flaws are results of the singular focus on race, which he consistently denounces as a variant of modern materialism. In his critique of Schultze-Naumburg, Weiss was not only prepared to take on a powerful Nazi cultural leader, then director of the Kunsthochschule

[4] *Marbacher Magazin: Sonderheft 15/1980*, "Der Dichter Konrad Weiss, 1880-1940," ed. Friedhelm Kemp and Karl Neuwirth, 62.

[5] Ibid., 13.

[6] Botho Strauss, "Eine nicht geheuere Begegnung," *Die Zeit*, 18 June 2003, no. 26; cf. Hans Hennecke, "Versinnlichung des Abstrakten: Konrad Weiss," in *Kritik: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur modernen Literatur* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1958), 245-53.

[7] Heiko Christians, "'Und immer wieder nur das Wort.' Konrad Weiß' Sonett-Zyklus *Gesichte des Knechts auf Golgatha* (1921) und der Geist der Liturgie," *Euphorion* 102, no. 4 (2008): 481-502. Borchardt, arguing in the spirit of a Georgean esotericism, underscored the unlikelihood, or even the undesirability, of popularity for Weiss: "aber wenn Sie und ich uns das Publikum vorstellen wollten, das diesen Dichter, oder seinen ihm so verwandten englischen Geisteszwilling Francis Thompson, nicht verkennte, – kennte, läse, rühmte; so würden wir schon stutzen und den Kopf schütteln müssen. [...] Kommen Sie, lassen Sie uns einen kleinen Kreis bilden [...]." *Marbacher Magazin*, 62-63.

[8] Armin Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1818-1932: Ein Handbuch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 319. Mohler complains, however, that the Weiss reception emphasizes the Catholic and Bavarian elements while underplaying the conservative revolution.

in Weimar, who by late 1930 had already initiated the removal of expressionist paintings from the Schlossmuseum and had ordered the dismantling or concealment of Oskar Schlemmer's interior design of the Werkstattgebäude, but Weiss could also carve out his own maverick cultural conservatism that combined nationalism, Christianity, and a defense of expressionism with a disdain for the provincialism of regionalist agenda and, especially, the racialized Nazi aesthetic, which he suggested was part and parcel of the same problematic Weimar modernity. His own alternative counter-agenda would be religious and culturally conservative.

This is, to say the least, a complex position in 1931: explicitly critical of Weimar modernity but jealously protective of modern art; proudly national but disdainfully opposed to the coarseness of National Socialism; "Germanic" and Christian but not evidently antisemitic and certainly not biologistic or exterminationist. Evidence of Weiss's subsequent trajectory is sparse; we lack a full biographical account. He reportedly felt threatened during the Röhm Putsch of 1934. In 1935, on the recommendation of Peter Suhrkamp, Gottfried Bermann Fischer acquired the manuscript of a volume of poetry, but the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, under *Gleichschaltung*, threatened to fire him if he worked with a "Jewish publishing house." The volume, *Das Sinnreich der Erde*, appeared in 1939 with Insel-Verlag.[9] At some point in the thirties, however, Weiss was forced out of the newspaper. During his final years, he undertook automobile trips through Germany, visiting medieval architectural sites, recorded in the two volumes of *Deutschlands Morgenspiegel* (1950).

The key piece of evidence for his political profile, however, is his 1933 volume, *Der christliche Epimetheus*. The first chapter, representing some two-thirds of this slim volume, presents a reflective political diary of the presidential election in 1932, in which Hindenburg predominates as the figure of fascination. Chapters two and three involve hermetic reflections on German politics and a salvation history, a political theology of the present, essayistic in its meandering and hermetic in its distinctly individual language. Chapter two carries events through the Reichstag election of March 1933, and chapter three, a conclusion of sorts, bears the title "Der deutsch christliche Epimetheus." A short though substantive footnote comments on the significance "des katholischen Rechtslehrers Carl Schmitt."[10] I will return to this crucial passage in a moment.

It was reportedly Schmitt who drew Weiss to the attention of Franz Schranz (1894-1961), a provincial doctor in the Sauerland, who financed the private publication of Weiss's text.[11] Schranz became the motivating force behind what would become the Siedlinghauser Kreis, an intellectual and artistic network of friends and acquaintances, generally critical of Weimar but with widely varying estimations of the Nazi regime. The range of the figures who would make the pilgrimage to Siedlinghausen testifies to the complexity of the conservative and conservative-revolutionary intellectual milieu in the period: Schmitt, of course, as well as the Jünger brothers, but also Joseph Pieper, later the leading Catholic philosopher of post-war Germany; the "national revolutionary" Ernst Niekisch, whose

[9] Konrad Weiss, *Das Sinnreich der Erde* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1939).
[10] Konrad Weiss, *Der christliche Epimetheus* (Berlin: Edwin Runge, 1933), 81.
[11] See http://www.lwl.org/westfalen-spiegel/upload/17.pdf.

postwar trajectory took him to Humboldt University, and his war-time collaborator, the graphic artist A. Paul Weber. To add to this complexity, Weiss himself maintained contact with the anti-Nazi Catholic intellectual Theodor Haecker, who dedicated two personal poems to Weiss in his *Tag- und Nachtbücher*. It is this broad terrain around Weiss, stretching from Schmitt, whose role in the Third Reich is notorious, to Haecker, the mentor of the Scholls, that makes an examination of his work, and particularly of his singular political treatise, so promising. The *christlicher Epimetheus*, which appears to have been a focal point of interest in Siedlinghausen, addresses the contemporary politics of 1932 and 1933 while elaborating a distinctive political theology. It demonstrates the efforts of a conservative Catholic intellectual to think through the crisis of Weimar under this enigmatic and mythological sign. Who is the Christian Epimetheus? What historical thinking does he invoke? And in what sense does Schmitt appropriate it later?

Der christliche Epimetheus is a challenging text.[12] In the present context, I have to limit my commentary to a few points: a preliminary determination of Weiss's position in the cultural and political turmoil at the end of Weimar; a consideration of the paratextual gloss on Schmitt; and some thoughts on the epimetheic perspective.

It is not surprising to find Weiss noting a fundamental lack of legitimacy in the Weimar state, a position hardly limited to conservative revolutionary circles. In the face of the political disputes of February 1932, Weiss comments:

> Das Unrecht, das in der Entstehung oder Einrichtung des gegenwaertigen deutschen Staates mitentstanden ist, frisst sich weiter und die Legalisierung durch einen dazwischen liegenden Zeitraum von gebrauchsmäßigen Zusammenleben kann es nicht abstellen. (45)[13]

This dissatisfaction with Weimar, however, is accompanied neither by any Third Reich millenarianism nor by a Wilhelmine nostalgia. A German state stands in some relationship to the destiny of the people, understood in religious and spiritual but not necessarily conventional terms, and certainly not racial ones. Hence his dissatisfaction with the perceived vacuity of the public intellectual support for Hindenburg, whose former opponents were now rallying to him only out of political expediency, however, and with no authentic comprehension of the new cultural streams:

> In den Aufrufen sind die Namen der künstlerischen und literarischen Vertretung zum Teil Vorkriegsvertretung und haben keine Fortsetzung in einem neuen Kultursinn, der doch inzwischen überall die Zeit umbesetzt

[12] In his journal entry of 11 July 1943, Pieper noted: "Es ist gewiss, dass sic him Werke dieses Dichters, der vielleicht als einziger in dieser Zeit 'Seher' ist im antiken Sinn, eine tiefe und grossartige Geschichtsschau ausspricht. Sie ist mühsam zu Wort gebracht, wie unter Geburtswehen; und es ist ein mühsames Geschäft, sie zu entziffern. Ich bin aber überzeugt, dass solche Entzifferungsmühe sich lohnt." *Marbacher Magazin*, 65. Pieper places an epitaph from Weiss at the front of his 1950 volume *Über das Ende der Zeit: Eine geschichtsphilosophische Meditation* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1950).

[13] Numbers in text will hereafter refer to pages in Konrad Weiss, *Der christliche Epimetheus* (Berlin: Edwin Runge Verlag, 1933).

> hat. Ein beträchtlicher Teil könnte auch als a.D.-Partei bezeichnet werden; und sonst ist viel innerlich Unvereintes zum äußeren Zweck vereinigt. (16)

Ibsen never excoriated the bourgeois *Lebenslüge* more forcefully. Can Weiss save Hindenburg from his supporters?

Weiss's characterization of the democratic intelligentsia as insipid is mild, however, in comparison with his condemnation of the moderate Catholicism of the Weimar coalition and its accommodation to liberal and humanistic paradigms (12). Thus, for example, his principled critique directed at a Catholic student newspaper for attacking Nazi hostility to academic freedom and scholarly autonomy; Weiss would have wished for a different and more effective anti-Nazi argument that might have maintained a polemical difference between Catholic and secular liberal camps:

> Wenn man das künstlerische Gesetz als eine innere Planschaft Gottes in der Geschichte gegenüber der substitutiven Autonomie der humanistischen empfindet, [...]können sich die inneren Instinkte gegen die Theorien von Völkisch-Nationalen, wenn sie die Kunst auf eine Zuchtgrundlage aus der Natur positivistisch legen und über die Resultate autoritär entscheiden wollen, empören wie mit Naturfibern. (18)

In other words: a genuine Catholicism could offer a more forceful critique of Nazi racism than could an imitative secularism. Throughout the essay, Weiss places the humanistic liberal and the *völkisch* camps, superficially opposed to each other, in parallel as both secularizing and positivistic and therefore as blind to the conditions of creaturely existence. "Hier also die Kommandostimme von Unverständigen gegen das innerste Reis der geschichtlichen Lebenswahrheit in der Kunst" (18). The loss of history means the loss of *Heilsgeschichte* and therefore the fall into degradation: "Das Umschlagen aus den großen Sinnesfühlkräften der Geschichte in dieses zur Unfruchtbarkeit des Gedächtnisses bestimmte 'Vergessen' [...] ist heute noch deutlicher geworden in der bloßen biologischen Position" (103). That "merely biological position" is the reduction of culture to race.

That will have to suffice as an initial indication of Weiss's ideological location at the end of Weimar, simultaneously anti-Nazi and anti-liberal. I turn now to Weiss's direct reference to Schmitt. In the relevant passage, the main text involves the dynamics of left and right mass movements in relation to the status of the popularly elected *Reichspräsident* as a hypothetically unifying power (*der helfende, integrale Staatssinn*), whose authority depends on juristic decisionism (81). It is here that Weiss introduces the Catholic Schmitt, whose work integrates mystical and practical elements that can transform "das Ambigene des logisch-humanen und immer zuletzt christlich nicht rekludierbaren Position" into a juristic decision with "politisch-geschichtliche raumhafte Fruchtbarkeit." He describes peripatetic inversions from "Recht" (the juristic dimension) into "Masse" (the popular movements), and from "'Technik'" (in quotation marks indicating the seeming neutrality of the legal code) into "Kreatur." Weiss evaluates this dialectic of Schmittian practice as "eine spezifisch-katholische Sinnesform der Gegenwart," characteristically drawing on a medieval architectural analogy: the integral relationship of buttresses and pillars

in cathedral construction.[14] At stake in Weiss's Catholic identification is presumably the integrating coherence and the establishment of an "Ordo." This evaluation could well be contrasted with Heinrich Meier's description of Schmitt's Nazi decision in 1933 as behaving "'like a Protestant,' neither respectful of the intermediate instances nor relying on representation [...]" while drawing on the stark alternatives of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*.[15] Yet only months before the Nazi seizure of power, Weiss still invokes Schmitt to conceptualize a political resolution of the crisis through the integrity and integrating power of the president. Can Schmitt's choice around 1933 be read, at least in one dimension, as a confessional transformation from a Catholic to a Protestant political theology?

When Schmitt appeals to Weiss and the Christian Epimetheus after the war in *Ex Captivitate Salus*, he tries to appropriate the figure for his own situation, in an arguably sentimental way that Meier reads as a subtle recanting, an expression of a backward-looking regret.[16] Whatever the validity of that reading, Weiss's image conveys a richer, multidimensional historical sense than such an appropriation would suggest. Weiss contrasts Epimetheus several times with Prometheus, but with a Christian inversion of values. In place of the mythological preference for the rebellious benefactor of humanity or disdain for the brother lacking in foresight, Weiss associates the former, negatively, with the destructive positivisms of modernity, while it is the latter who participates in an eschatological temporality, which houses both *Nachsinn* and *Hoffnung*. Retrospection includes the national tradition, of course, but that is defined, for Weiss, by a spiritual mission, inheriting a Christian knowledge of creation, the fall, and the crucifixion: instead of classical completion, an existential lack – or a wound – which in turn defines the possibility of redemption. "Rettung ist der gegen jeden Begriff entscheidender Sinn der Geschichte. Sie ist nicht Verbesserung einer Natur von ihrer humanen Allgemeinheit her und durch sich, sondern sie entfacht sich epimetheisch als ein Zeugnis, das ihr vorausliegt" (47), and that Epimetheic trajectory integrates the "vorgegebene Blutstapfe eines christlichen Geschehens" with a promise of hope greater than the pagan Pandora's: "[es] vertieft sich in den Gaben des Kampfes mit den Verschuldungen der Geschichte die unbeschützte Hoffnung." Epimetheus acts in history, which is a gift, but on the basis of a transcendent faith, which dismantles the reification of form: "[...] sie trägt die Sinne einer Innengrenze an sich mit und gibt der Welt der Sinne dadurch weitere insinnige Teile," a complexity of "comparation" "welche man mit bloßen Rassebegriffen schlechterdings nicht begreift" (66).

In this complex text, Weiss conveys conservative revolutionary despair with the lability of Weimar, while also – and increasingly in the course of the essay – insisting on distinguishing his own position from National Socialism. The salvation-historical framework generates a sense of redemptive temporality – Weiss writes of a "Nachvorwegvornahme" (97) – that would lend itself to comparable treatments in Benjamin and Adorno, just as his existentialist Catholicism echoes through the theological discourse of the early Federal Republic. As a meditation on religious thought in the midst of cultural and political crises,

[14] "Man kann vergleichsweise dafür an den Sinn von Pfeiler und Säule in der basilikalen Reklusaform denken." He offers two other analogies, one involving "comparation" and "contemplation," the other concerning the treatment of Dante by Albert Mirgeler.

[15] Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt*, 146.

[16] Ibid., 132.

however, Weiss argues for a spiritually engaged historicity – that is, a public life informed by traditional values – as an alternative to an all-encompassing state, whether defined by liberal positivism or Nazi racism.[17] Faith leads one into history and not – such is his critique of Protestantism – away from works, but the loss, the negativity, and the recognition of suffering at the core of Christianity stave off any gnostic dynamic or fanatic radicalism toward a thorough integration of society and state.

[17] A particularly rich passage proceeds from a recognition of the crisis of the presidial regime: "Der Gedanke der Präsidialregierung ist ohne Zweifel ein Ersatzmittel und eine Art Stellvertretung für die deutsche geschichtliche Sinnesform [...]" (87). He contrasts the role of the party in contemporary Italy and Germany: "daß in Deutschland gegenüber dem Italien Mussolinis die Partei immer doch weniger sein wird als das Reich." That is a conservative anti-Nazi position, presumably tempered by German nationalism, comparable to the stance of the narrator in Thomas Mann's "Mario und der Zauberer." At that point in the argument, however, Weiss describes a turn toward religious questions about politics particularly for Protestant Germans and references Wilhelm Stapel's *Der christliche Staatsmann: Eine Theologie des Nationalismus* (1932), which he sees as calling for "eine antisäkulare Front ins politische Feld." Here Weiss appears to make a Catholic move by accusing Stapel of inheriting "die alte lutherische Abneigung gegen den Wert der Werke" (88). Yet works in history, because they are not solely materialistic, remain important for Weiss: "Sie sind vor uns, wie wir selber vor dem Sinn der Mitte, und das Säkulare der Geschichte ist um so starker, je mehr die Schöpfung sich nach ihrem Sinne sehnt." This implies that the Catholic perspective leaves room for a secular historicity that, according to Wess, a radical Lutheranism would reject. Is the desideratum of preserving the separation of state and party – that is, the German position, in contrast to his treatment of Italian fascism – consistent with this account of Catholic historiography? Is the presumed German solution therefore more Catholic than fascist Italy? Weiss carries the question of historical action one step further by engaging, boldly, the problem of *Lebensraum*, effectively ripping it out of the imperialist discourse with which the Nazis used the term to justify conquering Europe. Instead, he turns "*Lebensraum*" into a designation of spiritual experience. "Der Deutsche begehrt heute, wie das Wort üblich geworden ist, 'Lebensraum': aber dieser Begriff ist bei ihm ein ausschließlicher mehr als ein einschließlicher. Er kämpft um eine komparativische Situation und muß, was nach außen liegt, nach innen austragen." He is describing a spiritual transformation in the relationship between interiority and exteriority, not a war of conquest "Der Deutsche ist mit seinem Reiche in zwei Teilen; es ist das kämpfende blinde Gesicht des Mannes neben dem sehenden weiblichen." (88). For any space to have the vitality implied by "*Lebensraum*," it has to surpass positivism and reach the soul.

Weiss concludes the passage with an additional paragraph, emphasizing again spiritual (rather than racial) motivation, but also the obligation to history, which, however, only increases the cosmic burden. Is action always guilt-ridden and mournful? "Der germanische Mensch, um die gekreuzte Innenheit des Sinnes zu finden, vermehrt die Last der Erde noch durch die Last der Geschichte. Dies ist die Vermehrung des Christentums durch Vorgebot in der Geschichte und das ist der christlich deutsche Epimetheus." Historical action is an obligation that amplifies the burden of creation. The passage insists on the connection between the pursuit of a Christian knowledge ("um die gekreuzte Innenheit des Sinnes zu finden") with historical action that stands in continuity with natural history: action in history takes place with Epimetheic retrospection. That represents a rejection of National Socialism's biological racism; not merely a fleeing from it, but a profound criticism, so therefore more powerful than a quietist "innere Emigration."

PATHWAYS OF CRITICAL THEORY: TOMASZ WIŚNIEWSKI IN CONVERSATION WITH RUSSELL A. BERMAN

1. In one of the conversations we had in Stanford, you described yourself as a "rebellious son" of critical theory (like Peter Sloterdijk), particularly in relation to the legacy of the Frankfurt School. Could you elaborate on what you meant by this? For instance, your book *Modern Culture and Critical Theory: Art, Politics, and the Legacy of the Frankfurt School* (1989) clearly draws from this intellectual tradition. Similarly, *Cultural Studies of Modern Germany: History, Representation, and Nationhood* (1993) reflects influences from the Frankfurt School's analyses in various aspects. However, *Fiction Sets You Free: Literature, Liberty, and Western Culture* (2007) seems to diverge entirely from this inspiration. Could you shed light on what changed during this period? Do you perceive the Frankfurt School's concepts as insufficient for analyzing contemporary culture and society? Is this shift related to the political evolution of *Telos*?

The encounter with Frankfurt School writings, especially by Adorno and Habermas, was important for my intellectual development and certainly left deep impressions, as did my interaction with Leo Lowenthal, whom I often visited in Berkeley when I was new on the faculty at Stanford. However, it would be very inconsistent with Frankfurt School thinking to imagine that its theoretical postulates are immune to social transformations; that would entail an endorsement of conceptual reification, hardly a tenable position. It might be worth reflecting on whether some historicism evident in the Frankfurt paradigm is part of its limitations. Yet to follow the logic of your question: yes, by the time I wrote *Fiction Sets You Free,* I was responding to different intellectual constellations: new conditions, new analyses, new critiques. To be sure, the long-historical framing is consistent with *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as is the insistence on the category of autonomy for which I make a media-theoretical argument, the importance of writing, in contrast to the mix of Marx and Freud that pervades Frankfurt. In addition, I build in some reflections on theological dimensions there that are not characteristically Frankfurt, despite Horkheimer's late thinking on religion and positions that led Cardinal Ratzinger to engage with Adorno and Habermas. And yes, *Telos*, the journal that I edited for a decade and a half after the passing of its founding editor, my teacher Paul Piccone, also evolved in that period. Perhaps the formula "from Adorno to Schmitt" catches part of it. For standard thinkers, that represents

an inversion, a shift from "left" to "right." But one should not forget how much large parts of the intellectual left, the orthodox Marxists and communists, always regarded Adorno as too conservative (no wonder the student movement occupied his Institute) and the current reception of Schmitt is more on the left and the right. Maybe those binary categories are not that useful in exploring complex theoretical terrains.

I can delve into the history a little bit more. I became involved with *Telos* when I began graduate study at Washington University in Saint Louis – I was in the German Department, but I very quickly met Paul – Professor Piccone – who was an assistant professor in sociology. His focus was "theory" in an era in which American social science was universally positivistic and empirical. His orientations include phenomenology, Italian neo-Marxism (he would later write a book on Gramsci), and of course the Frankfurt School. He was a charismatic figure and gathered a group of students around him. When I finished my studies in 1979, he invited me to become part of the editorial board, so that was on the eve of major changes in the world, the Reagan era and also the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It was also the last climax of the Cold War, the debate over the stationing of medium- and short-range nuclear weapons in Europe (that issue is just returning these days).

In and around *Telos*, two overlapping processes played out. In terms of theory, a divergence developed between those more oriented toward an Adornian critique of Enlightenment (often it was a matter of a mix of Adorno and Husserl, whose *Crisis of the European Sciences* was an important text for us) and, on the other hand, a more "liberal" wing defined by the "later-generation" Frankfurt School work of Jürgen Habermas and his communicative theory. That split turned out to be congruent with a more directly political one. In the context of the debate over cruise and Pershing missiles of the mid-1980s and the resurgent "peace movement" (sometimes marked by anti-Americanism, a topic on which I would later write), another cleavage took place in the *Telos* community: some, typically the Habermasian wing, identified with the more standard left position of the peace movement, hostile to NATO, while the core group, of which Paul and I and of course others were members, supported the US position. In retrospect, I see this as consistent with Adorno's own left anti-communism. In other words, the Adornians sided with NATO, the Habermasians sided with the peace movement, which meant, effectively, to side with the Soviet Union (although, okay, I know that that's a highly polemical characterization of their position). Since its founding, *Telos* was engaged, over decades, in the "self-dismantling" of the Marxism that had become so hegemonic around 1968 (and would remain so in West European intellectual life for a long time). This critical moment in the debate over NATO was probably a big step in the distancing from the orthodoxies of the left. Once freed of the residues of sclerotic leftism, *Telos* became open to the wave of new ideas in the 1990s – questions of tradition and populism, religion, sovereignty, and the political theorizations of Carl Schmitt. Our opening toward Schmitt – which was of course happening elsewhere in the post–new left – was taken by our adversaries as proof that we had gone over to the dark side. In fact, it only indicated that we were open to new ideas in a way our erstwhile "comrades" never were.

2. Between 2004 and 2019, you served as the editor of *Telos*, a journal initially established in 1968 by Paul Piccone to furnish the American New Left with insights derived from Frankfurt School's critical theory. The landscape has significantly evolved since its

inception. Yet *Telos* transcends the realm of merely an academic journal; it represents an institution in its own right. Through the auspices of the Telos–Paul Piccone Institute, the organization not only regularly convenes conferences but also engages in the publication of an extensive array of books beyond the journal itself. Could you elucidate the operational dynamics of *Telos*, particularly its "logistical" aspects? Managing such a multifaceted entity undoubtedly demands considerable effort.

Even at its conception, *Telos* was never solely about the Frankfurt School. It always included other currents, so its history is not *only* about moving away from orthodox Frankfurt positions. Even before the infatuation with Adorno, there was a heavy dose of phenomenology, Husserl and his heirs, especially the erstwhile effort to develop a phenomenological Marxism. There was also always an interest in heterodox leftist currents, the anarchist (and explicitly anti-Marxist) Gustav Landauer, for example, as well as strands of Second International thinking. Perhaps the common denominator was an effort to develop alternatives to the dictatorship of orthodox Marxism that prevailed in intellectual circles. Today, decades after 1989 and in the midst of our current identity-political – as opposed to class-political – culture, it is hard to imagine how much hard-core communist positions dominated intellectual life in the West in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Frankfurt was liminal: a lot of its thinking was marked by some Marxist categories – albeit mediated by Nietzsche, Weber, and Freud – but the key Frankfurt thinkers were also absolutely anti-communist, part of the tradition of left-wing anti-communism that both the left and the right try to forget today. And although the structural categories have changed, there is a similarity among "progressives" today between the communist mindset of that past and the ideological disciplining – the rejection of nuance, the insistence on conformism, the suspicion of individuality, and the suspicion of any suggestion of dissidence. That was painfully obvious in the demonstrations on university campuses in the wake of October 7, where protestors used violence to impose their party line and assaulted those who disagreed with them: a "dictatorship of the (not) proletariat" in action. More important therefore than the current of Marxism from Frankfurt into early *Telos* was *Telos*'s solidarity with dissidents in Central Europe during that period – see our publications on Charta 77, for example, or Victor Zaslavsky's book on Katyń, *Class Cleansing: The Massacre at Katyn* (2008). It turns out that freedom means breaking with many of the core currents of the established left.

You are correct when you note that *Telos* never strived to be a standard academic journal. It was interdisciplinary long before interdisciplinarity became standardized (a topic that deserves its own investigation). There was, however, more at stake: the journal never aspired to being solely a contribution to intra-academic discussions but instead built on other traditions of intellectual life and engagement in the public sphere with the goal of articulating a criticism of the given arrangements of thought and life. In that sense it did build on the early twentieth-century tradition of radical intellectual journals outside the (often boring) universities with the goal of changing the world. Its distinctiveness has not been only the resistance against squeezing into a particular academic pigeonhole but the aspiration of criticism in a strong sense – a connection, I suppose, to the tradition of "critical theory."

Telos has evolved organizationally, as you inquired. We have a separate Telos–Paul Piccone Institute (TPPI) – a charitable foundation in US tax terms – that supports conferences and other activities, and we have a book line run by Telos Press Publishing. We are now also organizing series of webinars – one was launched in the wake of the attacks by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023 – now every seventh of the month we address related topics online. And a similar series on China has just begun.[1] All this does take lots of organizational effort. David Pan has succeeded me as editor of the journal, and a new executive director of TPPI, Mark Weiner, has been managing the show. I am currently serving as president of the TPPI board. Most important has been the role of Marie Piccone, the founder's widow, who has brought her own business-world acumen to *Telos*. She has been and remains the moving spirit without which this would not thrive.

3. *Telos* is recognized for acquainting American audiences – and, by extension, global readers – with figures such as Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger, who were pivotal to the German Conservative Revolution movement.[2] It appears that categorizing these thinkers as simply "extreme right" does not encapsulate the complexity of their contributions. In contemporary discourse, they are regarded as quintessential modern classics, influencing various aspects of culture, politics, society, communication, globalization, technology, myth, religion, spirituality, among others. What is your perspective on these authors? What aspects of their work do you find compelling, and how do you assess the role of *Telos* in shaping their modern reception?

It is of course not wrong to think of both Jünger and Schmitt as conservative thinkers in general, although for each there is considerable heterogeneity within their work, and "conservative" is itself a contested term. Add to this the fascination of the contemporary left with Schmitt in particular because of his cogent criticism of liberalism. Obviously for *Telos* – and for much of his contemporary reception – Schmitt has been of interest despite and not because of his association with Nazism and his undeniable antisemitism. I think liberal critics of Schmitt make it too easy when they dismiss him because of these obviously flawed political orientations. Here the issue is that of those many intellectuals and artists whose allegiances and inclinations we find reprehensible: does that mean they have nothing to say or that none of their works are worth considering? Wagner's music, Eliot's poetry, Heidegger's philosophy – throw it all out and prohibit any reception? Alternatively, one tries to see what parts are worth salvaging and what needs to be rejected. Jünger has his vulnerabilities too, especially from his conservative-revolutionary phase of the 1920s, but in general there is less emphatic ideological allegiance than with Schmitt.

[1] The results of long-lasting discussions on Israel's current situation, as well as Chinese affairs, were published in the 207th issue of *Telos*, "Politics and the University" (see https://www.telospress.com/store/Telos-207-Summer-2024-Politics-and-the-University-p679489167); all footnotes here are provided by Tomasz Wiśniewski.

[2] Telos Press has published the following books by Ernst Jünger: *Approaches: Drugs and Altered States* (2022), *Sturm* (2015), *Eumeswil* (2015), *The Forest Passage* (2013), *The Adventurous Heart: Figures and Capriccios* (2012), *On Pain* (2008), as well as by Carl Schmitt: *The Tyranny of Values and Other Texts* (2018), *Land and Sea: A World-Historical Meditation* (2015), *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play* (2009), *Theory of the Partisan* (2007), *The* Nomos *of the Earth in the International Law of the* Jus Publicum Europaeum (2003). Russell Berman edited or wrote an introduction to most of them.

Schmitt was a Nazi in a way that Jünger never was. After all, for Jünger the paradigmatic notion was the "anarch," without affiliation, perhaps closest to versions of contemporary libertarianism. It is perhaps telling that there is a robust "left" reception of Schmitt, adored because of his illiberalism. There is no similar left reception of Jünger – he is too much the maverick, the outsider, the anarch, the one who refuses organization, and, very late in life, the one who became a Catholic.

When *Telos* began to engage with Schmitt, and later with Jünger, we were vilified on the American intellectual scene – Europeans were always more open to both. Those attacks on the journal built on the older leftist suspicions from the 1970s and beyond: as the New Leftists gradually began to reproduce the thought patterns of the Old Left, *Telos*'s willingness to carve out a different path led to denunciations as "renegades." (The scholar of German literature, Michael Rohrwasser, wrote a wonderful book about "renegades," those free thinkers who were denounced by the left: the obsessive disciplining associated with "political correctness" or today's wokeness, the policing of pronouns – all of this has a long history, none of it is merely of this moment.) Our willingness to give Schmitt serious consideration seemed to confirm the denunciations that we had strayed too far from the party line, and for the emerging political correctness, as for today's "wokeness," "there is no salvation outside the party."

4. Regarding other figures from the German Conservative Revolution, such as Friedrich Georg Jünger (the lesser-known brother of Ernst), Hans Freyer, and Oswald Spengler, their presence within English-language intellectual discourse appears minimal when compared to Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger. While Spengler is recognized among certain historians and philosophers, his influence remains constrained, and his philosophy of history, as presented in *The Decline of the West* (1918-22), is often viewed as outdated. Have these authors garnered interest within the *Telos* circle? Do you believe their works hold relevance for today's readers? Are their intellectual contributions pertinent to addressing contemporary issues?

Telos has itself not engaged with these authors, but interest in some of them is emerging. Some context: as you know, Stanford University, where I have taught for decades, is part of the Silicon Valley environment, and there is a significant interaction between technology innovation, industry, and the university. Of course, the university connection is primarily in the engineering fields, but it spills over into the humanities. Some of this is a result of the character of American college education: students in computer science *also* enroll in some courses in the humanities. Moreover, some students who leave the university to work in industry, whether in start-ups or the giant companies, maintain an interest in big ideas. There are networks of informal reading groups, at this intersection of university humanities and technology industry, where I notice interest in some of these thinkers, notably Spengler, along with Schmitt and Leo Strauss. In that extended context, by the way, interest led to a republication of the American translation of Friedrich Jünger's *Die Perfektion der Technik* as *The Failure of Technology: Perfection Without Purpose* (1949, 2021). Maybe it is interesting to note how, in the midst of the technology and start-up culture, there is also an emergent "theory" culture as well.

Let me also add a reference to another figure, who has not caught a lot of attention but on whom I have written: the German author Konrad Weiss, author of *Der christliche Epimetheus* (1933), which was very important for Schmitt. Weiss was an essayist, journalist, poet, and fiction writer, part of a southern-German conservative Catholic anti-Nazi milieu. He should be examined further. Weiss was certainly a critic of the Weimar Republic, from the right, but he was also consistently critical of Nazi racial thinking, which he regarded as incompatible with the spirituality of religion. He emerged from the intellectual Catholicism around the journal *Hochland*. I mention this now because *Telos*, which began in the New Left, eventually found its way to questions of religion. I tried to incorporate questions of religion in my book *Fiction Sets You Free: Literature, Liberty, and Western Culture,* influenced in part by some of the thinkers of the *nouvelle thélogie*, notably Henri de Lubac. Meanwhile *Telos* was engaging with the "radical orthodoxy" movement in England. More recently, I continued this line by offering, in German Studies, a seminar on Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI. I could present him, of course, as a German intellectual, one, moreover, who himself engaged with the Critical Theory tradition. However, more is at stake: the reassertion of religion and political theology. An interesting twist: my Ratzinger seminar was noticed, I am told, by the San Francisco archdiocese, and I received an invitation to offer a version of it at Saint Patrick's seminary nearby. In general, I consider religion a critical theory of the contemporary.[3]

5. You have translated works by Alain de Benoist, a figure both fascinating and potentially contentious within the current intellectual milieu, recognized as a seminal proponent of the European New Right (a movement distinct from the Reagan or Thatcherite iterations of New Right ideologies). The texts by de Benoist that you have translated were published by *Telos* under the title *Democracy and Populism: The* Telos *Essays* (2018). This editorial choice prompts inquiry into the specific interest *Telos* holds in de Benoist's thought, especially considering that *Telos* is one of the few English-language platforms offering his work. The other notable publisher is the "alt-right" publishing house Arktos, known for disseminating works by figures such as Julius Evola and Alexander Dugin, which positions itself at odds with liberal consensus and, arguably, in a realm beyond mainstream acceptance. Through *Telos*, de Benoist has been afforded an avenue to transcend what might be seen as an ideological enclave.

This juxtaposition invites further reflection, particularly when considering the relationship between de Benoist and Alexander Dugin – the latter often dubbed the "world's most dangerous philosopher." In contrast, de Benoist, despite his influence, remains relatively obscure or marginalized within broader intellectual discussions. De Benoist is, in a sense, Dugin's "elder brother" in ideology, but he remains a little-known, if not downright marginal thinker. How do you interpret the disparate receptions of these thinkers? How does *Telos*'s engagement with de Benoist's work contribute to or challenge the prevailing intellectual discourse?

[3] See Russell A. Berman, "From Brecht to Schleiermacher: Religion and Critical Theory," *Telos* 1999, no. 115 (Spring): 36-48.

I have little to say about Dugin. I have not engaged with his writings. I know that his reputation is varied: some see him as an eccentric, without even a serious following in Russia, while others treat him as the font of far-right thinking. Alain de Benoist, in contrast, has had a long and productive relationship with *Telos*. It is not wrong to say that he was a friend of the *Telos* founder Paul Piccone. Benoist has his own intellectual origin in parts of French conservatism, and he has been central to the French reception of Schmitt. For *Telos*, Benoist's work has been interesting for its insights into the political fractures within France as, perhaps, emblematic of West European liberal democracies in general. So I guess our *Telos* reception of Benoist is more in a Western frame rather than in a Duginite one. But more importantly: our early engagement with Benoist (as with Schmitt) has been proven correct by the growth of the populist right in France, the rise of the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) in Germany, the Meloni government in Italy, and so forth. Let alone the Brexit vote. I do not want to equate all these; each national circumstance has its distinct characteristics. Nor do I endorse them all, but it is foolish to pretend that they do not have a certain "objectivity" – that is, they are expressions of responses to genuine social and economic developments. It remains clear that the international framework that arose after 1989 and the fall of the Soviet Union, the unification of Germany, and the establishment of the European Union in the context of the celebrated globalization of the 1990s produced tensions and dissatisfactions in parts of Europe that have led to the various – and varied – populist movements. The year 1989 was in fact not at all an "end to history" but, after a brief pause, the beginning of an eruption of ideologies, from the distinctive Shiite messianism of the Iranian Revolution to the various regionalisms (Catalonia) and nationalisms that find expression in the new populisms, left (Podemos) and right (AfD). Alain de Benoist provides insight into that. At the same time, his foreign-policy view – I am sure he would not disagree with this – is decidedly not Atlanticist. On this point, many of the *Telos* group and I advocate a different stance – remember we derive from the pro-NATO position of the 1980s. On the other hand, in our discussions of, say, Ukraine, we have been willing to engage with some positions closer to the Russian one (again, although I have taken stances firmly for the restoration of Ukrainian national sovereignty, a position I see consistent with populism and Schmittian sovereigntism).[4] This suggests in any case how foreign-policy choices are only loosely connected to theoretical positions and political allegiances: or to put it bluntly, conservative Schmittians may be Atlanticist or anti-Atlanticist. Constellations of ideas may be more contingent and flexible than is suggested by the political denunciation of, for example, Benoist as simply *nouvelle droite.*

6. Having been a part of Stanford University since 1979, your cooperation with this institution spans over four decades – a period during which you have witnessed substantial transformations. Could you share insights on how American culture, politics, and society have evolved from your perspective at Stanford? Additionally, how has the American academic landscape shifted, both within Stanford and more broadly across California and the United States?

[4] See Russell A. Berman, "Empire, State, Nation: Glory to Ukraine," *Telos* 2022, no. 201 (Winter): 189-200.

Yes, I began as a new assistant professor in German Studies in the fall of 1979 (to put some historical context around that, I remember watching the news reports of the Islamic Revolution in Iran that fall). I have spent nearly all my career at Stanford, with some brief interludes at Harvard and Columbia and on leaves in Berlin and Paris. It would be difficult to review all the changes in American higher education across more than four decades in this context. Let me just highlight a few key points. First is the dramatic decline in the study of the humanities. The number of majors in fields such as history, English, foreign literatures, and so forth has dwindled. This is part of a national trend, a function of two factors: the rise of computer science and related engineering fields, which now dominate higher education, and more broadly the greater attention students, and their parents, give to likely career outcomes. There is a long discussion to be had about the relationship between undergraduate learning and careers, as well as the difference in the structure of US learning, with the four-years of college prior to professional specialization, in contrast to the formats common in Europe. All this has been compounded by the rapid rise in the cost of college, now approaching $100,000 per year at private institutions.

Separately, there has been some effort to integrate previously marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans, into higher education. Some progress has been made, although the overall system has failed to address the flawed character of K-12 education,[5] which should provide the real preparation for college. As a result, there has been some compromise on meritocratic selection processes; one consequence is a dramatic divergence in the student body between those who come with strong preparation, especially in math and science, and those who lack that preparation and who remain at a disadvantage in the competitive technology fields.

Finally – and related both to the collapse of the humanities and the erosion of meritocracy – an ideological animus to the status quo has been disseminated: hostility to western culture, hostility to the United States and its history, hostility to capitalism and patriarchy and all the standard villains of contemporary adversarial culture. In intellectual-historical terms, it is fascinating to note how, during the Culture Wars of the 1980s, neoconservative critics bemoaned the influence of Nietzsche that had allegedly led to a cultural relativism, beyond good and evil, today we find a return – or regression – to a moralistic binary thinking, good versus evil, non-white versus white, non-West versus West, and so forth. All this is currently, in the spring of 2024, erupting in the anti-Israel demonstrations that are taking place at many colleges and universities, shot through with explicit antisemitism. As I write, we are in the midst of this, and I cannot predict where it will lead. But it certainly indicates that, in the long run, higher education in the United States may be at a tipping point. It will not return to the pre–October 7 normalcy. The elite universities in particular have ruined their brand, and the public is losing faith in the value of a college education. Interestingly we see an uptick in enrollments in trade schools: better to learn how to weld than to pay for a BA in gender studies. I think we may soon watch free-standing computer science and programming academies develop, without the

[5] K-12 education refers to schooling from kindergarten through twelfth grade, the end of high school. In other words, it covers education prior to college.

baggage of humanities disciplines that have decided to marginalize themselves – unless there is a sea-change in the management of higher education.[6]

A moment ago, I said a tipping point. We may face new institutions and new kinds of institutions. Tesla represents a new kind of automobile company that is overshadowing the historically great car companies of Detroit. The traditional press, the *New York Times* and so forth, has lost ground to the dissemination of the social media, to substacks, and to undertakings such as Bari Weiss's *Free Press.* The University of Austin is a new university, intended to compete with the moribund old ones. More change is sure to come.

7. As a literary scholar, much of your academic inquiry centers on the interplay between literature and various cultural, historical, political, and social contexts, as well as its impact on reality. In light of this, how do you perceive the current state of literature? Does it continue to serve as a pertinent medium and a forum for articulating significant insights about the world? Furthermore, what role does literature occupy in an era shaped not only by radio and television but also by successive waves of media and communication technologies that engage individuals through computers, smartphones, and other devices?

Serious literature continues; new authors continue to engage with language and develop the various genres in ways that grapple with human existence in its current formations. In addition, some readers continue to delve into the canon of inherited literature. Literature past and present thrives on what Adorno called its "truth content," just as it can give pleasure, both aesthetic and intellectual. But there are problems. The effect of the media society – a term I use loosely to encompass both the spread of mass media and the new technologies, which are not at all the same – has been to erode traditional literary culture. Literature may be headed toward the fate of serious music: there is a dwindling audience for symphonic concerts, and the audience for serious contemporary music is tiny. To be sure, the recipients of serious literature and serious music were always a minority, but there was a period in parts of the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century when there was a kind of confluence of serious art and a culture of democratization. One response by specialists in literature – professors of the humanities – has been to declare the products of media culture as the new literature, whether film or television series. I fear this is a dead end; there are interesting questions to raise about such material, but the intellectual content is simply lower. In the meantime, the study of literature and the humanities in general has declined, even in elite institutions of higher education. I attribute this in part to the job prospects associated with the study of, for example, computer science, the intellectual excitement in the technology fields, and the failure of the humanists to offer competitive alternatives. The problem is indeed multifactorial, but the study of literature – the number of students "majoring" in English and other fields – is just on the decline. If US universities were to move to a system of "no requirements" and to allow students to select courses

[6] Russell Berman presented his critique of the current state of the humanities, their ideological entanglements, as well as their sociopolitical cluelessness in the essay "Higher Education after October 7: Drain the Swamp"; see https://www.telospress.com/higher-education-after-october-7-drain-the-swamp/.

simply on the basis of their own inclinations – rather than being forced to enroll in the humanities – the shift toward the sciences would be even greater.

Let me pick up on the response to the previous question about new institutions. The shape of higher education will change. When I started, classical humanities – especially literature in departments of English, but also history, philosophy, and so forth – were the predominant major choices in elite colleges and universities. Now they have dwindled significantly. So what will happen? It may be that universities just end up shrinking and then giving up on the humanities; those who would like to appreciate them will have to find other venues. If you want to learn piano, buy lessons from a piano teacher or go to a music school. I do not preclude a similar outcome for the study of literature.

8. What is the current state of critical theory? Does it remain a credible and meaningful subject for discussion in today's context? Does *Telos* continue to engage with critical theory in its work? Furthermore, is it feasible to pursue critical theory outside the confines of the Frankfurt School's legacy and its subsequent evolutions? If so, what could be the potential domains of impact for such a theory in today's context?

The term "critical theory," taken narrowly, really does belong to the Frankfurt School. It refers back to the distinction with "traditional theory" made by Max Horkheimer. It represented a particular tradition that drew especially on German idealism and Marx, integrating Nietzsche, Weber, and Freud and taking shape over several generations, from Lukacs through Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and others and then on to Habermas and his students. There has been a shift from, say, a generalized criticism of alienation in capitalist society – a formula that holds for Adorno's generation – to theories of liberal democracy associated with Habermas. The several facets of this legacy continue to have relevance. Yet obviously there are other philosophical strands that ask questions about contemporary social and cultural phenomena, and *Telos* has tried to engage with them, whether the tradition of sovereignty-theories associated with Carl Schmitt and related thinkers or questions of religion and tradition, prompted initially by the "radical orthodox" thinkers in England, such as John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock. The big picture is that *Telos* has been willing to go beyond the limited "Western Marxist" tradition and explore other legacies. For this we have been repeatedly criticized, but that criticism is really just a repetition of the criticism that the Frankfurt School faced because of its anti-communism: it was a key phase in the intellectual history of left anti-communism, and for that the communists attacked us for not being sufficiently "progressive." The same phenomenon applies when "progressives" attack *Telos*'s probing questions about Schmitt or about religion. What is at stake for *Telos* is theorizing the contemporary – in that the Hegelian mandate to raise the historical moment to the level of "the concept" applies. So just now we have new initiatives. One pertains to contemporary China. During the Cold War, *Telos* engaged with and promoted the work of Central European and Russian dissidents (hence, of course, the accusation of being reactionary, just because we opposed Soviet-style communism). We hope to engage with Chinese thinkers in a similar manner. The other pertains to the Middle East and the eruption of antisemitism after the Hamas attacks of October 7. Antisemitism was a topic for the classical Frankfurt School in its

efforts to theorize Nazi Germany. Antisemitism is a topic for *Telos* today in our efforts to understand the progressive neo-totalitarianism. I know of no other academic journal that has undertaken such openings. On the contrary, too much of the established academic world embraces the post–October 7 antisemitism, just as it effectively endorses the dictatorial practices of the Beijing regime.

9. How do you perceive the current state of the humanities, or "liberal arts," as you often refer to it in your public talks? This question encompasses both the discipline's standing within the academic realm and its broader societal context. Is pursuing a career or vocation in the humanities considered appealing to the younger generation? In an era marked by the rapid expansion of corporate entities and their associated career paths, how does the humanities community navigate the diminishing perceived value of their field? Furthermore, what effect do ideological conflicts have on the structure of the humanities and on the interactions among scholars with differing political views? Do you foresee any particular trends or changes in the future of the humanities? Will scholars remain isolated in an "ivory tower," or is there a different destiny awaiting them?

I discussed some of this above. I very much value the sort of learning that can be found in the study of the humanities, but it would be foolish to deny that they are in rapid decline as fields of study. There are multiple causes: job opportunities, the excitement of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, the changing field of mass media. The power of what Horkheimer and Adorno labeled the "culture industry" has only grown greater, pushing serious writing ever more into a corner. As a result, humanities faculty members try to overcome their increasing marginalization by rushing to the forefront of various political causes, most recently the defense of Hamas. Their calculation is that, if they promote themselves in political campaigns, they may be able to counteract the growing disinterest they find among students. I suspect this is a miscalculation and will only lead to further deterioration of the fields. The number of students drawn to the humanities to pursue "activism" will not offset the numbers who are repelled by overpoliticization. And for those poor souls that are really drawn to activism, there are better ways to do it than majoring in English.

10. Do you believe that contemporary intellectuals possess agency and a tangible impact on the shape and functioning of culture, politics, and society? In today's media landscape, characterized by messages that are simultaneously more fragmented and more intense than they were just a decade ago, is it feasible not only to formulate rational thought and judgment but also to share it? Do journals and think tanks retain the capacity to exert such influence?

Of course it is possible to think or, as you put it, to "formulate rational thought and judgment." It is also possible to share it. Journals such as *Telos* continue to exist, and there are various venues of intellectual life, inside and outside universities. The point, however, is that there is the perception, which may underpin your question, that the

capacity of intellectuals to influence events is declining. Perhaps, but I am not sure how to prove that. Was there a golden age when intellectuals truly drove political agendas? How have intellectuals (which one would have to define more precisely) participated in political leadership? André Malraux was once minister of cultural affairs in France, and Paul Claudel was an ambassador, but I'd venture that these were exceptions. More likely these were cases of some sociological overlap of the educated elite with the elite dominance of politics. One could measure the number of Oxbridge graduates in British cabinets over a century, or Ivy League graduates in US governments. But that kind of educational pedigree is, I suspect, different from what you mean by intellectual. French ministerial leadership has long come out of select institutions of higher education, the preparatory schools for the political elite, but that does not mean that Michel Foucault or Jean Baudrillard might ever have headed a ministry. (I should add: thank goodness.)

Now, what we are witnessing today, certainly since COVID and the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement compounded by DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) policies is a degradation of the elitist practices of the formerly elite institutions. The current abrupt transformation of higher education, and not only in the United States, may mean that the elite universities will lose their reputation and their standing. They may revert to what they were for a long time, just indications of privilege without, however, educational substance to back that up.

So in the end: no, intellectuals do not drive society today, anymore than Socrates did, but we imagine that we are losing a power that we really never had.

11. You authored *Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Problem* (2008). Do you believe in the concept of "Americanism"? If so, could you explain the anatomy of this phenomenon? Is there an essence to Americanism? It's assumed that conservative intellectuals might perceive it quite differently from liberals. Does the United States have a historical mission? Given the current global context, including the war in Ukraine and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, what can the United States offer to the world?

"Anti-Americanism" is a commonly used term to designate hostility, whether ideological or affective, to the United States. "Americanism," in contrast, is not often used, so it would be hard to define. To stay with this lexemic question for a moment, the term "antisemitism" is familiar as the name for hostility to Jews, whether out of religious, ideological, or even racial frameworks. But "semitism" does not exist. The apparent opposite of every word is not necessarily a word. Yet you ask whether America has a historical mission. Here one would want to look at the founding and the principles associated with it, as articulated in the Declaration of Independence, the long and complex efforts at the realization of those principles in different historical contexts, and American foreign policy today. How does the founding moment and its legacy reverberate in subsequent epochs? That would be worth a book. At the same time, the United State is – still – the strongest power, the hegemon, although China may be challenging that status. So, we could ask what the United States has to offer in terms of its ideas from the founding – support for self-governance and human dignity – and/or we could ask about the responsibility of the strongest power, for example,

to maintain order, or at least to contribute significantly to the maintaining of order, in the international system. These two vectors are not absolutely separate, but they are different logics of motivation. The gap between them is the gap between values and power.

12. In addition to occupying numerous academic positions, you have also engaged in activities that are distinctly political in nature. You served as a senior advisor on the Policy Planning Staff of the US Department of State and were a member of the department's Commission on Unalienable Rights. Additionally, you are the director of the Middle East and the Islamic World Working Group at the Hoover Institution. Within this framework, you have contributed numerous geopolitical commentaries to *The Caravan* magazine. It would seem these pursuits are motivated by an ambition to shape global affairs, an aspiration that might be challenging to fulfill through purely academic endeavors. Have these politically oriented roles enriched your worldview as an intellectual? Were you able to effect change in the manner you envisioned? Do these experiences diverge from your long-standing academic pursuits within the university? Furthermore, how has your academic and intellectual foundation – for instance, your familiarity with a Schmittian analysis of geopolitical issues – impacted your political engagement?

My initial training was in the humanities, and I have been a professor of German literature. However, even literary intellectuals are also citizens, in other words, participants in a political community. Plus, I have always had interests in political affairs. So I have been fortunate enough to be able to participate, both in a policy context, such as the Hoover Institution, and in government concerning foreign policy. I have appreciated opportunities to escape academic narrowness, and my different interests have informed each other, as I have described above. I suppose in terms of foreign policy I direct particular attention to questions of culture, language, and narratives: when I was asked to take over the directorship of the Middle East group at Hoover, I insisted that I, with my humanities background, would have to try to learn Arabic, which remains a constant and rewarding intellectual pursuit. I believe that the current diplomatic world suffers from the fact that too many of the actors have too little familiarity with the cultures with which they interact, too little knowledge of their history. Similarly, what passes as political thinking in the humanities is really little more than resentment and sloganeering, with no serious attention to the existential realities of power. Having some experience on both sides has been salutary. I am grateful for the opportunities I have been blessed to enjoy. There is too much in professional life that pushes toward narrowness and "one-dimensionality." People should work against that.

13. I would like to ask you about your work on the Christian Epimetheus – a figure coined by the German poet Konrad Weiss. Your paper can be seen as a contribution to the discussion on the so-called postsecular turn, which is understood as the return of religion and/or its new visibility in the public sphere. It was Carl Schmitt who made serious use of this figure and proposed it as one of the main elements of "the Christian conception of history" in his review of Karl Löwith's famous book *Meaning*

***in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (1949).[7] You began your text with a reference to Jürgen Habermas and his lecture on religion in the public sphere. About fifteen years have passed since the text was written. What do you think the figure of Christian Epimetheus can contribute to contemporary discussions about the relationship between politics and religion? Is it more than a testimony to a bygone era? Has something changed since the text was written – a time when discussions about the return of religion were stimulated by Habermas's theses about a "postsecular society"?**

You are right that in my work on Weiss I began with an invocation of Habermas's acknowledgement of the (potential) significance of religious traditions even in our "enlightened" world. By invoking Habermas, I suppose I was conceding that skeptics of religion, proponents of liberal secularism, still defined the intellectual hegemony in universities. So Habermas seemingly was giving "permission" to think about religion, and, what's more, the path to religion led through the appearance of Weiss's notion of a Christian Epimetheus in Schmitt. In other words, I was working through a double taboo: talking about Schmitt and talking about religion.

In general, Schmitt's thinking was not primarily religious, although he did initially operate within the terms of political Catholicism. That disappeared by the mid-twenties. Nonetheless, in the face of the dictatorship (and his ambivalent relationship to it) and then later the threatening world situation of the Cold War, he turned toward the political theological notion of the Katechon, the ruler who staves off catastrophe, who retards the arrival of the Antichrist and the apocalypse. This is not the place to open up the implications of eschatology: should one hasten the end, or should one fear it? (This is analogous to the left-wing cliché of "the worse, the better."). Into this, Schmitt introduces references to Weiss and the "Christian Epimetheus." In contrast to the standard progressive adulation of Prometheus, the one who looks forward and the one who brings technological progress through fire, Epimetheus is constitutively retrospective, he looks back at the past in mourning, and while doing so, participates in history. There is some affinity to Walter Benjamin's often cited image of the "angel of history" constantly blown away from Paradise. For Weiss, implicitly, history is imbued with the sorrow of the past, ultimately the Crucifixion, and we participate in history through the acknowledgement of suffering. The progress imagines that we can eliminate suffering fully; the Promethean tries to do so with fire and tools; the Epimethean acknowledges, humanly, that while we must try to alleviate suffering, suffering, loss, and pain will not disappear. That concession is not some kind of alibi for exploitation (that would be the standard progressive misrepresentation of religion) but rather a recognition of our finitude. Our mortality means not only that we will face death, but we face the death of those around us whom we love. That suffering will not be eliminated by policies of a progressive Leviathan.

[7] See Carl Schmitt, "Three Possibilities for a Christian Conception of History," trans. Mario Wenning, *Telos* 2009, no. 147 (Summer): 167-70, originally published in 1950.

Abraham P. Bos

BASILIDES OF ALEXANDRIA AS AN ARISTOTELIAN GNOSTIC III: WORLD SEED, TRIPARTITE SONSHIP, AND THE TRANSCENDENT GOD[1]

CHAPTER 4. BASILIDES'S DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD SEED ACCORDING TO *REFUTATION* VII 20, 1-27, 13, AND X 14 (CONTINUED)

4.3. THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AS ΑΡΧΗ ΓΕΝΕΣΕΩΣ THROUGH ITS WILL (20, 2, AND 21, 1)

The way Basilides talks about the genesis of the cosmos is unique. He starts his cosmogony with absolute Nothing (20, 2-3). Basilides presents this absolute Nothing as the highest divine principle. It is the non-being God, whom he also characterizes as "not ineffable." That Basilides thus wants to distinguish the highest and metacosmic principle sharply from the two cosmic divine principles can be seen in what follows, where Basilides describes the Great cosmic Archon as "ineffable" (23, 3 – but see chap. 4.7.4 – and 25, 4; X 14, 6) and where he characterizes the Lower Archon of the Hebdomad as "effable" (25, 4).[2] The latter, that is, the third divine being, is said by Basilides to be the God who spoke to Moses (25, 4). In the eyes of Basilides, the fact that the Lower Archon had revealed himself to Moses by means of the name "I am He who is" (Exod. 3:14) must have been a self-disqualification and a sign of his Ignorance.

Starting with this initial situation of absolute Nothing, Basilides goes on to claim that "the God-who-was-not *willed to create* a cosmos."[3] This is a crucial sentence in the Anonymous's discussion. For at the very beginning of his discussion, we encounter a serious problem. To Basilides's highest God (whom the author had identified with Aristotle's God, whose activity he twice describes in the Aristotelian formula "thinking

[1] The first two parts of this study were published in *Kronos*: *Philosophical Journal* 11 (2022): 100-136, and *Kronos*: *Philosophical Journal* 12 (2023): 153-70.

[2] Though these Archons received the name "god" in earlier centuries, Basilides does not deem them worthy of this title. He can base this on John 17:3, where Jesus talks about "the only true God." Basilides sees the attribution of the name "God" to other beings as the result of the "confusion" about the meanings of words. Cf. Gospel of Philip §11: "And the one who hears 'God' does not think of the one who is stable, but he thinks of the ones who are unstable."

[3] *Haer.* VII 21, 1: <ὁ> οὐκ ὢν θεός [...] κόσμον ἠθέλησε ποιῆσαι. Philo, *Opif.* 16 speaks in the same way: βουληθεὶς τὸν ὁρατὸν κόσμον τουτονὶ δημιουργῆσαι προεξετύπου τὸν νοητόν.

of thinking"), the Anonymous attributes two activities incompatible with the Aristotelian concept of God: "willing" and "making." "Willing" is always aimed at the realization of something that the subject of this Will has not yet realized. But this is completely at odds with the autarky of the highest Principle in Aristotelian theology. "Making," "producing" is also an activity that is appropriate not to a totally perfect, self-sufficient Intellect but to an ensouled being in development or in a production process. Aristotle had sharply criticized Plato's *Timaeus* for being vague about the functions of the World Soul and the Intellect (*Anim.* I 3, 406b26-407b11). And he had emphasized that νόησις is the activity of the Intellect, not of the Soul. In this work, he had also clearly distinguished between purely theoretical activity and the practically orientated activity of the mind (407a23-25). For Aristotle, it is beyond question that all production and πρᾶξις are a matter of the Soul. Νόησις and θεωρία are exclusively the activity of the Νοῦς. Basilides was well aware of this; witness the way he directly reformulates "willing" as a form of "not willing" (cf. chap. 4.3.2) and mentions that "making" relates not to something from the world of "beings" and the visible, material world but to a World Seed.

Yet there is clearly a problem: an act of the totally self-sufficient highest God produces something else that is not identical with God.

We should consider here that both the author of the *Poimandres* (*Corp. Herm.* I) and Philo of Alexandria indicate that, though the Will of God is the Will *of God*, it *is not identical with God*. Moreover, the Will of God results in a distinction between God and that which is not identical with God. In fact, the Will of God is itself a manifestation of a separation in the Deity.

POIMANDRES (CORP. HERM. I)

This problem is discussed most explicitly by the author of the *Poimandres*. He first describes God as a Light, a brilliant and pleasing Light. But then part of this Light is obscured and becomes fearful and terrible Darkness (chap. 4). This Darkness gives birth to a moist nature, which then differentiates into Fire and Air and Water plus Earth. When the initiate Hermes asks Poimandres in chapter 8 where these physical elements came from, Poimandres replies, "From God's Will [Βουλή], which has received Logos and has become cosmos while imitating the Beautiful Cosmos, through the agency of its own elements, the souls." The formulation used by the author here[4] makes it clear that he interpreted the Will of God as a passive principle that undergoes an effect from the highest, active divine Principle. The author of the *Poimandres* sees the Will of God as the female aspect of God, which is impregnated by the Logos of God, which is therefore a Λόγος σπερματικός. In this fundamental Hermetic treatise, the visible cosmos is therefore a rational living being and product of the creative conjunction of God as Male Principle of Generation (the Intellect) and as Female Principle of Generation (his Will). In this the author of the *Poimandres* follows the Aristotelian scheme of all procreation: the male Principle is presented as the supplier of the Εἰδός by means of his Λόγος. The female Principle stands for "matter," which receives the form.

[4] *Corp. Herm.* I 8: ἐκ βουλῆς θεοῦ [...] λαβοῦσα τὸν λόγον.

But here it is therefore God's female aspect that, purely by means of its own elements, the souls, becomes a visible cosmos in which the purely physical bodies are used by these souls. These physical bodies were not first created or begotten but are the result of a development process of the Will-of-God as World Soul.

This explanation is supported by the explicit statement of the author of the *Poimandres* in chapter 9 that God is androgynous. He is both Life and Light.

But in the context of the *Poimandres*, it is also clear that an internal contradiction is thus projected into the Origin itself. God's Will is clearly the same as the Darkness that arose in a part of the divine Light. And the entire *Poimandres* is also about the liberation of the components of the divine Ἄνθρωπος, who displays "the image of God," from the matter resulting from the development of God's will.

THE TREATISE *ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD* (NHC II 5 AND XIII 2)

To illustrate the train of thought followed by the author of the *Poimandres*, we can suitably quote a passage from one of the Coptic treatises in the Nag Hammadi collection – namely, the opening passage of the treatise *On the Origin of the World* (pp. 98-99). Its intention is to show that the foundation of all things is not Chaos but an even more original principle. In English translation, this text reads:

> After the natural structure of the immortal beings had completely developed out of the infinite, a likeness then emanated from Πίστις [Faith] ; it is called Sophia [Wisdom]. It exercised volition and became a product resembling the primeval light. And immediately her will manifested itself as a likeness of heaven, having an unimaginable magnitude; it was between the immortal beings and those things that came into being after them, like [...]; she [Sophia] functioned as a veil dividing mankind from the things above.
>
> Now the eternal realm (αἰών) of truth has no shadow outside it, for the limitless light is everywhere within it. But its exterior is shadow, which has been called by the name darkness. From it there appeared a force, presiding over the darkness. And the forces that came into being subsequent to them called the shadow "the limitless chaos." From it, every [kind] of divinity sprouted up [...] together with the entire place, [so that] also [shadow] is posterior to the first product. It was <in> the abyss that [it] [shadow] appeared, deriving from the aforementioned Πίστις.[5]

The text describes how Sophia, characterized by volition, separates from the perfect Origin, which is also called "the primeval light." This separation of Sophia from the Origin produces a "likeness of heaven." But further on, we are also told that shadow arises where first there was only light. This shadow can also be called "Darkness" and "limitless chaos."

There is a clear connection via the term "Wisdom" with the biblical notion of Wisdom as involved in God's work of creation (Prov. 8:22). Via the notion of the Will as

[5] *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. M. Robinson, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1988), 172. Cf. B. A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 221-25.

characteristic of this figure, she seems to have been presented as the Will of God but in the sense of non-identical with the Intellect of God. The author of this text, like the author of the *Poimandres*, apparently claims that not only is there a distinction between male and female in all beings but that this distinction, which is fundamental in the sphere of all living creatures, should also be assumed *in the Origin* of these living creatures.[6]

The birth of "shadow," or "darkness" and "chaos," where first there was only "the primeval light," should be seen as the result of the distinction between God's Intellect and God's Will. As soon as a non-identity occurs, that which differentiates itself causes a shadow, which by degrees condenses into materiality. This explains why the obscuration of the spiritual principle that differentiates itself is automatically burdened with materiality (even if at the highest level this materiality is of a very fine, subtle caliber). But as we shall see in chapter 4.6.3 in discussing the *Acta Andreae*, Plutarch, and Plotinus in order to illustrate the three different levels of the Sonship in the divine World Seed in Basilides, this is a standard way of explaining in Basilides's time why there is not just the one Origin but also a reality of lower quality. The spiritual principle that differentiates itself undergoes a process of obscuration and of increased Ignorance. At the same time, this results in a materiality alien to its essence, with which it is clothed as an "image" (εἴδωλον) of itself.

This problem of whether this cosmos "always existed without ἀρχὴ γενέσεως," or whether it "came into being, initiated by a certain ἀρχὴ" seems to have been raised by the question in Plato's *Timaeus* 28b6. The answer is that the Demiurge is the cause of being for the cosmos because the Demiurge shared his own perfection out of pure goodness (29e).

But Aristotle decisively influenced the further debate by stating that not just one ἀρχὴ γενέσεως functions in the cosmos but two![7] Besides the male, form-giving principle, something else is required that receives the form but that does have an affinity (κοινωνία) with the male principle. For not just anything is fertilized by just any spermatic principle (*Anim.* I 3, 407b17-26). But whereas in animals and humans the male and the female are represented by separate, concrete specimens, this is impossible at the highest level of origin. Hence the male and the female are discussed as two facets of the divine Origin. But these two facets are certainly *not* equivalent. At this level, too, the male principle is the cause of all that is good and perfect; the female is the receptive entity (cf. Arist. *Phys.* I 9, 192a12-25).

This is why many Gnostics formulate the ultimate goal as follows: the female must become male (Gospel of Thomas, logion 114; 106). This occurs in a process of "unification," to which the metaphor of the "bridal chamber" is often applied. However, no "daughters of the bridal chamber" are ever begotten in it but always "sons." The purpose of everything that comes into being is to become like unto God, in the sense of becoming "of the same essence" as God, but specifically "of the same essence" as the male aspect of God!

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[6] Perhaps the Gospel of Philip §60 refers to this in the words "The mystery of marriage is great, for [without] it the *cosmos* would [not be]."

[7] Cf. *Gener. anim.* II 1, 732a1-3, where he says that the male and the female are the principles of living beings and that therefore the male and the female are present in "all that exists." The correction introduced by H. J. Drossaart Lulofs in *Aristotelis De Generatione Animalium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 47: "in all living beings which have that distinction," is wrong.

We should see the conceptions of the *Poimandres*, of *On the Origin of the World*, of Philo of Alexandria in his *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, and of Basilides as four closely related answers to the same problem: How are we to understand that the cosmos in its entirety, that is, according to both its physical and its spiritual aspect, can be reduced to God as the one Origin? In all four cases this has led to an *intra-divine* distinction between the Intellect of God as the male, active Principle and the Will of God as the female and passive Principle. This Will of God brings about a "spiritual," not yet coarse-material world, which goes on to produce the visible world by means of the souls or the Powers as its own principles.

In the *Poimandres* it is the Will of God itself that imitates the Beautiful Cosmos in the Intellect of God and thus becomes the visible world. We will have to interpret this as the World Soul that contains the forms of all living entities and that it then goes on to realize.

Looking back from there, we will also have to explain why Philo of Alexandria in *On the Creation of the Cosmos* 8, before he starts on the actual creation, says that Moses was well aware of the need to distinguish between an active principle and a passive object in all that exists. Philo also compares the male principle with the seed-sowing male and the female object with the seed-receiving female specimen (*Opif.* 14). He goes on to situate the intelligible world in the Λόγος, as the Architect who first designs in himself the plan for the cosmos and carries it with him *in his soul* (*Opif.* 18; 20) and then gives it concrete shape. Philo emphatically distinguished the King and the Architect as a model of θεωρία and intellectual activity and as a model of practical and productive activity, respectively. Significantly, the Architect is called a "craftsman" in *On the Creation* 20.

Looking ahead to Basilides, we can suspect that he similarly saw the World Seed as resulting from the conjunction of the Λόγος of God with his Will, the passive principle vitalized by the Λόγος.

Actually, it is surprising that the theme of God's "Will" has not been studied more extensively. There is a striking similarity between these very different texts. The origin of the theme no doubt goes back to Plato's *Timaeus* 29d7-30b9. There, for the first time, the "Will" of God is said to be "the most fundamental Principle of becoming and of cosmos" (29e). The passage goes on to observe that the visible cosmos that came into being could only be as beautiful as possible because it possessed intellect but that it could only possess this intellect thanks to *a soul* as vehicle of this intellect. It is made clear that the actual activity of the Demiurge was that he brought order to that which was restlessly in motion without order. Here, too, the Will of God seems to be an aspect of God that produces as it were a *passive principle*, on which the divine Intellect of the Demiurge acts in a regulating and organizing way.[8]

The Demiurge is never called "soul" in the *Timaeus*. He is designated only as "God" and "Intellect." His real activity is the activity of thought, the contemplation of intelligible reality. But there is the other side of the Demiurge as well: his Will and his ordering and construction of the visible cosmos as a combination of World Soul and World Body.

[8] But the debate over Plato's *Timaeus* has taken an unproductive turn because of the fact that the passage 28b, where an "Ἀρχὴ γενέσεως" is mentioned for the first time, has too often been explained as an inquiry into whether the cosmos had a "beginning" in time. Cf. Bos, "Philo on God as '*archê geneseôs*,'" 32-47.

It has often been remarked that the Demiurge is not a real "Creator" God because he only gives form to unordered matter in motion. But we should bear in mind that Plato uses for the unordered matter terms such as "the nurse" (49a), "the receptacle" (50b), "the substance" or "mold" (50c2), but even "mother" (51a5). Plato himself also provides the specific explanation in 50d2: the visible cosmos is that which is begotten, that which moves without order is the Mother, and the Origin of order and form of all creation is the Father.

But if we again connect this specific explanation with Plato's earlier remarks about God's goodness and his Will to make everything as good as possible (27e1-9), we can rightly conclude that Plato himself already distinguished between God's Intellect and his Will, as between the active and the passive principle of Origin.

The fact that the *Poimandres* explicitly identifies the Will of God as God's female aspect and Philo and Basilides give the same idea less explicitly suggests that we are dealing here with the solution that Aristotle proposed to the problem of the cosmos's dependence on God as the Principle of Origin. The real essence of God is then interpreted as perfect pure Intellect (cf. Philo, *Opif.* 8); that on which God acts as giver of form and life is seen to be "matter" and the "Mother," the female Principle of Origin (cf. *Phys.* I 9, 192a14).

ZEUS CHARACTERIZED AS "MALE" AND "FEMALE" IN *ON THE COSMOS* 7

We might think that the *Poimandres* with its reference to the "androgyny" of God is an aberration, "dredged up from somewhere in the underworld of Middle Platonism," to use a fine expression by J. Dillon.[9] But perhaps we should rather acknowledge that the work *On the Cosmos* 7, 401b2, already describes Zeus as "male" and "female," in a quotation from an Orphic hymn that Plato had already cited in *Laws* IV 715eff.

THE 'WILL' OF GOD IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE AUTHOR OF THE *ELENCHOS*

It is relevant to mention here that the author of the *Elenchos*, in his own brief summary of Christian doctrine in Book X, also puts great emphasis on the "Will of God" as the foundation of the world's genesis. He starts in X 32, 1, by describing God in himself. "God is one, the first and only, of all things the Maker and Lord. There is nothing simultaneous to him." "When He *willed* the beings, He made them. But they did not exist before He conceived the will to make them." In passing, the author refers to his own treatise *On the Universe* (Περὶ τοῦ παντός) or also *On the Essence of the Universe* (Περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός οὐσίας), in X 32, 4, in which he explained "the Origin of order and form" of all of creation.

He goes on in 33, 1, by saying that the only God first "thought out and brought forth" (ἐννοήθεις απεγεννα) the Logos in himself. He produced the Logos from beings. "For God himself was being and the Logos was produced from it." Again it is said explicitly of the Logos that it carried in itself the Will of its Begetter. In 33, 3-5, the author goes on to say that the Logos made all beings subject to procreation male and female, but not all the others (such as the subservient beings – the angels – and the elements). He concludes this section

[9] J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), 287.

in 33, 6, with the remark, "Everything that God willed to make, he created through the Logos," and "When He willed to make them, He made them as he willed" (33, 7).

The author calls the Logos God's "firstborn" (πρωτότοκος, 33, 11) and "firstborn child of the Father" (33, 11), "his light-bringing voice from before the morning star" (cf. Psalm 109:3 [LXX]).

It seems that, although the author of the *Elenchos* emphatically avoided calling God "male and female," he did otherwise follow the scheme introduced by Aristotle as the alternative to Plato's Demiurge: God is ἀρχὴ γενέσεως because as self-contained Intellect he became the begetter and producer of the Logos through his Will.

In this regard there is no clear difference from the Logos doctrine of the work *Contra Noetum*. There, too, great emphasis is first put on God's unicity, and then on God's Will, as the starting-point for the genesis of the cosmos (10, 1; 10, 3). It is remarkable that in 16, 7, in the explicit quotation of Psalm 109:3 (LXX): "I begot you from the womb before the morning star," it seems as if the author of *Contra Noetum* relates the words "from the womb" to the virgin birth of Jesus from Mary's womb, though the text of the Psalm rules this out. In this the author of *Contra Noetum* follows Justin Martyr, who in his *Dialogus* 63, 3, also says that long beforehand the psalmist David announced the birth of God's Anointed from a human womb!

4.3.1. THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS: MAIN ISSUE OR SIDE ISSUE? GENESIS 1 OR JOHN 1? (21, 1)

It is pointedly added in 20, 2, that the "cosmos" God wanted to make does not refer to the differentiated, three-dimensional, physical cosmos but to a "non-being cosmos." This could be understood in the sense that God's goal was not the visible, concrete world but only a by-product of the spiritual cosmos he wanted to initiate.[10] For why would God want to make a visible cosmos from which the most valuable principles desire to escape (that is, the tripartite Sonship that, once actualized, turns out to be hypercosmic)? And why did the visible cosmos have to be created if it is plunged into ignorance in the end? If the purpose of the cosmogony is that receptive beings are "enlightened" by γνῶσις, how can it have the side effect that the entire material cosmos is enveloped in the darkness of Ignorance?

This remark could suggest that Basilides was not so much thinking of Genesis 1, Plato's *Timaeus*, or Philo's *On the Creation of the Cosmos* but rather of John 1. John 1 places the genesis of all things firmly in the framework of the Birth of the Λόγος.[11] John

[10] In his work "Against the Gnostics" (Enn. II 9 [33] 3, 17), Plotinus also polemicizes with persons who believe that matter is a "by-product" of the spiritual world.

[11] Cf. A. Méhat, "*Apokatastasis* chez Basilide," *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1974), 365-73, 366: "Ce Dieu a créé du néant [...] un Germe, [...] qui est Parole de Dieu et Lumière." J. H. MacMahon, in his translation of *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Ante Nicene Christian Library, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1868), 21-22, underlined the importance of Basilides's quotation of the Prologue to John for the debate over the date and authorship of this gospel, as did P. Hofstede de Groot, *Basilides am Ausgang des Apostolischen Zeitalters als erster Zeuge für Alter und Autorität neutestamentlicher Schriften, insbesondere des Johannesevangeliums, in Verbindung mit andern Zeugen bis zur Mitte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Deutsche vermehrte Ausgabe, 1868). But see Harting, "Basilides als getuige voor de echtheid van het

said that all things have been made by the Λόγος. But the point he wants to make in his gospel is that those who accept the Λόγος can become God's children (John 1:12). Basilides seems to have learned that the Λόγος entered the cosmos and that this brought about the entire cosmos, but the final upshot is that the divine Sonship unites with its *hyper*cosmic Origin.

The implication, however, is that Basilides viewed the theology of Genesis 1 and of Plato's *Timaeus* as products of an earlier and superseded theology. The consequence of Basilides's postulation of an absolutely transcendent, hypercosmic God seems to have been that he took the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus* to be the producer of cosmic, nonspiritual reality – that is, of the visible celestial beings (the stars and planets) – and that, like Plato, he presented the generation of mortal living creatures as the work of an even lower deity, who "imitates" the work of the Demiurge. Basilides seems to have understood the Prologue to the Gospel of John as a revelation of hitherto unknown aspects of the genesis of the cosmos. The genesis of the visible cosmos is seen as a necessary side effect of a spiritual genesis, the revelation/birth of the Sons of God.

In the seed of the cosmos, as in the ἀρχή (the principle) of the cosmos, the Logos was active and the cosmos was made through him. Yet the world knew him not (John 1:10). Only to those who received him did he give power to become "children of God" (John 1:12). They are those who were "born of God" (John 1:13). Elsewhere the evangelist talks about "to be born from above" (John 3:3, 3:7). This is clarified by the words "to be born of Πνεῦμα" (John 3:8). So Basilides probably meant to say that *the Son* of the Great Archon and then *the Son* of the Lower Archon are such that in a stage after their initial coming to be they are born "anew," "from above," and "born of Πνεῦμα," and consequently "they knew and received him," that is, because the Γνῶσις of the first and second Sonship descended upon them by mediation of the holy Πνεῦμα.[12]

In that case, the Λόγος that proceeded from God was interpreted by Basilides as the Λόγος σπερματικός, just as a Father begets a Son, who is first present in the capacity of semen and must pass through various phases of development in which he is *potentially* "of the same essence" as the Father but *not yet in reality* but with the specific final goal that the same essence (as that of the Father) be revealed in the Son.

If we may interpret Basilides's argument in this way, it becomes easier to understand why further on in his description of the cosmogony he talks about the begetting of Sons by the Great cosmic Archon and subsequently by the Lower cosmic Archon. As we will argue later, it is significant that the Sons of the Archons are begotten "from the underlying," in which the third Sonship has stayed behind. As a result, they share in this Sonship (which is "of the same essence" as the transcendent God) that had stayed behind there. We anticipate here by suggesting that in Basilides "the Sonship" plays the role that "the image of God" has in Philo, that is, the actual divine that a human being can possess. The reason why Basilides does not talk about "image" (εἰκών) must be sought in his language theology.

vierde evangelie." On this theme, cf. Luttikhuizen, "Johannine Vocabulary and the Thought Structure of Gnostic Mythological Texts," 175-81, in connection with "The Letter of Peter to Philip" and "The Trimorphic Protennoia." See also L. Abramowski, *Drei Christologische Untersuchungen*, chap. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981).

[12] In VII 22, 15, this "holy Πνεῦμα" is associated with the oil with which the priest Aaron was anointed.

We could consider the theological assimilation by Basilides of Aristotle's scheme of "procreation" by postulating that God, if he wants to produce a spiritual reality outside of himself, can only do so by causing the *Logos* as "God in potentiality" to enter a principle that receives the *Logos*, just as the intellect/the entelechy of a human being is "potentially" present in semen and is thereby passed on to the menstrual fluid of the female partner,[13] and it is then actualized in a process of development. But it is possible to characterize this entire process by means of the two aspects of the basic distinction that the author of the *Elenchos* had attributed to Aristotle in I 20, 1 – namely, "the οὐσία" and "the accidental." Both for Aristotle and for Basilides, the Origin is "true being"; by contrast, the World Seed and visible reality are "accidental," as his Δύναμις. Although it might seem rather speculative, we might consider Aristotle's viewing of the Δύναμις of God as the result of an "ἔκβασις" away from God, resulting in "ἔλλειψις."[14]

4.3.2. GOD'S WILL IS HIS COUNSEL (VII 21, 2)

But we have anticipated the train of Basilides's argument. We must now return to his discourse on the Origin and the initiative taken by the Origin to bring about a process of generation.

> 21, 1. [...] then <the> God-who-was-not, – whom Aristotle calls "thinking of thinking" but they "Him-who-is-not" – without thinking, without perception, without counsel, without choice, without passion or desire, willed to create a cosmos.
>
> But I say only for the sake of clearness, says he, that he willed, to signify that he did this without will or thinking or perception.

We saw that Basilides said that the non-being God *willed* to produce a cosmos.

This talk about God's "willing" is immediately corrected by saying that it is a willing that takes place "without will" (21, 2). Basilides seems clearly intent on preventing the misunderstanding that God had a wish or desire, which would detract from his self-sufficiency. All beings that have become are characterized by "longing" and "desire" (22, 8; X 14, 3). They belong to the sphere characterized by lack and want, ἔλλειψις. But God does not. The sphere of God is the sphere of fullness or πλήρωμα. The "will" attributed to God here is better called a "non-willing," a causal process that has no element of volition. His "will" can also be understood as his counsel. Everything that comes into being is repeatedly referred to as a product of God's "premeditated counsel."[15]

Basilides can link up here with passages in the letters of Paul that also talk about the "will" of God. A highly suitable text is Ephesians 1:3-14. It brings up a number of

[13] Cf. Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 1, 735a4: Πότερον δ' ἔχει ψυχὴν τὸ σπέρμα ἢ οὔ, with the answer in 735a8: δῆλον οὖν ὅτι καὶ ἔχει καὶ ἔστι δυνάμει, and A. P. Bos, "Aristotle on Soul and Soul-'Parts' in Semen (*GA* 2.1, 735a4-22)," *Mnemosyne* 62, no. 3 (2009): 378-400.

[14] Cf. the principle formulated in Arist. *Cael.* I 1, 268b3-4; see also *Phys.* I 9 on Form and Matter as male and female.

[15] Cf. *Haer.* VII <22, 1>; 22, 6; 23, 6; X 14, 2; 14, 9.

central terms in Basilides's theology. And it talks three times about the "will" of God.[16] It is the will of God that causes the entire process of world history.[17]

Nor does the fact that God "wills to make a cosmos" mean that the author of the *Elenchos* connects the highest divine entity in any way with the material realization of the cosmos. The hypercosmic God is only the causer (in a direct sense) of spiritual reality – namely, of the non-Being World Seed, which does not have a concrete (material) identity. It has assumed a material shape in the course of its development, but this seems to be a side effect of the actual divine begetting.[18] In this sense, the visible cosmos can be viewed as the field in which "the treasure" of the Sonship is hidden (cf. 22, 1), just as the visible body is the earthenware vessel in which the soul is hidden.

4.3.3. THE HYPERCOSMIC GOD OF BASILIDES AND THE UNMOVED MOVER OF ARISTOTLE (21, 1)

The author of the *Elenchos* says of this God that it is the God whom Aristotle called "thinking of thinking."[19] According to him, then, there is agreement between the perfectly pure Intellect-in-act that Aristotle says is the highest principle as final cause and Unmoved Mover, and the divine principle that Basilides assumes and that also in the words of Paul (Rom. 11:34: "who has known the mind [νοῦς] of the Lord?") transcends all human knowledge.

We should also take into account here that the Sonship, which is "of the same essence" as the transcendent God (22, 7), is said to ascend "like a thought [νόημα]" (22, 8); and that the great Enlightenment occurs when "the sons of God" in the cosmos receive the νοήματα deriving from the already blissful Sonship (25, 7).

Is there an element of truth in this identification of Aristotle's God with the God of Basilides?[20] I believe there is. We should bear in mind that Aristotle fundamentally paved the way for a Gnostic philosophy in his description of *Metaphysics* A 1-2. He proposed there that the "natural desire" of all men is directed at supernatural knowledge, that is, knowledge of God and knowledge that God himself possesses. This allows man

[16] Eph. 1:4: He chose us in him before the *foundation* of the world – ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου; Eph. 1.5: He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will – προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἱοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ; Eph. 1:9: For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will – γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ; and Eph. 1:11: according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will – τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.

[17] The reference in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* IV 86, 1 (Löhr frag. 8), to Basilides's doctrine of "the so-called will of God" supports the idea that this is an important and comprehensive concept in Basilides.

[18] Against the background of this theology, we will also have to understand the statement in VII 27, 1: "God shall bring upon the whole world the Great Ignorance," in the sense that this great Ignorance is not the result of an incidental intervention by the supreme God but the final situation of the development process that has taken place in the World Seed.

[19] *Haer.* VII 21, 1: ὃν Ἀριστοτέλης καλεῖ νόησιν νοήσεως. The author of the *Elenchos* had already referred to this definition of God in 19, 7.

[20] See also chap. 4.1.1 above. Mueller ("Hippolytus, Aristotle, Basilides," 146) sees the relation between Basilides's non-being God and Aristotle's transcendent Intellect as an unfounded opinion of Hippolytus. But in note 8, he does point to the doxographical reports that state that, according to Aristotle, God was ἀκατονόμαστος. Quispel ("L'homme gnostique," 98) also considered a relation of Basilides with Aristotle to be weakly founded.

to overcome his Ignorance (Ἄγνοια) and to realize his potential for intellectuality, that is, his potential to be of the same essence as God.[21]

Moreover, as we already remarked, Basilides did not present the highest divine entity as the producer of any materially characterized reality. He holds responsible for the visible cosmos not the highest God but the Great Archon of the Ogdoad and his subordinate, the Lower Archon of the Hebdomad, who are both presented as living beings devoid of spiritual insight and as psychically characterized (23, 7, and 24, 3-5). This doubtless means that Basilides's theology took into account Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Timaeus*.[22] The heart of this criticism was that, if God is pure Intellect, he cannot be the Demiurge because the Intellect is free from any involvement in material reality; and that, if he is the Demiurge of the cosmos, he cannot be pure Intellect because he needs an instrument, an efficient cause, to produce a material product. If he is the Demiurge in the sense of Plato's *Timaeus*, God belongs to the sphere of the psychical, which cannot function without a "natural σῶμα ὀργανικόν." The double theology of a transcendent, hypercosmic God and a subordinate, cosmic god (or gods), which is characteristic of all forms of Gnosticism, can be understood to result from the elaboration of Aristotle's further distinction between the human functions that are connected with the intellect and the soul. The distinction between immaterial objects of knowledge and material natural reality was accepted by Aristotle from Plato. But in his view of the soul and the functions of the soul, Aristotle clearly distanced himself from his teacher. For instance, he described perception as a process that the soul cannot carry out "without a body," and hence he presented the soul itself as the "entelechy of a natural instrumental body."[23] Whereas Plato for this reason presented man's goal as the purification of the influences of the visible body, Aristotle stated man's goal as a higher ideal: to free the intellect from the limitations of the soul.

That the non-being God of Basilides is, with some justification, equated by the author of the *Elenchos* with Aristotle's pure, transcendent Intellect is also shown by the description in 22, 8: "For toward Him every nature strives, but each differently."[24] It is clear from this that God is the cause of all movement as the object of desire and conation.[25] The role occupied by the Idea of the Good in Plato's philosophical system is awarded by

[21] Cf. A. P. Bos, "Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology in Greek Philosophy and Gnosticism," in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, ed. W. E. Helleman (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1994), 1-21, esp. 1-2; "Die Prägung des Gnostizismus durch den Aristotelischen Dualismus," in *Philosophische Religion: Gnosis zwischen Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. P. Koslowski (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006), 37-55.

[22] Löhr (*Basilides und seine Schule*, 308n86) also points to the criticism that Basilides's doctrine of the World Seed implies in relation to Plato's conception of the Demiurge as a craftsman. See also J. Whittaker, "Plutarch, Platonism and Christianity," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of A.H. Armstrong*, ed. A. H. Armstong, H. J. Blumenthal, and R. A. Markus (London: Variorum Publications, 1981), 50-63; and A. P. Bos, "God as 'Father' and 'Maker' in Philo of Alexandria and Its Background in Aristotelian Thought," *Elenchos* 24 (2003): 311-32.

[23] For this, see A. P. Bos, *The Soul and Its Instrumental Body: A Reinterpretation of Aristotle's Philosophy of Living Nature* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[24] *Haer*. VII 22, 8: ἐκείνου γὰρ [...] πᾶσα φύσις ὀρέγεται, ἄλλη δὲ ἄλλως. Cf. X 14, 3. See also VII 22, 16, and the commentary on 22, 8, in chap. 4.6.8 below.

[25] Cf. Arist. *Metaph*. Λ 7, 1072a26-b4; *Phys*. I 9, 192a14-19. Löhr (*Basilides und seine Schule*, 296n47) also refers to Arist. *Anim*. II 4, 415b1, and Plu. *Facie* 944E.

Aristotle to the transcendent, immaterial Intellect, which thinks out the principles of all reality and acts through power (of attraction) upon psychically characterized entities. This influence of Aristotle on the theological debate can be clearly discerned in Philo of Alexandria.[26] Likewise in the Hermetic *Poimandres* the Νοῦς is the origin of all things, while the demiurgic Νοῦς produced by him is called "the God of Fire and Πνεῦμα" and is said to be "of the same essence" as the Λόγος.[27] But this Aristotelian theology can equally be observed in Basilides as the author of the *Elenchos* describes him.

Recall that the author had already remarked in I 20, 4, that there was actually only one point of disagreement between Aristotle and his teacher: the doctrine of soul.[28] But both for Plato and for his pupil, the doctrine of soul had a macrocosmic and microcosmic aspect. Psychology and theology run parallel. Aristotle's theology sprang from his criticism of Plato's demiurgic creation doctrine. In his view, God should be conceived of not as efficient cause but as final cause. Aristotle elevated the visible celestial gods to the status of "efficient causes" of all that comes to be in the cosmos.[29] Basilides's theology seems the result of a tradition in which this Aristotelian criticism was fundamentally accepted.

4.3.4. THE DEPOSITION OF THE WORLD SEED AS THE ΚΑΤΑΒΟΛΗ OF THE COSMOS (21, 2)

We recall here that in the description of Aristotle's doctrine of being it was said that the genus according to Aristotle is a "heap" of many different seeds that are mixed together (a "seed-mixture," VII 15, 2), and then the author remarks in 17, 1, that he will discuss in a later place who "deposited" this principle of the beings. We noted in this context that the verb "καταβάλλειν" can have the meaning "to sow," "to fertilize,"[30] but also "to deposit," "to lay down."[31]

The derived noun "καταβολή" is used in Matthew 13:35, where it is said, "I will utter what has been hidden since the καταβολή [of the world]." Matthew is quoting there the text of Psalm 78 (77 LXX):2. Matthew 25:34 talks about "the kingdom prepared for you from the καταβολή of the world" (cf. Eph. 1:4-5).

Basilides himself seems to have explained this specific turn of phrase "the καταβολή of the world" as identical with "the deposition of the World Seed" as the principle of all things.[32] In 21, 4, the author makes this explicit by rendering Basilides's doctrine of creation as follows: "Thus the God-who-is-not made the cosmos from things which were not, casting down and bringing to reality a certain single seed containing within itself the

[26] Philo, *Opif.* 7-11. Cf. A. P. Bos, "Philo of Alexandria: A Platonist in the Image and Likeness of Aristotle," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 10 (1998): 66-86; Bos, "Gnostische spiritualiteit: de Grieks-filosofische component," *Philosophia Reformata* 67, no. 2 (2002): 108-27; Bos, "Philo on God as '*archê geneseôs*,'" 32-47.

[27] *Corp. Herm*. I 9-10.

[28] See chap. 2.3. in *Kronos*: *Philosophical Journal* 11 (2022): 105ff.

[29] See in particular Arist. *Cael*. II 12 and II 2. See also *Philos*. frag. 26 Ross; 65 Gigon for the distinction between "mens" and the "alius quidam qui mundi motum regat atque tueatur."

[30] Cf. in particular *Haer*. IV 3, 5-11, on the problem of drawing up a horoscope if this requires a precise determination of the moment of fertilization or conception (τῆς τοῦ σπέρματος καταβολῆς καὶ συλλήψεως). See also Philo, *Cher.* 49, where God is called "the man of Sophia," who "sows" the seeds of happiness (καταβαλλόμενος).

[31] It is also remarkable that our author in 27, 4, talks about "all things that were by nature founded [τεθεμελιωμένων] in the Seed of all things in the beginning," which suggests the laying of a firm ground and anchorage but also of a seedbed. Cf. *Haer*. VI 9, 4-5, and V 9, 5.

[32] *Haer.* VII 22, 8: τοῦ σπέρματος τὴν πρώτην καταβολὴν. X 14, 3. Cf. also Luke 11:50, John 17:24.

whole seed-mass of the cosmos."[33] So God in Basilides is not "the Maker" or "Creator" of the cosmos but the "Sower" of the Seed, the Germ and Principle out of which everything unfolds. Basilides has thus made a new link between the cosmogonic theme and the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23 (and parallels). It is crucial here that, according to the explanation of this parable in 13:18-23, the "sowing" relates to the Λόγος. The seed that falls on good soil is differentiated into three categories in this parable, of which one bears hundredfold fruit, the second sixty, and the third thirty (Matt. 13:9, 13:23). Basilides clearly supported a spiritual exegesis of this parable, in which the "fruit" was understood as the achievement of γνῶσις by the pneumatic beings in the World Seed thanks to the "Enlightenment" resulting from the revelation of the Gospel. It is significant that in his concluding remark about Basilides's heresy the author of the *Elenchos* alludes to the theme of this parable by saying, "Taught in Egypt and instructed in such wisdom, *he brought forth such fruits*."[34]

But Basilides was also able to link up with the parable of "the wheat and the weed" in Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43 and with "the treasure in the field" (Matt. 13:44), which do not occur in the other gospels.

Basilides's contemporary Numenius of Apamea also describes the highest, transcendent God as "the Sower" of the seed of all souls, and he also uses the description "the previously deposited seeds."[35]

4.3.5. THE WORLD SEED: WHAT IS THE REASON BEHIND BASILIDES'S CHOICE OF THIS MODEL? (21, 2)

What was willed by God was not therefore ready to hand but was produced by God as "World Seed" (VII 21, 2-3; X 14, 1) or cosmic seed (VII 22, 6 and 7). Just as a grain of mustard seed in the plant world or a peacock's egg in the animal world[36] already contains everything that will come out of it, so the World Seed encloses "all things together."[37] The choice of this metaphor, derived from the sphere of flora and fauna, raises many questions.

(1) First, of course, why Basilides exchanges the Platonic metaphor of God as the "Maker" of the world for the notion of God as "Sower" of seeds.

(2) Second, the question of whether a purely spiritual principle such as the hypercosmic God also produces a purely spiritual Seed, or whether the Seed possesses a different quality from the producer of the Seed.

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[33] See also VII 21, 5: "the non-being Seed of the cosmos cast down by the non-being God," and 23, 6; X 14, 1.

[34] *Haer.* VII 27, 13: σχολάσας κατὰ τὴν Αἰγυπτων καὶ παρ' αὐτῶν τὴν τοιαύτην σοφίαν διδαχθείς, ἐκαρποφόρησε τοιούτους καρπούς. Cf. Matt. 13:23!

[35] Numenius, frag. 13 (É. des Places): Ὁ μέν γε ὢν σπέρμα πάσης ψυχῆς σπείρει [...] and τὰ ἐκεῖθεν προκαταβεβλημένα.

[36] Löhr (*Basilides und seine Schule*, 286) sees the passage on the peacock's egg (21, 5) as "ein weiterer – offenbar von Hippolyt eingeführter – Vergleich," because the author says, ἵνα δὲ καταφανέστερον ποιήσω τοῦτο ὅπερ ἐκεῖνοι λέγουσι. But the terms and concepts in the comparison do well express Basilides's ideas. Moreover, the peacock's egg is mentioned again in the "Short summary" of X 14, 1.

[37] *Haer.* VII 21, 3: τὸ δὲ σπέρμα τοῦ κόσμου πάντα εἶχεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, [...] ὡς ὁ τοῦ σινάπεως κόκκος ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ συλλαβὼν ἔχει πάντα ὁμοῦ (Marcovich, *Hippolytus*). Plot. *Enn.* III 3 [48] 7.1-28 uses the image of a tree, its root, trunk, branches, leaves to illustrate divine Providence as the agency that from the beginning regulates all that comes out of it.

(3) Third, how the World Seed gives birth not only to (quasi-?) spiritual principles (such as the tripartite Sonship) but also to the cosmic Archons and finally to mortal beings such as man.

(4) Fourth, whether we should view the World Seed as male semen or as "fertilized germ" or embryo (what is called a κύημα in Aristotle's doctrine of procreation)[38] and what the consequences of this are. "Σπέρμα" can have both meanings, but Greek distinguishes between "seed" in the sense of male semen (γονή) and "seed" in the sense of seeds of trees and plants (which should rather be called "fruit" – καρπός).[39] The deposition of the World Seed as ἀρχὴ raises the question of whether the World Seed is the product of God as male ἀρχὴ γενέσεως, or of God as androgynous ἀρχὴ γενέσεως, or of God and another, female entity.

By using the notion of a World Seed, Basilides has in any case opted for a biologist model of how the cosmos came to be. It reflects the influence of Aristotle's criticism of the way that Plato speaks about "becoming." In the *Timaeus*, Plato had talked about the genesis of all things as a process in which a representation of an Idea (e.g., of Man or of Horse) is realized in matter and space. In Aristotle's view, however, Plato had neglected to speak about the "efficient cause"[40] of all genesis. Aristotle had presented the genesis of all products of craftmanship (τέχνη) as the realization of the form of, for example, a table by a carpenter, who imposes this form on matter with his hands and his instruments. And he said about all products of nature that their form is passed on via the semen of the male specimen to the menstrual fluid of the female specimen, and thus instigates the development of a new specimen *of the same species*.[41]

The metaphor of craftsmanship is no longer suitable for the Hellenistic theologies. Philo of Alexandria had already opted for the biologist model. True, he also uses the model of founding a city,[42] but this model is superimposed on the model Philo uses for the production of the visible cosmos by the Logos of God as a life-giving and separation-making Λόγος σπερματικός. Thanks to the effect of the Logos, a "passive object" (i.e., a female principle!) receives motion, form, and soul.[43] For Philo, the Λόγος is the executive agent who has thought out the world. And the cosmos is the "work in progress" of God's Λόγος. This product of the Λόγος also contains beings that themselves contain an image

[38] Cf. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, 238n142: "Bei Basilides [...] übernimmt das selbständig auftretende Sperma des Gottes die Funktion des Material-prinzips mit." It is unclear what Krämer bases this proposition on.

[39] In *De anima* II 1, where he gives his definition of the "soul," Aristotle adduces the examples of σπέρμα from the animal world and καρπός from the plant world to illustrate a natural body potentially possessing life (412b27).

[40] Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* A 9, 991a20-23: τὸ δὲ λέγειν παραδείγματα αὐτὰ εἶναι καὶ μετέχειν αὐτῶν τἆλλα κενολογεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς. τί γάρ ἐστι τὸ ἐργαζόμενον πρὸς τὰς ἰδέας ἀποβλέπον; This problem plays in the background when Basilides uses the same verb in *Haer.* VII 22, 2: ἵνα κόσμον <ὁ> θεὸς ἐργάσηται and ἄνθρωπος χαλκὸν [...] ἐργαζόμενος λαμβάνει.

[41] Cf. Arist. *Phys.* II 2, 194b13: ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ. *Metaph*. Λ 5, 1071a13-16; *Gener. anim.* I 22, 730b12-23; II 1, 735a2-4. See also A. P. Bos, "The 'Instrumental Body' of the Soul in Aristotle's Ethics and Biology," *Elenchos* 27, no. 1 (2006): 35-72.

[42] Philo *Opif.* 17-20. Cf. D. T. Runia, "The Idea and the Reality of the City in the Thought of Philo of Alexandria," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 3 (2000): 361-79; Runia, "The King, the Architect, the Craftsman: A Philosophical Image in Philo of Alexandria," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 46, no. 78 (2003): 89-106.

[43] Philo, *Opif.* 8-9. Cf. Bos, "Philo on God as '*archè geneseôs*.'"

of the divine Λόγος, that is to say, human beings! Philo's reflection leads him to propose that the divine Intellect is the Origin of all life and that at the level of the soul God's Λόγος separates out the multitude of Forms and Ideas, which go on to develop into the multitude of individual, material entities in the cosmos. Basilides's metaphor of the World Seed can therefore be understood as a subtle variant, with corrections, of Philo's cosmo-theology.[44]

The idea that the Λόγος, which proceeds from the Νοῦς, has a fertilizing effect on a passive principle is found not only in Philo but also in the *Hermetic Corpus* I (*Poimandres*) 4-6. God is emphatically called "androgynous" there.

We already noted that Basilides's doctrine of creation as the deposition of a World Seed is unique. At the same time, we do well to bear in mind that the Gnostic doctrines that Irenaeus describes in his *Adversus haereses* say, among other things, that according to the evangelist John God produces an Ἀρχή that is called "Son" and "only-begotten son of God," in whom God has "produced all things as seed."[45] In his description of Naassene doctrine, the author of the *Elenchos* also says that they "place the origin of all things in an original seed."[46] And in his description of the Doceti (whose name the author "etymologizes" as "having a beam" (δόκος) in their own eye!), he mentions that they represent "the first God as the fruit of a fig."[47]

There are further elements in the biblical tradition that may have played a part in Basilides. We can point first to the text in Psalm 2:7, which features in the texts about Jesus's baptism in the Jordan and about the glorification on the mount. In Psalm 2:7 we read, "'I will tell you of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, you are my son; today I have begotten you."[48] The same Psalm contrasts the deliberations of the kings and "archons" (2:2) with those of God.

Psalm 110 (109 LXX), which opens with the words "The Lord says to my lord: sit at my right hand," has something similar in verse 3 in the Greek translation: "before the morning star I brought you forth from my womb."[49] This biblical text is more important than we might think on a first reading. For the author of the *Elenchos* himself refers to it as a text in which the Λόγος, the first-born Son of God, is denoted.[50] (We will indicate in chapter 4.8.3 in connection with 23, 6, that probably Basilides explained the text of Psalm 110 [109 LXX] as a statement about "the Son of the Great Archon.")

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[44] Though the image of the "begetting" of offspring by God and divine beings in the Gnostic theologies seems a reversion to the anthropomorphism of the ancient mythical traditions, it is better understood as a critique of the metaphor of God as "Maker" and as craftsman.

[45] Iren. *Haer.* I 8, 5: Ἰωάννης [...] βουλόμενος εἰπεῖν τὴν τῶν ὅλων γένεσιν, καθ' ἣν τὰ πάντα προέβαλεν ὁ Πατὴρ, ἀρχήν τινα ὑποτίθεται τὸ πρῶτον γεννηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὃ δὴ καὶ Υἱὸν Μονογενῆ καὶ Θεὸν κέκληκεν, ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα ὁ Πατὴρ προέβαλε σπερματικῶς. So these Gnostics derive their theology from the text of John 1:1.

[46] *Haer.*V 7, 21: τὴν ἀρχέγονον φύσιν τῶν ὅλων ἐν ἀρχεγόνῳ τιθέμενοι σπέρματι.

[47] *Haer.* VIII 8, 3: Θεὸν εἶναι τὸν πρῶτον οἱονεὶ σπέρμα συκῆς.

[48] Septuagint: Κύριος εἶπεν πρὸς μέ Υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε. Cf. Luke 3:22 with the variant of the Western tradition. And cf. J. Slavenburg, *De "logische" Jezus. Logos, Christusdimensie en de 21e eeuw. Een antwoord op kerk, bijbel en new age* (Deventer: Ankh Hermes, 1999; repr. 2003).

[49] Ps. 110 (109 LXX):3: ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐξεγέννησά σε.

[50] *Haer.* X 33, 11: ταῦτα δὲ πάντα διῴκει ὁ Λόγος ὁ θεοῦ, ὁ πρωτόγονος πατρὸς παῖς, ἡ πρὸ ἑωσφόρου φωσφόρος φωνή. Marcovich (*Hippolytus*, 410) refers for this passage to Ps. 109 LXX and 2 Pet. 1:18-19. Cf. Abramowski, *Drei Christologische Untersuchungen*, 22. For Clem. *Protr.* 84, ὁ πρὸ ἑωσφόρου γεννώμενος is also identical with ὁ Χριστὸς κύριος.

But the parables in Matthew 13 of "the Sower" and of "the wheat and the weed" must have been crucial. Basilides himself refers explicitly to the New Testament parable of the grain (κόκκος) of mustard seed and the Kingdom of God.[51] Basilides interprets the parable of the mustard seed in the sense of a parable about God's plan of development that manifests itself in the cosmos from its καταβολή, its very first phase of growth, until its completion. So he does not relate it to the effect of Jesus's proclamation, which causes people to turn back to God as their king and to the covenant he made with them.

The theme of sowing and seed also plays an important role in the First Letter to the Corinthians by the apostle Paul. In chapter 15:35ff., he talks about the body of the resurrection, and he emphasizes how different it is from the earthly, mortal body by referring to a "grain (κόκκος) of wheat" (15:37). We also hear there a statement intriguing to Gnostics: "There is sown a physical body, there is raised a spiritual body."[52] For a Gnostic, this clearly indicates the spiritual dimension of God's activity as sower. This idea is underlined by the words "Thus it is written: The first man, Adam, became a living soul, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit [πνεῦμα]."[53] Finally, "The first man was from the earth, a man of dust, the second man is from heaven."[54] We will have to bear this in mind when discussing what Basilides says about the Great Archon, who springs from the World Seed, and his Son, who is much more excellent than he and of a different caliber.

Inasmuch as Paul talks about "spiritual bodies" here, we should consider whether this helps to explain why Basilides goes on to talk about the holy Πνεῦμα as not of the same essence as God but as closest to the divine world and as vehicle of the Sonship (22, 12).

Basilides himself refers to John 1 in 22, 4. In 27, 4, he says that "all things are established in the seed of the All at the beginning ἐν ἀρχῇ." This might well suggest that Basilides interpreted "ἐν ἀρχῇ" in John 1:1[55] as referring not to a beginning (in time) but to a "principle." The World Seed is thus "the principle" in which God created all things and in which God's Λόγος is actively present, giving life and light.[56]

In 21, 5, the Anonymous also gives the example of a peacock's egg:

> as an egg of some variegated [ἐκποικιλλομένου] and particolored [πολυχρωμάτου] bird, for instance the peacock[57] or some other bird still more manifold and even more particolored, though being one in reality, contains in itself numerous forms of manifold, particolored, and much compounded substances, so the non-existent Seed,[58] which has been deposited by the

[51] Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19; Gospel of Thomas, logion 20. The fact that Matthew talks about the "Kingdom of Heaven" must be due to reluctance to use the name of God. But the focus is certainly on God's kingship in his creation, including the earth.

[52] 1 Cor. 15:44: σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν.

[53] 1 Cor. 15:45: οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν· ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν.

[54] 1 Cor. 15:47: ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ.

[55] Surprisingly, Marcovich makes no reference to Genesis 1:1 or John 1:1 here.

[56] Similarly, Tatian, *Or.* 5 (5, 16): Θεὸς ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ, τὴν δὲ ἀρχὴν λόγου δύναμιν παρειλήφαμεν.

[57] Cf. Arist. *Gener. anim.* V 6, 785b22, on the variegations of the panther and the peacock; *H.A.* VI 9, 564a25ff.

[58] I follow here D. Holwerda, "Textkritisches zum Basilides-Referat des Hippolytos," *Mnemosyne* 56, no. 5 (2003): 599, who proposes reading: οὐκ ὂν σπέρμα <τὸ> τοῦ κόσμου.

> non-existent God, contains in itself the multiform cosmos comprehending many substances.[59]

The choice of an egg may have a different background. J. van Amersfoort has suggested that it is inspired by the Orphic theme of the World Egg.[60] This connection is highly interesting, partly on account of the close links between Aristotle's *Eudemus* and the Orphic tradition. In what follows we will point out a few times that Basilides displays remarkable similarities to the views familiar from Aristotle's *Eudemus*.[61] As we have said above, it is more natural to assume that Basilides himself used this example than that the author of the *Elenchos* added it in his account of Basilides's doctrine, if only because the animal and human world had his interest but the world of plants did not.

But a mustard seed and a (fertilized) peacock's egg are both a σπέρμα in the sense of a κύημα, a result occurring when the seed of a male specimen and the contribution of a female specimen conjoin. It was Aristotle in particular who pointed out this ambiguity of the term "σπέρμα." In his work *Generation of Animals* II 1, 732a1-15, he explained clearly the need to distinguish in all reality between the male and the female. This also goes for human beings and for animals and plants. (In plants there is not always a distinction between separate male and female specimens.) Aristotle also made it clear that, in the genesis of a new specimen of humankind, the father provides the (immaterial) form-principle and the mother the material principle of the κύημα, that is, the double unity of immaterial soul and instrumental body of the soul. The form-principle, which is passed on via the male semen, requires the menstrual fluid as "'matter."[62] It could suggest that somehow Πνεῦμα was considered by Basilides to be connected with the World Seed as vehicle of the threefold Sonship. Though the holy Πνεῦμα will not ultimately form part of the hypercosmos, the text of John 1:4, where the Λόγος is said to contain "life," may have been explained by Basilides in the sense that the World Seed required the Πνεῦμα as the carrier of life.

The Anonymous repeatedly assures us that nothing descends from the Transcendent (22, 16; 25, 6), so the "deposition" of the World Seed, too, should not be seen as a (unique) "action" of the non-being God. It could be compared with "sowing" in the way that a radio transmitter "sows" waves in the air (cf. Afrikaans: "Uitzaai-corporasie") or "broadcasts."

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[59] Cf. X 14, 1. The Greek text in VII 21, 5, is such as to suggest a relation with Eph. 3:10, where the πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ (the "multicolored wisdom of God") is brought up in a chapter that is explicitly mentioned in VII 25, 3, because Paul speaks there about "the mystery that was not revealed to earlier generations."

[60] J. van Amersfoort, "Traces of an Alexandrian Orphic Theogony in the Pseudo-Clementines," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, ed. R. van den Broek (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 13-30.

[61] The details of the "Orphic" myth concerning the regeneration of Dionysus from his "heart," which was saved by Athene, and about the "World Egg" are easily connected with Aristotle's ideas in view of his theory that the heart is the first thing to be formed in a new living creature and his extensive interest in the development of eggs, which are hatched. A very special theory is found in *Gener. anim.* I 21, 729b33-730a23, where it is said that eggs already laid are fertilized by a rooster, which covers the broody hen after the eggs have been laid (!). For Aristotle this is an indication that only the Power of the begetter is important. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice in the underworld is also readily connected with Aristotle's theory about the eschatological separation of νοῦς and ψυχή.

[62] Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* Λ 6, 1071b29 (straight after mentioning the dogma of Anaxagoras that "everything was together" in the beginning): πῶς γὰρ κινηθήσεται, εἰ μὴ ἔσται ἐνεργείᾳ τι αἴτιον; οὐ γὰρ ἥ γε ὕλη κινήσει αὐτὴ ἑαυτήν, ἀλλὰ τεκτονική, οὐδὲ τὰ ἐπιμήνια οὐδ' ἡ γῆ, ἀλλὰ τὰ σπέρματα καὶ ἡ γονή.

The "deposition" should rather be viewed as the emanation of a Δύναμις from the non-being God. The only images Antiquity had for this were the power that proceeds from a magnet and the heat and light radiated by the sun.

It seems likely that Basilides chose a biologist metaphor to avoid having to present the highest God in the all too anthropomorphic guise of a Demiurge, as Plato had done in the *Timaeus*. The seed that God deposits is itself non-being. But it develops under its own power entirely according to God's premeditated counsel.

The World Seed is emphatically described by the author of the *Elenchos* as "non-being from non-beings" (21, 4; 21, 5; 22, 2; 22, 5; 22, 6) and as "become" (22, 5). On the one hand, this aligns it with spiritual reality. As World Seed, it does not contain the beings of visible reality but their seeds, their vital principles. But the World Seed clearly does *differ* from the highest God. It seems to be a hypostasis dependent on God, just as there is one highest Origin in Plotinus's system and two derived spiritual hypostases distinct from it. Their exact relationship will have to be examined when we discuss the "threefold Sonship" present in the World Seed (see chap. 4.5.3 and 4.6 below). We will then find that the World Seed differs from the one Origin in that it contains a plurality of at least three Sonships, with striking characteristics ("subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification"), which certainly do not apply to the highest God.

4.3.6. THE WORLD SEED AS A SKETCH (21, 1)?

We need to look here at an extremely difficult but perhaps important passage in *Elenchos* 21, 1:

> Since, <therefore>, Nothing <existed>, not matter, nor substance, nor what is insubstantial, not something simple, not something non-composite, not something not intelligible, not something not sensible, not a man, not an angel, not a god, nor, in short, any of those objects that have names, or are apprehended by sense, or that are cognized by intellect, [...] then <the> non-existent God, – whom Aristotle called "thinking of thinking" but these "the non-existent" – without thinking, without perception, without will, without choice, without passion, without desire, willed to produce a cosmos.

The section I have left open between square brackets contains eight Greek words [ἀλλ' οὕτω καὶ ἔτι λεπτομέρως πάντων ἁπλῶς περιγεγραμμένων] that are extremely hard to translate. But the central notion is "περιγράφειν." The crucial question is how this notion should be interpreted.

(A) The term can be interpreted as "to block," "to exclude." L. Duncker and F. G. Schneidewin have here "*prorsus sublatis*," "completely excluded."[63] P. Cruice translates it as "*rebus omnino omnibus deletis et remotis*."[64] The open place thus reads: "when all matters had been thus – and in even more detail – completely excluded." In that

[63] Hippolytus, *Refutationis omnium haeresium librorum decem quae supersunt*, ed. and trans. F. W. Schneidewin and L. Duncker (Göttingen: Sumptibus Dieterichianis, 1859).

[64] P. Cruice, *Philosophumena sive Haeresium Omnium Confutatio, opus Origeni adscr.* (Paris: In typographeo Imperiali, 1860).

case, the author is indicating here that Basilides went even further in his enumeration and that he wanted to underline that God's will to create was absolutely the only foundation for the realization of the cosmos.

(B) However, the sentence starts with a repetition of the mentioning of the "Nothing" that was used in 20, 2, to indicate the transcendent God. So, all the negations used here may also suggest entities that do not belong to the "beings" of cosmic reality. In that case, they may indicate the intelligible foundation of all cosmic reality. This would also lend more substance to the statement that the cosmos was made "from non-beings" by the highest God (21, 4; 22, 12).

And the term "περιγράφειν" also has the technical meaning of "making a sketch," the draft that a painter, a writer, or an architect makes before tackling the real work of producing his painting or book or building plan. The term also has this meaning in the other two places where the author of the *Elenchos* uses it: IV 43, 11, and IX 31, 2. The words between brackets would then translate as "but when all things were sketched in this way and even more subtly."[65]

The term could be appropriate in this sense. It is used by both Aristotle and Plotinus in connection with the very first beginning of a living being. And Philo of Alexandria uses a related term for the work of the Λόγος as the divine architect who first draws up an outline of the whole project in his mind and only then fills in the details.

In *Generation of animals* II 6, 743b18-25, Aristotle describes how the effect of the movement of the male's seed on the menstrual fluid of the female, that is, the κύημα, is preceded by an almost schematic organization:

> Now the upper portion of the body is the first to be marked off in the course of the embryo's formation; the lower portion receives its growth as time goes on. (This applies to the blooded animals.) In the early stages the parts are all *traced out in outline* [περιγράφαις διορίζεται]; later on, they get their various colors and softnesses and hardnesses, for all the world as if a painter were at work on them, the painter being Nature. Painters, as we know, first of all sketch in [ὑπογράψαντες] the figure of the animal in outline, and after that go on to apply the colors.[66]

In Plotinus, who worked in Rome but came from Alexandria, we find a closely related passage in his work "Against the Gnostics" (!), in which he disputes a Gnostic cosmogony that proceeds in stages. He says there in II 9 [33] 12.19:

> Even now the things which are parts of the world when they are brought into being by natural principles do not come into existence like this, first fire, then each individual constituent, and then a mixture of them, but there is an outline [περιβολή] and *sketch plan* [περίγραφε] of the whole living thing

[65] A. Hilgenfeld, "Das System des Gnostikers Basilides," *Theologische Jahrbücher* 15 (1856): 86-121, suggested on p. 111, "(dem reinen Nichts, welches [...] in seiner Leere) auch die feinen Umrisse aller Dinge enthielt."

[66] *Aristotle, Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (London: W. Heinemann, 1942, repr. 1963), 224. Cf. R. Ferwerda, *Aristoteles, Over voortplanting* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 2005), 102-3.

> impressing the form on the menstrual fluid. Why then, in the making of the world, too, was not matter *marked in outline* [περιεγράφετο] with the form of the universe, in which form earth and fire and the rest were contained?[67]

We find the same theme in Philo of Alexandria, at the beginning of his work *On the Creation of the Cosmos*. Philo first declares there (8-9) that Moses had reached the heights of philosophy and had moreover received divine instruction. He therefore understood that in all that exists there must be an active Principle, a transcendent Intellect, and on the other hand a passive object, which receives motion, form, and soul through the Intellect. Philo follows here the Aristotelian scheme of a male form-principle and a female matter-principle.

He then says that God wanted to make a world and for this purpose first produced the world of Ideas (16). In the famous comparison of the King and the Architect that follows, Philo presents the Λόγος of God as the Architect who carries out the plan of the King for a new city. Of this Architect, Philo says (17), "[He] first *sketches* [διαγράφει] in his own mind wellnigh all the parts of the city. Thus after having received in his own soul, as it were in wax, the figures of these objects severally, he carries about the image of a city in the creation of his mind."[68]

Though we cannot be certain about the intention of the passage, it may be that Basilides took his cue here for an intelligible world of νοήματα of God that, because they represent the original principles for the later visible world of "beings," can only be presented as "non-beings"! This would fit well with the remark that Aristotle called the highest God "thinking of thinking." This expression seems to introduce a distinction between a subject (the divine Intellect) and an object. In that case we are dealing in 21, 1, with a subtle consequence of Basilides's language theology, which requires that the intelligible structural principles of the visible cosmos must be characterized as non-beings. The "will" of God is then the constitution of the Λόγος that proceeds from the highest divine Principle, the Intellect (cf. 22, 4).

4.3.7. A ΚΑΤΑΒΟΛΗ OF A WORLD SEED WITHOUT A ΠΡΟΒΟΛΗ (22, 2)

Elenchos VII 22, 2-3, is also a very difficult text:

> 2. But since it would be problematic to say that anything non-existent came into being as a projection [προβολή] of a non-existing God [...] for Basilides altogether shuns and dreads the substances of things generated in the way of projection [κατὰ προβολήν]. For, [he asks] of what sort of projection [προβολή] is there a necessity, or of what sort of matter must we assume the previous existence, in order that God should construct a world, as the spider

[67] *Plotinus*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, vol. 2 (London: W. Heinemann, 1966), 270-73. Cf. *Plotinos, Over schouwing en Tegen de gnostici*, trans., intro., and annot. T. G. Sinnige (Bussum: Wereldvenster, 1981), 151, who observes in note 109: "This view is Aristotelian."

[68] *Philo in Ten Volumes*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (London: W. Heinemann, 1929; repr. 1971). Cf. D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 135-43.

> his web; or as a mortal man, for the purpose of working it, takes brass or wood or some other of the parts of matter? [...]
>
> 3. But, he says, "God spoke the word and it was carried out." And this, as these men assert, is that which has been stated by Moses: "Let there be light, and there was light." Whence, he says, came the light? From nothing. For it has not been written, he says, whence, but this only: from the voice of him who speaks the word. And he who speaks the word, he says, was non-existent, nor was that existent which was being produced.[69]

The author of the *Elenchos* uses the term "προβολή" here.[70] To understand his intention, we shall have to take into account what he said about the Valentinians in VI 30, 7-9. He says there in 30, 7:

> The Father alone, without copulation, has produced. [...] But Sophia, being begotten, and born after many more, is not able to acquire possession of the power inherent in the Unbegotten One. For in the Unbegotten One, he says, all things exist simultaneously, but in the begotten the female is projective of substance, and the male is formative of the substance [οὐσία] which is projected by the female.[71] Sophia, therefore, prepared to project [προέβαλεν] that only which she was capable (of projecting), viz. a formless and undigested substance [οὐσία].[72]

Further on in the Valentinian myth, which relates how the negative effects of Sophia's action are combatted, we are told that the Father commands the production of auxiliary entities (ἐπιπροβαλεῖν κελεύει, VI 31, 2), and it is remarked with emphasis that the Father himself does not προέβαλεν but that the Intellect and the Truth do this together. We can infer from this context that προβολή can stand for "emanation" in relation to a spiritual Pair but also to its passive or female aspect.[73]

Clement mentions in *Stromateis* III 1 (Löhr frag. 6) that the Valentinians approve of marriage because they derive the (spiritual) Pairs (συζυγίαι) from the Origin as springing from the divine προβολαί. This suggests the idea of an "emission," an "emanation," a flowing out from the perfect spiritual Origin of something that as a passive principle becomes the object for the form-giving, organizing power of the principle of Origin.

But there is another text in the *Elenchos* that needs to be brought up in this context, in book VIII, where the doctrine of the Doceti (8, 1-2) is discussed. These people claim that the highest God can be compared with the σπέρμα of a fig tree. This seed gives birth to successively the trunk, the leaves, and the fruits (καρποί) of the fig tree. The striking

[69] Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, trans. J. H. MacMahon, Ante Nicene Christian Library, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1868).

[70] On this, see Zandee, *The Terminology of Plotinus*, 31-33.

[71] Cf. *Haer.* VI 30, 8: ἐν δὲ τοῖς γεν<ν>ητοῖς τὸ μὲν θῆλύ ἐστιν οὐσίας προβλητικόν, τὸ δὲ ἄρρεν μορφωτικὸν τῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ θήλεως προβαλομένης οὐσίας.

[72] The words used here immediately suggest the words of the Septuagint in Genesis 1:2: "the earth was without form and void," which the author goes on to quote.

[73] See also Irenaeus, *Haer.* I 8, 5, which describes the explanation of John 1 by the Valentinian Ptolemaeus.

thing in this description is that the highest God is not referred to as a fig but as a σπέρμα. This doubtless has to do with the fact that a fig is more than just seed. Like an apple and any other fruit, a fig does not just have seed but also flesh, which serves to cover and protect the seed. In the same way an eggshell can be seen as a προβολή of the embryo inside the egg (Arist., *Gener. anim.* II 1, 733a19).

So what conclusions can we now draw about the description of Basilides's World Seed doctrine? Should we conclude that Valentinus developed a doctrine of emanations and materializations and that Basilides rejects it? Our text offers no firm evidence for this. The Valentinian conception can also be a revision of Basilides's theology. But it seems clear that they differ in concept. We should pay special heed to the statement that "Basilides altogether shuns and dreads the substances of things generated in the way of projection [προβολή]." If we interpret this along the lines of VI 30, 8, this could mean that he shuns and fears all unformed and unordered matter resulting from a female principle. In any case, this squares with what we further read in Basilides's system about the aspiration of the threefold Sonship to return to the hypercosmic God and abandon all materiality (whether it be subtle, less subtle, or requiring purification).[74]

No doubt the author of the *Elenchos* means that materiality has nothing to do with the non-being God but everything with the material beings from which the true Gnostic wants to escape. People need material, and a spider needs thread to spin a web. But God does not need anything similar that is offered for formation. God deposits the World Seed himself, from himself. By contrast, the World Seed contains all the principles that act as formal principles on something that does not form part of them. This must be the formlessness of the Darkness.

The realization of this formless cosmos as non-being World Seed seems to imply that extension and materiality become connected with it "accidentally," just as a visible body becomes connected with a soul-principle of a living being. This may remind us of what the author of the *Elenchos* said about Aristotle's basic principles, "being" and "the accidental" (I 20, 1; cf. Arist. *Phys.* I 9, 192a20-25).

Whereas Valentinus introduces a whole series of aeons with Sophia, who brings the Πνεῦμα into the cosmos, as the last, there does not seem to have been such a roundabout route in Basilides if we are to believe our author. God deposits a World Seed with the threefold divine Sonship in it. Perhaps the Πνεῦμα comes into being at the same time as the cosmic vehicle of these Sonships and as cosmic vital principle.

4.3.8. THE WORLD SEED AND "FORMLESSNESS"

Linking up with the theme of the προβολή, we must now pay attention to the notion of the "Formlessness" that repeatedly occurs in the *Elenchos*'s account of Basilides's doctrine. For it seems that Basilides used this notion as the opposite of the World Seed. In 22, 15, the Anonymous talks about the fragrance that descends from on high from the holy Πνεῦμα

[74] Properly understood, "to shun" (φεύγειν) may contain an allusion to Hom. *Iliad* 2, 140, the passage to which Plato, *Theaet.* 176b1 refers when he talks about "becoming like to God," and which Plot. *Enn.* I 6 [1] 8.16 quotes when talking about the soul's ascent, and to which Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 2, 982b20, alludes when he talks about philosophy as the means of escaping from Ἄγνοια.

"as far as the Formlessness and our region, whence the (second) Sonship had started to ascend." With the help of the holy Πνεῦμα, this second Sonship, which formed part of the World Seed, ascended from the seed-mixture of the World Seed. But our author says here that it ascended from the "Formlessness" (ἀμορφία). In 26, 7, in the description of the Great Enlightenment, he says that the Formlessness needs to be enlightened in our region and that the mystery that had not been made known to earlier generations was to be revealed to the third Sonship, "left behind in the formlessness." We encounter the same idea in 26, 10; 27, 9; and 27, 12. "The Formlessness of the heap," in which the third Sonship finds himself in great affliction is discussed in 25, 6.

These places together might suggest that Basilides had also presented the World Seed, which the author of the *Elenchos* had identified with "the heap" of mixed seeds, as a model of Formlessness. But this does not seem very likely, since it was precisely the World Seed that was considered the totality of all formal and vital principles active in the cosmos.

It is therefore crucial to take a look at 27, 10, as well. It is said there of Jesus's suffering: "That which was his corporeal part suffered. And this was part of the Formlessness and reverted into Formlessness." This text makes it clear that the third Sonship, of which Jesus formed part and of which the Anonymous had said that it was present in the World Seed (22, 7), was also present "in the Formlessness" and was characterized by the gross-material reality of visible and tangible bodies, such as the mortal body of Jesus.

Because gross-material corporeality cannot possibly have been present in the World Seed, we must conclude that the Formlessness and the gross materiality stand for that in which the World Seed was sown. In that case the formlessness must be viewed as "the field" in which the Seed was sown,[75] or "the darkness" in which the Light shone.

The evangelist John also said that "life" was present in the Λόγος, and that life was "the Light of man" (1:4). He did not say that the Darkness was also in the Λόγος. On the contrary, the Light of the Λόγος shone in the Darkness (1:5).

In Basilides's system, the "Formlessness" has the place of matter. It is formed and organized by the vital principles that form part of the World Seed, which is sown in the Formlessness.[76]

For this meaning of "Formlessness," we can base ourselves on the *Elenchos*'s description of Valentinus's system, where it is said that Sophia emitted that which she could produce on her own, that is, "formless and unorganized substance." "And this, he says, is what Moses asserts: 'The earth was invisible, and unfashioned'" (VI 30, 8-9). In 31, 1, the text continues: "Ignorance, therefore, having arisen within the Pleroma in consequence of Sophia and shapelessness in consequence of the offspring of Sophia." This, too, clearly shows the difference in approach between Valentinus and Basilides in relation to the problem they both faced: to prevent matter from being connected with the highest God himself.

[75] Cf. Matt. 13:38: "the field is the world."

[76] Perhaps this explains why the author of the *Elenchos* in 19, 1, after Aristotle's doctrine of threefold being, introduces his doctrine of "matter, form, and privation" and pretends as if this doctrine does not differ much from the view discussed earlier!

4.4. BASILIDES'S DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD SEED AND THE PROBLEMS IT RAISES

We need to go as far as possible in attempting to understand Basilides's conception in the account given by the *Elenchos* as consistent and well thought through, even when this seems particularly difficult. It seems hardest for his doctrine of the World Seed.

We can start by saying that the World Seed is referred to as "non-being" and as "come into being" from "non-beings" (21, 5; 22, 4). This implies that it should be classified as belonging to the spiritual reality to which the non-being highest God also belongs. And it implies that the World Seed does not include materiality or concreteness (21, 2).

But there is clearly a difference between the highest God and the World Seed. The highest God is completely one and ungenerated. The World Seed is generated and contains the πανσπερμία, the totality of all seeds of everything that possesses life. We could provisionally try to understand this difference between the highest God and the World Seed in Basilides's system as the difference between two spiritual hypostases, for instance, the spiritual hypostasis of the Intellect and the spiritual hypostasis of the World Soul.

Next, we need to consider what it means that this spiritual World Seed contains three Sonships, which are all said to be "of the same essence" as the highest God but at the same time to differ among themselves (and thereby to differ from the highest God as well).

That they are of the same essence as the highest God is clearly manifested further on, when they unite with the highest God and for this purpose rid themselves of anything that impedes this, even of the holy Πνεῦμα, whose services the Second Sonship has gratefully used. But how should we understand the terms "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification" (22, 7) as features of these Sonships? How can spiritual principles possess features that bring about a difference in quality?

In theory there seem to be two possibilities. (1) These distinguishing features denote degrees of materiality and refer to the material "coverings" of these spiritual principles. The Sonships are not themselves "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification," but the coverings they receive display these features. But another possibility is (2) that as spiritual principles the Sonships themselves are characterized as "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification." In that case the three terms stand for three degrees within the spiritual reality of the World Seed. We could compare this with the three levels that Plotinus distinguishes within the one spiritual hypostasis of the Soul. He recognizes souls that always remain "above," united with the Intellect. He also recognizes souls that "are downward inclined" and become entirely locked up in materiality (which they themselves produce). And he talks about souls that keep a balance and, orientating themselves to the Intellect, have an organizational role in the visible cosmos, above which they remain elevated.

In Basilides's description of the visible cosmos, we will find the distinction between the Ethereal realm of the Great Archon, the Lower Archon's sphere of the Air, and our region of the earthly vale of tears. Though these three regions in the visible cosmos could be referred to as "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification," we should perhaps emphasize that the three Sonships are never referred to as "Ethereal," "Airy," or "Earthly."

The most plausible solution to this problem therefore is that the labels "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification" are distinctions within *psychical* (spiritual) reality.

These features of the three Sonships could thus be compared with the characterizations of the soul-πνεῦμα we encounter in Aristotle, by which he relates differences in quality and level of life to differences in purity of the vital πνεῦμα (*Gener. anim.* II 3, 736b36-737 a9). A higher degree of life and a higher level of soul are connected with a "purer" kind of πνεῦμα. Aristotle had presented every soul as an immaterial entelechy principle, connected with an instrumental soul-body, which in any case possessed πνεῦμα. It seems that we should equally regard Basilides's three Sonships as wholly spiritual and divine as regards their nucleus but possessing degrees of "purity" that imply a distance to the highest God.

A passage in Porphyry's *Sententiae* is remarkably relevant in this context.[77] He says in chapter 29 that the soul, when it has left the solid body, draws its εἴδωλον with it. The soul itself does not undergo a real change of place, unlike the πνεῦμα in which it is present. And this πνεῦμα differs in quality depending on the purity of the soul. For the purest soul, the innate πνεῦμα is "ethereal," but if it proceeds in its innate covering (προβολή), it is "sun-like"; at an even lower stage, "moon-like." If it has fallen into bodies and becomes implicated in their formlessness because they grow from moist evaporations, the consequence for this soul is utter Ignorance about being and obscuration and stupidity. In this text, we can note that "purity" of πνεῦμα is analogous to the degree to which the soul possesses γνῶσις or is burdened with Ignorance (Ἄγνοια). The "purification" of soul-principles therefore involves liberation from corporeality and the achievement *thereby* of a higher degree of γνῶσις.

Porphyry's text also suggests that the three Sonships are structurally burdened with πνεῦμα as their vehicle and that their different characterizations should be viewed as characterizations of the pneumatic vehicle inextricably linked to them during their cosmic development.

But this also makes it likely that there is a distinction in Basilides between πνεῦμα as principle of life and "holy Πνεῦμα" as intermediary of the "Enlightenment"!

This means that the three Sonships in the World Seed stand for the principles of life on three clearly distinct levels, which nevertheless display all three forms of life of the highest quality. Until we can think up a better division, we will distinguish these three levels as:

(a) the highest level of psychical life, characterized by rational activity;

(b) the lower level of psychical life, characterized by rational and animal activity;

(c) the lowest level of psychical life, characterized by rational and animal activity in a mortal body preserved by vegetative processes.

The highest level is displayed in individual living creatures with ethereal, astral bodies: the lower level manifests itself in individual living creatures with airy bodies; and the lowest level is displayed in earthly living creatures with mortal bodies.

The first Sonship, which is "subtle," is the vital principle of ethereal astral living beings. The second Sonship, which is "less subtle," is the vital principle of airy living creatures. The third Sonship, which is in need of purification, is the vital principle of all earthly, gross-material living creatures.

[77] See *Porphyrii Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, ed. E. Lamberz (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1975).

It remains unclear how Basilides explained the existence of irrational animals and plants in the sublunary sphere. They, too, must derive their vital principles from the World Seed but seem incapable of participation in any Sonship. The subhuman fauna and flora were also the domain not ruled by divine Providence. The only possible option seems to be that Πνεῦμα, which is present throughout the cosmos as the cosmic vehicle of the Sonship, produces by itself lower forms of life as well.

It could follow from the foregoing that the first Sonship is the vital principle of all ethereal, astral beings, and that these ethereal, astral beings survive even after their Sonship has broken away. These ethereal beings are beings with an astral body and a subtle vitalizing πνεῦμα but without their divine principle that can acquire γνῶσις. They are ensouled living beings but possessed of a different kind of soul from the Sonships. This could be expressed by Plotinus in his distinction between "the genuine souls" (*Enn.* II 9 [33] 12, 5) and "this other soul of theirs, which they compose of the elements" (II 9 [33] 5, 17).

This distinction ultimately goes back to the distinction Aristotle drew between the potential intellect as a potentiality of the human soul and the soul in itself as burdened with an "instrumental body." Aristotle calls the intellect that is actualized "a different kind of soul" (*Anim.* II 2, 413b26) because it does not require an instrument (ὄργανον).

As a spiritual cosmos, Basilides's World Seed was therefore an "embryo" or κύημα. That is to say, it was the result of a conjunction of a form-principle *and* a passive, form-receiving principle. This raises the question of how God can be the cause of such a male and female principle. It seems that Basilides presupposes the "union" of God with a female partner but does not speak about it in detail and in terms of human wisdom. We could acknowledge that the World Seed is the result of God, the Intellect, and Sophia, his Wisdom. In that case the World Seed could have been presented, as it sometimes is in Philo of Alexandria, as the Λόγος, the Son of God (as Father) and his Wisdom (as Mother). In my view, such a hypothesis is also supported by the fact that both 21, 4, and 22, 4 (cf. 22, 7), describe the World Seed as formed "from non-Beings" (in plural).

Note also what Aristotle said about the problem of an embryo (κύημα). He stated that male semen owes its life-giving power to the πνεῦμα it contains. In his view, the menstrual fluid of the female partner is formed in the same way as semen but is not quite semen because the πνεῦμα of a woman possesses less vital heat.[78] Moreover, Aristotle does not say that the man's contribution to fertilization consists in a quantity of seminal fluid but that the male partner only passes on the immaterial soul-(form-)principle as a kind of motion or power (δύναμις) to the menstrual fluid (by means of the semen). Consequently, the fertilized menstrual fluid can be regarded as the vital principle that will subsequently produce the visible, coarse-elementary body of the new living being. But at the moment of fertilization itself, it is merely still the composite unity of (immaterial) soul-principle (immanent entelechy) and instrumental soul-body (σῶμα ὀργανικόν).

It was Aristotle who in his work *Generation of Animals* made the very first attempt to explain how an immaterial form-principle can be passed on to a (fine-material)

[78] Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 4, 737a27-30.

instrumental soul-body in the process of fertilization and how the coarse-material bodies of living creatures are then produced by this ensouled principle.

In Basilides's conception the holy Πνεῦμα is cosmic and clearly not "of the same essence" as the threefold Sonship and the highest God. It is, however, that which, in a more or less pure form, is the "carrier" and "vehicle" of the spiritual principles in the cosmos. And in I 20, 4, our author had explicitly connected Πνεῦμα with the soul in Aristotle's system and his doctrine of the fifth element.

It is very remarkable that the author of the *Elenchos* cites Aristotle's doctrine of soul in his description of Basilides's doctrine. Perhaps we should conclude that the Aristotelian model for the generation of a new visible specimen of a species of living creature with a vitalizing soul-body that is the vehicle of the immaterial form-principle (the ἐντελέχεια) provided Basilides with a model for his theory of the production of purely spiritual principles in the course of sowing a World Seed.

But the period of Greek philosophy in which Aristotle figured held it to be beyond question that everything that forms and develops must have a substrate. There must be an underlying something that can undergo the process of formation. Moreover, we will have to assume that the hypercosmic Sonship cannot possibly have been thought directly connected with the "Darkness" of the gross-material elements.

Now because the holy Πνεῦμα has a special relationship with the threefold Sonship but is not of the same essence as the highest God, we will have to assume that *in Basilides's system Πνεῦμα was seen as "that which receives the Sonship," that is, as that which is the carrier (mother) and vehicle of God's life-giving Power and which as holy Πνεῦμα functions as intermediary for the hypercosmic νοήματα in the process of the Great Enlightenment***.** If this hypothesis is correct, it is a reason to conclude that Πνεῦμα in Basilides's system played the role that divine ether had in Aristotle's system.[79]

Just as an egg has sometimes been called the means by which a chicken produces a new chicken, so, in the perspective of Aristotelian philosophy, a baby in the cradle can be conceived of as the instrument of an intellect for producing a new intellect. By analogy, the cosmos may have been conceived of as the instrument by which the purely spiritual, non-being God, by means of the threefold Sonship he had deposited in a World Seed, created the levels of life from which, on three different cosmic levels, "Sons of God" developed that finally realize their potential by breaking away from every cosmic, natural substrate and uniting with hypercosmic reality. Gnostic readers of the Gospel of John would be inclined to read such a doctrine into the Gospel because, although it says, "He was in the world, and the world was made through him" (1:10), it also states, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (17:16).[80]

In connection with Basilides's use of the expression "being together of all things" in the World Seed, we note that Aristotle brings up four times the "being together of

[79] In Aristotle's system, the Ether is cosmic but divine and sempiternal.

[80] This is formulated even more expressively in 1 John 5:19: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one." But there is no evidence of familiarity with this letter in the *Elenchos*'s account of the heresy of Basilides.

all things" as a doctrine of Anaxagoras in *Metaphysics* Λ[81] and also frequently in other contexts.[82] He always criticizes it, inasmuch as it denotes the primeval situation *tout court*. But he greatly appreciates Anaxagoras's position for indicating that the object of formation develops from an undifferentiated beginning under the guidance of a differentiating principle, which can be characterized as Intellect.

Basilides's view of God's Fatherhood of spiritual "Sonships" that develop and achieve their revelation as spiritual beings implies a union and marriage with a divine partner. This calls up associations with the puzzling passage in the Gospel of Philip §82 "The Father of the All united with the virgin who had come down and a fire enlightened him on that day. He revealed the great bridal room." But we can also think of a text in the *Dialogue of the Savior* 144, 9-11: "Lorsque le Père a établi le monde pour lui-même, il a laissé beaucoup (à faire) par la Mère du Tout."[83] The central focus in the Gospel of Philip on the "bridal chamber" and on the union of the non-divine with the divine seems closely related to this. There, too, the train of thought seems to be that the souls of mortal beings must first be clothed in a "purely pneumatic body" and must then unite with the Light from the hypercosmic world.

4.4.1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARISTOTLE'S BIOLOGICAL DOCTRINE FOR THE LATER THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

Aristotle's doctrine concerning the genesis of new life is based on a number of fundamental propositions. The beginning of this genesis can only be caused by a complete male specimen of a certain species of living creature. But this complete male specimen, which possesses the form of his species "in reality/in act," passes this life on by means of his σπέρμα/γονή, which consists of water and air but which also contains πνεῦμα and is thus the bearer of vital heat, which is not identical with the heat of Fire but is of the same kind as the astral vitalizing heat. This process of generation can only be initiated by fertilization of the menstrual fluid of a female specimen belonging to the same species. Like semen of the man, menstrual fluid is a residue of the blood, but because it has less vital heat it does not become semen but remains similar to blood.

Via his semen, the male specimen superimposes a vitalizing motion (κίνησις) on the menstrual fluid and from this makes a κύημα, that is, an embryo that from that moment is bearer of "the soul in potentiality" (ἐν δυνάμει). The potentiality of this soul is then actualized in one or more stages, depending on whether there is just one soul-function (in plants) or several soul-parts (in animals and humans).

[81] Arist. *Metaph.* Λ 2, 1069b21; b29; 6, 1071b28; 7, 1072a20. The author of the *Elenchos* also knows it himself as a doctrine of Anaxagoras: I 8, 1.

[82] Arist. *Phys.* I 4, 187a29; III 4, 203a25; a32; VIII 1, 250b25; *Gener. corr.* I 10, 327b20; *Metaph.* Γ 4, 1007b26; I 6, 1056b29. The term "seed-mixture" (πανσπερμία), which our author often uses but only in his description of (Aristotle and) Basilides, also occurs in Aristotle, in *Anim.* I 2, 404a4; *Phys.* III 4, 203a21-22; *Cael.* III 4, 303a16 (in connection with Atomism). In connection with Anaxagoras in *Gener. corr.* I 2, 314a29. Plato, *Tim.* 73c, also knows the term. Cf. F. A. Lewis, "Is There Room for Anaxagoras in an Aristotelian Theory of Mind?" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 25 (Winter 2003): 89-129.

[83] *Le Dialogue du Sauveur (NH III, 5)*, trans. P. Letourneau (Leuven: Peeters, 2003).

Crucially, a vehicle of a soul-in-act only begets new life in a process in which a "soul potentiality" develops into a soul-in-act of the same species as that of the father and mother specimens and in which the "soul potentiality" is always present in a fine-material substrate. That is to say, the process of development is led by a soul as "first entelechy," that is, a guiding principle, an internal goal-orientating principle, but not a mature specimen or a principle conscious of the goal. This process is a *natural* process of development in which an act by a mature specimen has a sequel but only in the way that a constructed "automatic puppet," following the laws of nature, "automatically" carries out all kinds of movements planned by the constructor. And the parts of this automatic puppet come into action one by one, successively, after the first part has been set in motion.[84] So it is not the father himself who brings about the new specimen but the vitalizing *motion* that is passed on by the father specimen to the menstrual fluid and that is a λόγος-containing motion, like the motion of instruments used by an expert craftsman.[85]

This process of development may also break down, so that the final goal is not achieved. If this happens during pregnancy, the κύημα is rejected as a miscarriage or ἔκτρωμα.[86]

This conception in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* II is remarkably consistent with what Aristotle says in *On the Cosmos* 6, 397b16-24, about God and his Power (Δύναμις). God himself or his οὐσία, he says there, is not present in the cosmos. He is absolutely transcendent and unmoved. But he *is* called the γενέτωρ (begetter) of all that comes into being. And through his Δύναμις he brings about the motion of the outer celestial sphere and via this motion the motion of the lower spheres, and so on. As in *Generation of Animals* II 1, the author here uses the comparison of machines constructed by engineers that successively execute all kinds of complicated movements.[87] Though this Δύναμις is something of God, it is not the οὐσία of God nor identical with God. And though God causes this movement, it is through an unmoved principle of motion. The motion of the celestial spheres seems to have been interpreted in *On the Cosmos* as "the efficient principle" (τὸ ποιοῦν), which consists of λόγος-containing motion and the fine-material "instrumental natural body" (σῶμα φυσικὸν ὀργανικόν). The sublunary sphere is thus on a par with the visible body of humans or animals. That is to say, the fifth element of the Ether was interpreted in *On the Cosmos* as the "passive principle" or the "female" component for the Origin of the life-producing principle.[88]

The major difference between the biologist model and the (devalued) maker's model is that the result of formation in the biotic model is a specimen *of the same quality of life and form* (ὁμοούσιος), whereas the work or product of a maker is always of lower quality than its

[84] *Gener. anim.* II 1, 734b7-17.

[85] Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 1, 734b28-735a4. This passage is central to the interesting article by D. Henry, "Embryological Models in Ancient Philosophy," *Phronesis* 50, no. 1 (2005): 1-42.

[86] The author of the *Elenchos* uses the term in 26, 7, to denote the as-yet-undeveloped third Sonship. But there are also reasons for seeing the Great Archon as such a product of incomplete development.

[87] Arist. *Mu.* 6, 397b27-398a6 and 398b12-27.

[88] Cf. A. P. Bos, "Aristotle on the Differences between Plants, Animals, and Human Beings and on the Elements as Instruments of the Soul (*De Anima* 2.4.415b18)," *The Review of Metaphysics* 63, no. 4 (2010): 821-41.

maker. In a made product, the form-principle is always external. In a product of begetting, it is internally active in a hidden way, and efficient cause, formal cause, and final cause are of the same kind.[89] All theology after Aristotle preferred the biologist model to the craft model. This has nothing to do with an "obsessive preoccupation with sex," as G. A. G. Stroumsa has suggested to explain the "sexually centered mythology" of the Gnostics.[90]

What Aristotle argued in relation to man was thus paralleled in theology. Man's highest capacity is his capacity for intellectuality. A man who has developed this capacity and then begets a son initiates a natural process in which in the long run the new specimen can also, as the final result of his "natural desire for knowledge," realize his potential for intellectuality but in a process that is long characterized by its non-attainment.

If God is pure Intellect and possesses life of the highest quality, he can impart life only by producing a new God of the same essence as himself but in a process where at first this new God only *potentially* possesses the same quality of life. This essence of God-in-potentiality can be transferred only to a "passive principle" or "matter," which becomes the vehicle of this divine potentiality or motion but in which the divine essence is "obscured," "hidden," "veiled," non-actualized, and alienated from itself as long as the development lasts. For "presence of soul" can manifest itself in two distinct ways, as "sleeping" and as "awake" (Arist. *Anim.* II 1, 412a23-26). In semen, it is "asleep."

It seems due to these considerations that Philo of Alexandria in *On the Creation of the Cosmos* 8-24 posited that God, the causal principle, produced the Λόγος, which carries all the Powers (Δυνάμεις) within itself, and that this *Logos* of God went on to impress a vitalizing and ensouling stamp on a "passive object," which thus developed into life and order and beauty and harmony and into the most beautiful product, namely the visible cosmos, including the soul-principles, which, like the Λόγος, displayed "the image and likeness of God." It is legitimate to interpret Philo's explanation as a view in which the Λόγος of God plays the role of Λόγος σπερματικός and the "passive principle," the role of material substrate, which becomes the vehicle of the form- and life-establishing principle that proceeds from God.

It is equally legitimate to see the theory of Plutarch of Chaeronea and of Alcinous on the transcendent Intellect that acts upon the potential-for-intellectuality of the World Soul as another variant of this Aristotelian doctrine of procreation, transferred to cosmogony and theology.

Just so, it is legitimate to understand Basilides's doctrine of the World Soul and its development in the cosmic life cycle as a view in which the cosmogony is seen as the process in which God begets a God, just as "a man begets a man."[91]

And it is legitimate to recognize that the Prologue to the Gospel of John could be studied and interpreted in the light of this procreation doctrine, in the sense that it, too, meant to say that the Λόγος that proceeded from God and is of the same essence as God

[89] The Gospel of Philip §120-21 strongly emphasizes the difference in quality between a result of "begetting" and of "producing."

[90] G. A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 173.

[91] Cf. R. A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); J.-P. Mahé, "Le sens des symboles sexuels dans quelques textes hermétiques et gnostiques," in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi*, ed. J.-É. Ménard (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 123-45.

could only return to itself in a cosmogonic process in which the "fullness of the deity" was physically present (cf. Col. 2:9).

4.4.2. STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD SEED (22, 1)

No doubt we can also assume that the idea of development elaborated by Aristotle, particularly in his biological studies, was an important source of inspiration. Aristotle's psychology is above all new in that he put great emphasis on the biotic development of all that lives. He presented this process of development as a process of progressive differentiation. In a significant passage, Aristotle says, "It is not the fact that when an animal is formed at that same moment a human being, or a horse, or any other particular sort of animal is formed, because the end or completion is formed last of all, and that which is peculiar to each thing is the end of its process of formation."[92] In fact everything that is formed begins as a member of the genus "living entity"; only then is the sensitive activity activated and does the living being in the process of formation become a member of the genus "*animal*." Only finally does it become an individual cat or human being. Here the unicity or individuality clearly does not just result from progressive differentiation but also from the development of increasingly higher powers – that is, in the case of man, from the development of his mind and intellect or intuition.

This development occurs according to its own laws because the vital principle is already present in the semen as (first) entelechy. But in Basilides's conception the εἰδή as form-principles are present in the semen as non-being.

All things that exist have sprung from the World Seed in a meaningful order, just as new phases of development begin for a newly born child at set times:

> All necessary[93] things, then, that are to be described and those that, not having yet been discovered, must be left out of the account were destined to be added to the cosmos, which was to come into being from the Seed at the proper time, as destined by such and so great a God, whose quality the creature can neither conceive nor define. And these things existed stored within the Seed as, in a new-born child, we see teeth and the power of fatherhood and brains accrue later; and those things that belong to the man but do not at first exist evolve gradually out of the child. (22, 1)

The text talks about "by addition." This suggests the intake of food, just as a plant or tree takes in food from outside via its roots and an animal through its mouth (cf. *Haer.* V 7, 10: "by addition all things grow that grow. What is added is food for that which is fed."). But we should bear in mind here that the World Seed belongs to the sphere of non-Being and that the process of formation also means the expansion of a non-physical principle

[92] Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 3, 736b2-5: οὐ γὰρ ἅμα γίγνεται ζῷον καὶ ἄνθρωπος οὐδὲ ζῷον καὶ ἵππος, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων· ὕστατον γὰρ γίγνεται τὸ τέλος, τὸ δ' ἴδιόν ἐστι τὸ ἑκάστου τῆς γενέσεως τέλος, trans. A. L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 167. Cf. M. Furth, *Substance, Form and Psyche: An Aristotelean Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 112. In *Haer.* VII 20, 4, Basilides also paid special attention to the ἰδιότητας.

[93] D. Holwerda has proposed to read ἀναγκαῖα here.

into spatial and material reality. This "addition" only seems possible if there is a physical material reality. It seems as if Basilides collapses differentiation through logical diaeresis with the process of acquiring spatial divisibility.

The transmitted text also talks about the getting of teeth, the ability to procreate (?), and brains as matters that develop gradually but were not there before. Here, too, we can easily recognize an Aristotelian scheme of potentiality and actualization (of the soul-parts). We would, however, expect an order to be delineated in which the vegetative, animal (conative), and human (rational) soul-parts were distinguished.

The first thing we need to say is that the example of teeth refers to biotically systematic vegetative processes. Teeth grow and milk teeth are shed according to a biotically systematic process. "Mind" (φρένες) is a capacity Aristotle emphatically connected with the soul. The virtue of φρόνησις or "good sense" is typical of a human being whose actions are guided by λόγος, or reason.[94] Consequently, the reference to the second phase in the development of a newly born child, as denoted in the text, seems strange.

According to modern editors, the author of the *Elenchos* makes reference here to "the substance of the father."[95] But it is far from clear what this could be. Moreover, the order of the words as transmitted makes no sense to modern editors.[96]

We will have to bear in mind that the development in each of the three sectors of the cosmos displays the following scheme: (a) being born; (b) begetting a Son; (c) achieving γνῶσις. If we compare this with the three items mentioned here, the reference to an "ability to procreate" would not be so strange. We could then think of the three phases of (a) growth until natural maturity; (b) the phase of natural maturity that results in reproduction and the begetting of a Son; (c) the phase of spiritual maturity and the begetting of a spiritual Son.

In any case, the theme of the world's ages as periods in the development of the World Seed is a motif structurally connected with the idea of a World Seed and cannot be better linked with any other philosophical system than with that of Aristotle.

Basilides repeatedly says of this seed that everything is "stored as a treasure within the Seed."[97] On account of the role it plays in Basilides's system, we can well compare Col.

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[94] *Haer.* I 20, 5, had reported that according to Aristotle, like Plato, φρόνησις is one of the qualities of the soul.

[95] *Haer.* VII 22, 1: πατρικὴν οὐσίαν (Marcovich, *Hippolytus*). Cruice, in *Philosophumena sive Haeresium omnium confutatio opus Origeni adscriptum*, translates this as "paternam substantiam"; MacMahon, as "paternal substance"; F. Legge, in *[Hippolytus] Philosophumena or the Refutation of All Heresies,* translated from the text of P. Cruice (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1921), as "the power of fatherhood"; H. U. Meijboom, in *Hippolytus, Weerlegging van alle ketterijen*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1916-17), as "den aard des vaders" (the nature of the father); Quispel ("L'homme gnostique," 116) connects the expression with sexual maturity at the age of 14; Osborne, in *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy*, 287, translates it as "his inherited character"; W. Foerster, in *Zeugnisse der Kirchenväter*, vol. 1 of *Die Gnosis* (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1969), as "das väterliche Wesen." D. Holwerda, in "Textkritisches zum Basilides-Referat des Hippolytos," *Mnemosyne* 56, no. 5 (2003): 606n, has proposed reading ὡρικὴν οὐσίαν as "grace." He believes its corruption to πατρικὴν is easily explained in a minuscule manuscript.

[96] Ms Parisinus reads ὀδόντας ὕστερον ὁρῶμεν καὶ πατρικὴν προσγένεσιν οὐσίαν καὶ φρένας καὶ [...]. In V 7, 20, the author quotes a logion from the Gospel of Thomas (logion 4), in which it is said: "he who seeks me will find me in children aged seven and older. For there I reveal myself in hidden fashion in the fourteenth year." The Anonymous dismisses this as a corruption of Hippocrates's thesis: "a child aged seven is half his father." A corruption of πρακτικήν is also possible. Note that the author says of God in VIII 8, 3, that he is πρὸς γένεσιν ἀπροσδεές.

[97] Cf. *Haer.* VII 22, 1; 22, 6; 26, 1; X 14, 2.

2:2-3: "to have [...] knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."[98] But we shall also have to bear in mind that Matthew 13:44 talks about "a treasure hidden in the field." Compare also Matthew 13:52: "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

4.4.3. PLOTINUS'S CRITICISM OF THE COMPARISON OF COSMIC DEVELOPMENT WITH THAT OF A SMALL CHILD IN *ENNEADS* II 9, 17

In connection with the *Elenchos*'s description of the initial phase of cosmic development, we do well to bear in mind that Plotinus in his treatise "Against the Gnostics" (*Enneads* II 9 [33], which forms part of four treatises that together formed a single whole but which Porphyry, for systematic reasons, placed in different parts of the *Enneads*) campaigns in a striking manner against Gnostics, who present the world as developed from an early beginning to a perfect result. He says there, "But it never happened to the All to be *incomplete like a child*, nor does any kind of *addition* come to it and *add anything to its body*. For where would it come from? The universe includes everything. Nor could one imagine any addition to its Soul."[99]

Plotinus is willing to recognize development on an individual scale but certainly not for the cosmos in its totality. And the words he uses are rather similar to those of the author of the *Elenchos* in 22, 1. It has always been thought that Plotinus was at loggerheads with the Valentinians because Valentinus is known to have lived and taught in Rome.[100] But the point of criticism Plotinus raises here fits very accurately with the conception that is ascribed to Basilides in the Anonymous's account. And the fact that Plotinus also criticizes the difficult, artificial, and vague terminology of his opponents (II 9, 10, 27-30) and their theory of the "Enlightenment" of the material world from an intelligible world (II 9, 10, 25) suggests that Plotinus was acquainted with writings by Basilides and his followers. Plotinus, who was from Alexandria himself, could well have had knowledge of works by Basilides.

4.4.4. MAN (ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ) IN HIS EARTHLY CONDITION AND AS COSMIC BEING (22, 4)

Two things need to be added in connection with Basilides's World Seed. The development of the World Seed in phases was probably compared by Basilides himself with the development of a newly born (human) infant (22, 1). Basilides thus makes a clear choice. He could also have compared this development with that of a plant or an animal.

The implicit assumption here is that man is a microcosm and the cosmos an Ἄνθρωπος writ large. Cosmogony and anthropogony have been parallel tracks since Plato. But this implicit assumption is a Greek-philosophical assumption and not a biblical one.

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[98] Col. 2:2-3: εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ, ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι. In 2 Cor. 4:7, Paul also talks about a "treasure," after he has spoken in 4:6 about the light that God has shone in our hearts "to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God."

[99] Plot. *Enn.* II 9 [33] 17. 52-54, trans. A. H. Armstrong (London: Heinemann, 1966), 295-97. See also R. Ferwerda, *Plotinus, Enneaden* (Baarn: Uitgeverij Ambo, 1984), 242; and Sinnige, *Plotinos*, 175.

[100] Cf. chap. 4.12.14 in the next issue of *Kronos: Philosophical Journal*.

The biblical doctrine of creation always awarded a special place to man and did not equate him with the cosmos as the living environment of man, who was created in God's image.

But in *On the Creation of the Cosmos* 25, Philo of Alexandria deduced from the text of Gen. 1:27 that, inasmuch as man was created "in God's image" (which Philo takes to mean that man is an image of God's Λόγος), the same should apply even more to the cosmos as a whole, of which man forms part. In this way, Philo had exchanged the very special place of man in all creation, which is characteristic of the biblical view of creation, for the Greek notion, which set man and cosmos as it were side by side as the youngest and oldest Sons of God and as vehicles of the divine Λόγος.

This crucial mental step underlies the notion of the God "Man" or the cosmic Ἄνθρωπος, about which H.-M. Schenke wrote a penetrating study.[101] He explains this concept via the exegesis of Genesis 1:27 and thus via the Jewish tradition.[102] But we should note that precisely the basic idea of the parallelism between man and cosmos is not Jewish but Greek-philosophical. In view of this, we can ask whether Basilides also saw this connection being made in John 1:9, which talks about "the true light that enlightens *every man* on its coming into the world."[103] Basilides uses this text in 22, 4, when he talks about the genesis of the cosmos:

> The Seed of the cosmos came into being from non-existent things, the Λόγος which was spoken: "Let there be light." And this, says he, is the saying in the Gospels: "The true light was coming into the world which lightens every man." He takes his beginnings from that Seed and is enlightened by it.

Man derives his principles from the World Seed "and is enlightened." For Basilides, this seems to mean that the enlightening effect of the Λόγος is operative in the entire cosmogony, which ultimately results in the "final Enlightenment," in which first the Enlightenment of the Sons of the cosmic Archons takes place and then the Enlightenment of the "pneumatic" mortals. Thanks to this Enlightenment, the specific human (divine) capacity for acquiring γνῶσις of the Transcendent by the cosmos is realized in its divine components. The fact that Basilides quotes the text of John 1:9, where it is said that the true Light enlightens "every man," may suggest that Basilides talked about the generation of Ἄνθρωποι on three different levels, comparable with the way that Philo of Alexandria had done this. In *De gigantibus* 60ff., Philo had distinguished between "people" "of the earth," "of heaven," and "of God" as three different degrees of recognizability of "God's image" in man. The beings of the highest category are those who wholly orient themselves to the knowledge and service of the one, transcendent God.

[101] H.-M. Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis. Ein religions-geschichtlicher Beitrag zur Diskussion über die paulinische Anschauung von der Kirche als Leib Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1962).
[102] Ibid., 120ff.
[103] *Haer.* VII 22, 4. On John 1:9, see G. H. van Kooten, "The 'True Light Which Enlightens Everyone' (John 1:9): John, *Genesis*, the Platonic Notion of the 'True, Noetic Light,' and the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity and Modern Physics*, ed. G. H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 149-94.

If this assumption is correct, there is reason to compare Basilides's position accurately with that of the Naassenes as described by the author of the *Elenchos* in his book V.[104]

4.5. COSMOGONY AS THEOGONY

So Basilides talks about a Seed that is deposited by the highest God. He compares this seed to a grain of mustard (from the purely vegetative sphere) and to the fertilized egg of a peacock (from the animal sphere) (21, 3-4). But the author of the *Elenchos* also relates it to the Aristotelian concept of "living being" as a comprehensive genus in VII 16, 1ff., and as a "seed-mixture" (πανσπερμία). As a consequence, different things seem to be mixed up in this Basilidean system. On the one hand, a seed produced by God seems necessarily to result in a "Son of God." And the cosmos springing from this Seed could then be presented as "Son of God."[105] Thus the cosmogony described here is also a kind of theogony.[106] But in fact only the "threefold Sonship" in the World Seed is truly "of the same essence as God." As far as that goes, this cosmogony could be construed as a kind of cosmic manifestation ("cosmification") of God's Sonship,[107] which finally results in the redeification of the "sons of God" through the union of their pneumatic, inner essence with the transcendent "Sonship."

On the other hand, the developing cosmos comprises all kinds of life and living beings, including sundry non-divine, mortal forms of life, whose existence does not involve participation in the divine Sonship and the holy Πνεῦμα.

4.5.1. THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS (22, 3)

What else does Basilides say about the World Seed? He emphasizes that we should see this seed as the result of God's commanding word: "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). He adds that the same light is meant in John 1:9: "The true light which enlightens every man, was coming into the world."[108] In my view, Basilides's intention here is clear: "the true Light" "was coming." In 25, 5; 25, 6; and 26, 1, the thrice-repeated "It [the Gospel] came"[109] is a clear reminiscence of the passage in the Prologue of John quoted here.[110]

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[104] Cf. *Haer.* V 9, 20, for quotation of John 1:9 and V 6, 4-7 and 7 passim, for their doctrine of the threefold Ἄνθρωπος.

[105] Thus in *Corp. Herm.* X 14 the cosmos is the "Son of God" and man the "grandchild" of God.

[106] So there are certainly points of contact between this Basilides and the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel, as G. Quispel, "Note sur 'Basilide,'" *Vigiliae Christianae* 2, no. 1 [1948]: 115-16, suggested.

[107] *Corp. Herm.* I 6 calls the Λόγος, which proceeds from the highest, transcendent Intellect, "Son of God": ὁ δὲ ἐκ Νοὸς φωτεινὸς Λόγος υἱὸς θεοῦ.

[108] *Haer.* VII 22, 4: καὶ τοῦτο, φησίν, ἐστὶ τὸ λεγ(ό)μενον ἐν τοῖ(ς) εὐαγγελίοις· «ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον». Foerster, in *Zeugnisse der Kirchenväter*, reads this as "Es war das wahre Licht das jeden Mensch, der in die Welt kommt, erleuchtet." Note that John 1:12 says, "But to all who received him, [...] he gave power to become children of God." Cf. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 286n9.

[109] See also *Haer.* 26, 4, ἐλθεῖν and 26, 8, κατῆλθεν and τὸ κατελθὸν.

[110] The thesis of G. H. van Kooten (see "The 'True Light Which Enlightens Everyone' [John 1:9]: John, *Genesis*, the Platonic Notion of the 'True, Noetic Light,' and the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth. Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity and Modern Physics*, ed. G. H. van Kooten [Leiden: Brill, 2004], art. 2004, 149-94) that "the true Light" is a Platonic element in the Prologue to the Gospel of John seems to me insufficiently founded. A further question is why the

The consequence of Basilides's use of the text in John 1:9 is that he interpreted the Light in question as an "intelligible" Light of a different, higher order than any light observed in the cosmos. This means that, for instance, the Great Archon is not identified with this spiritual Light, even though he is once called "more luminous" than everything that lay below him.[111] The Great Archon is connected with the cosmic sphere of the Ether (23, 7; 24, 3) and of the visible celestial lights (the stars and planets), that is, the sphere under the holy Πνεῦμα of the Boundary and under the returned and already blissful Sonship that causes the (intelligible) Light to enter the world.

By contrast, the third Sonship does not manifest its character of Light substance. It still resides in the Darkness of the matter and material reality in which this divine component of the Seed is hidden. But it is this third Sonship that, while it is still in the cosmos, has the potential to be "enlightened" if "kindled" "from above."

In Basilides we will have to assume the same kind of distinction between spiritual, intelligible Light and the visible light of celestial powers as in the *Poimandres* of the Hermetic Corpus. It is said there that the transcendent Intellect, the Νοῦς, who is "Light and Life," produces a demiurgic Intellect, the god of Fire and Πνεῦμα.[112] But he then produces Man, "of the same essence" as he.[113] He displays the image of the highest God.

Basilides's basic idea that "the Sons of God" must be revealed should therefore be understood in the sense that the Son of the Great Archon realizes his potential to be enlightened; that, next, the Son of the Lower Archon must rid himself of his irrational passions and then realize his potential to be enlightened; and that likewise the mortal beings with potential to be enlightened are purified of their coarse materiality and their irrationality in order to undergo enlightenment by the Gospel as well, for these Sons of the Archons and the mortal pneumatics participate in the divine third Sonship that has remained behind. It is alone in being of higher quality than the Great Archon (23, 4).

The Prologue to the Gospel of John identifies this Light with the Λόγος of God. John says of the Λόγος: "All things were made through him, and without him not anything was made. In what was made was life" (John 1:3).[114] And the Prologue of John also talks about the Darkness in which the Light shines. This is how Paul talked about it as well.[115]

The passage 22, 4, which says, "The Seed of the cosmos came into being from non-existent things, the Λόγος which was spoken 'Let there be Light,'"[116] implies that Basilides

author of the *Elenchos* writes ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις. But elsewhere he also refers to the canonical gospel texts in this way without specifying: VI 29, 1; VII 27, 8; 38, 2; VIII 10, 7; 17, 3; 19, 1; X 16, 6; 25, 1.

[111] *Haer.* VII 23, 4: φωτεινότερος.

[112] *Corp. Herm.* I 9. Cf. the "light names" of the planets in Arist. *De mundo* 2, 392a23-30, with commentary in *Aristoteles, Over de kosmos*, intro. and trans. A. P. Bos (Meppel: Boom, 1989), 94-97, and G. Reale and A. P. Bos, *Il Ttrattato Sul Cosmo per Alessandro Attribuito ad Aristotele* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1995), 261-62. See also Plu. *De facie in orbe lunae* 941C on the planet Saturn (Φαίνων) as "Nightwatch" (Νυκτοῦρος) in the darkness.

[113] *Corp. Herm.* I 12.

[114] Thus the reading of *The Greek New Testament*, ed. K. Aland et al. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1975). The usual reading before that was: "All things were made through him, and without him not anything was made that was made. In him was life."

[115] 2 Cor. 4:6: ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν, ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμψει.

[116] *Haer.* VII 22, 4: ὁ λόγος ὁ λεχθεὶς «γενηθήτω φῶς», and 22, 3: ἐκ τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ λέγοντος.

directly connected the World Seed with the Λόγος.[117] This means that he interpreted the text of Genesis 1:3 "Let there be Light" as the deposition of the World Seed. Again, this shows the importance of the Prologue to the Gospel of John alongside the motif of God as "Sower" in Matthew. It is remarkable that Basilides apparently presents the God "exalted above all name" as the author of "the Λόγος which was spoken." In other Gnostic systems, the Λόγος is said to be produced from the Great Silence (Σιγή – cf. VI 22, 2, and X 13). The sowing of the World Seed is interpreted as the emanation of the Λόγος from God.[118] So Basilides sees the Λόγος as the Λόγος σπερματικός of the World Seed. In this view, the "incarnation" of the Λόγος did not take place in the birth or activity of the earthly man Jesus of Nazareth.[119] Jesus of Nazareth is seen here as the "first-born of the seed-selection" (27, 8) of the "third Sonship," while the three Sonships together are viewed as the Λόγος that enters matter (as Light into the Darkness). In this conception, the Λόγος did not become "Flesh"[120] but entered the Darkness of matter. There is no question of an "incarnation" but of an "entering into the world" of the Deity.[121]

A question that urges itself here is in what sense we can say that the World Seed is identified in 22, 3, with the "Light" mentioned in Genesis 1:3. Further on in his discussion, Basilides also talks about the process of "Enlightenment"[122] by which the Gospel passed through all levels of the cosmos and thus brought about the completion of the cosmos and the liberation of the "third Sonship." Yet we can see those two phases as different stages in the "coming of the Light" into the world. Basilides may have explained the command "Let there be Light" as the command that initiated the entire cosmic process, starting with the vital principles that derived their starting point (ἀρχή) from the sowing of the World Seed and finally resulting in the last phase of these vital principles, the "Enlightenment" of all levels of the differentiated cosmos. I think that Basilides's intention should be understood in this last way.[123] He uses here a distinction that Aristotle had introduced between the soul as "entelechy" and its instrumental body in the process of the actualization of its potentialities (*Anim.* II 1, 412a22-26). The soul-principle is present from the outset but is not free from its instrumental body from the outset.

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[117] Cf. L. Abramowski, "Ein gnostischer Logostheologe," in *Drei christologische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981), 25n22.

[118] We should bear in mind that, according to Matt. 13:19, 20, 22, and 23, "the Sower" also sows the "λόγος" of the Kingdom.

[119] That the earthly man Jesus, son of Mary, is the Son of God in a proper and physical sense is emphatically denied in VII 26, 8-9, in connection with the very special explanation of Luke 1:35 given there. This is also why Basilides and his followers saw no reason to celebrate Jesus's birthday. For them the day of Jesus's Enlightenment through his baptism by John in the Jordan was much more important. Cf. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 47.

[120] Cf. L. Abramowski, "Ein gnostischer Logostheologe," 44n72: "Die Logoschristologie des Redaktors geht niemals soweit, dass er ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο aus Jo. 1.14 zitiert."

[121] The Prologue to the Gospel of John is fundamental to Basilides's conception as rendered by the *Elenchos*. If Löhr (*Basilides und seine Schule*, 46, 48) is right to say that Basilides cannot have had knowledge of the Gospel of John, this means that a much more profound conception is attributed to later, unknown pupils than to Basilides himself.

[122] Cf. *Haer.* VII 26, 5; 6; 7; 8; 10.

[123] Cf. *Haer.* VII 22, 5: <πᾶς γὰρ ὁ κόσμος> λαμβάνει τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ σπέρματος ἐκείνου καὶ φωτίζεται (Marcovich, *Hippolytus*). But Marcovich's addition is not compelling. We can certainly read here: "[every man] takes his beginnings from that seed and is enlightened."

But we have to explain here why the "true Light" is expressly said to enlighten *every man*. We will have to examine what this means against the background of the fact that the Great Archon and the Lower Archon are *not* enlightened (they are only instructed in the content of the Gospel), but their Sons and the earthly pneumatics are![124]

Certainly it is Aristotelian to see the achievement of self-knowledge and the recognition of the highest God as the final state that can be achieved according to the special laws that govern the development of rational living beings, after all previous phases of cosmic development have been completed.[125] When Aristotle declares at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* that "all men by nature desire to know," this means for him that there is in Nature a desire that finds its fulfilment in something that transcends Nature: the intuitive knowledge of the metaphysical Origin. And this knowledge is only possible if man's intellect goes beyond Nature. Though everything in nature aspires in its own way to the divine and to immortality, vegetable and animal nature will never achieve this. But it *is* a possibility for human beings because they possess πνεῦμα of the highest degree of purity.

In this way, the entire process of creation was described by Basilides as a process in which a spiritual Light enters the Darkness as a formative principle in the sense that "every man," on the different levels of the cosmos, takes his beginnings from the Λόγος of God, which as World Seed supplies the principles for all living beings and leads these living beings to their destination through his Light.

4.5.2. PLOTINUS ON LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

It may be illuminating to note here that Plotinus was familiar with a Gnostic view in which the genesis of the cosmos is presented as the result of Light that brightens the Darkness. We also find this in his work "Against the Gnostics" (*Enneads* II 9 [33] 10.19-33):

> For they say that Soul declined to what was below it, and with it some sort of "Wisdom," whether Soul started it or whether Wisdom was a cause of Soul being like this, or whether they mean both to be the same thing, and then they tell us that the other souls came down too, and as members of Wisdom put on bodies, human bodies for instance. But again, they say that the very being for the sake of which these souls came down did not come down itself, did not decline, so to put, but only *illumined the darkness*, and so an image from it came into existence in matter. Then they form an image of the image somewhere here below, through matter or materiality [ὑλότητος] or whatever they like to call it – they use now one name and now another, and say many other names just to make their meaning obscure – and produce

[124] In discussing the threefold Sonship in chap. 4.6, we will show that the divine Sonship was seen by Basilides as the essence of humanity on each level of the cosmos.

[125] A problem is that the growth of teeth can be called a biotic-systematic affair, but the realization of intellectuality cannot. The achievement of intellectuality is conditional on the entire preceding development, but it is not a sufficient ground. In Clem. *Strom.* II 10, 1-11, 2 = Basil. frag. 2 (Löhr), this leads to discussions about whether saving "faith" is a "natural" thing or a matter of choice/free will. See chap. 4.10.5 in the next issue of *Kronos: Philosophical Journal*.

> what they call the Maker, and make him revolt from [ἀποστάντα] his Mother and drag the universe which proceeds from him down to the ultimate limit of images. The man who wrote this just meant to be blasphemous![126]

Throughout the next chapter 11, Plotinus criticizes this view and analyzes the contradictions he finds in the discussion of a Soul, or Sophia, that "declines" and "does not decline" and of an Enlightenment that brings about the generation of souls but not of bodies.

In reading this text, we could acknowledge that according to Basilides the World Seed consists of the threefold Sonship. It is deposited in the field of the world and thus separates from its unity with the divine Origin. This could well be interpreted in the sense that the World Seed "declined to what was below it." But of this threefold Sonship, the first Sonship ascends directly, and the second Sonship with some help, to the hypercosmic Origin. And this Sonship then functions as a source of spiritual Light for all beings that participate in the third Sonship, which has stayed behind in the underlying. In chapter 4.6.2, we will explain the fact that the first Sonship ascends directly to its Origin as the cause of the Great Archon's Ignorance. Plotinus talks about the "separation" (ἀποστάντα – Armstrong's translation, "revolt," is defensible but not compelling) between the Archon and his Mother, the Soul or Sophia.

To explain this text, other Gnostic myths are certainly relevant. But what Plotinus says is not far removed from what Basilides means by the Sonship of the World Seed. We already suggested above that the World Seed can be viewed as the product of the union of the divine Intellect and his Sophia.

And in no other Gnostic system is the theme of "Enlightenment" so fundamentally and so firmly anchored with texts from Genesis 1 and John 1 as in Basilides!

Plotinus's information can also supply us with arguments for positing that Basilides regarded the holy Πνεῦμα as identical with Sophia.

The Gnostic writings, like the *Apocryphon of John*, in which Sophia is presented as the last emanation of the Πλήρωμα, can be easily seen as a (drastically simplified) representation of Basilides's doctrine of Πνεῦμα, which forms the boundary between hypercosmos and cosmos.

4.5.3. THE WORLD SEED AS ΓÉΝΟΣ (22, 5)

In this connection, the author of the *Elenchos* makes a remark he has set up in his extensive discussion in VII 15-8 on Aristotle's doctrine of threefold substance – namely, γένος, species, and individual substance (ἄτομον εἰδός). He says here, "this is the seed which contains within itself all the seed-mass which Aristotle says is the γένος divided into boundless species, as we divide 'animal' ox, horse, and man from the non-existent."[127] There seems to be a striking relationship here with Philo of Alexandria's notion of the

[126] Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Armstrong (my italics and additions).

[127] *Haer.* VII 22, 5: τοῦτο <δ'> ἔστι τὸ σπέρμα, <τ>ὸ ἔχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ πᾶσαν τὴν πανσπερμίαν, ὅ φησιν Ἀριστοτέλης γένος εἶναι, εἰς ἀπείρους τεμνόμενον ἰδέας, ὡς τέμνομεν, [...] ὡς τέμνομεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ζῴου βοῦν, ἵππον, ἄνθρωπον.

Λόγος τομεύς or the "severing Λόγος."[128] Cosmogony is described here in the context of a separation and differentiation process.[129]

It seems likely that the Λόγος was seen as being produced by the highest divine principle (the transcendent Intellect), like Light by the Source of Light, and as Λόγος σπερματικός in the sense of a principle that introduces order and separation in what was only potentially a cosmos.

Thus understood, Basilides seems to have strongly developed the words in John 1 about the Λόγος that proceeded from God and that he identified with the World Seed, after the example of Philo's talk about the Λόγος as God's world-creating aspect and as the totality of all primeval models.

But the author of the *Elenchos* had argued at length that for Aristotle concrete existing substances had their constitutive components in the *genos* and species as non-being things. He now puts the World Seed here on a par with the Aristotelian *genos*, and he repeats again that the *genos* is "non-existent." This seems to imply that he equated the hypercosmic Sonship with the Aristotelian εἶδος.

4.5.4. WHY DID BASILIDES INTRODUCE THE TERM "SONSHIP"? (22, 7)

We are now forced to tackle the question of why Basilides talked about "Sonship" and not simply about "Son of God." For although Basilides designates a specific group of individual people as "the sons of God" (25, 2) – namely, the pneumatics – his system centers on the "tripartite Sonship." Only *together*, and only after they have left their lower levels behind, do the pneumatics form the "third Sonship," which is hypercosmic.

To begin with, we can say that the term Basilides uses for "Sonship" does not occur in classical Greek. It is also absent in Plato, where we might expect it. It is clearly a rarely used term, one that belongs to the Christian literature and the Christological discussion. It may be that Basilides himself introduced the term as a neologism.

Basilides's language theology is probably an important factor here. In the commentary on 20, 2-4, we pointed out that Basilides's language theology shows remarkable similarities to the content of sections 11-13 in the Gospel of Philip. But the Gospel of Philip does not contain the abstract term "Sonship." While we might suspect that the author of the Gospel of Philip derived his theme of the mutation of names from the Gospel of John, Basilides seems to evince theoretical, philosophical reflection and consequently introduces idea-like names for everything that belongs to transcendent reality. Just as none of the "names" of cosmic entities applies to the Origin, so Basilides may have chosen not to use the "cosmic" term of "Son" for a hypercosmic reality present in the World Seed. By using abstract notions such as "non-being" and "Sonship," Basilides wants to refer linguistically to a reality that differs in kind from the reality of "the beings" and of "Sons."[130]

[128] Philo, *Heres.* 130ff. Cf. U. Früchtel, *Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen bei Philo von Alexandrien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Genesisexegese* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 41-52.

[129] Cf. Tatian, *Or.* 12, 2, where διάκρισις and διαίρεσις result from the creative activity of the Λόγος.

[130] Perhaps Paul's Epistle to the Romans 1:20 interprets the word "deity" in a similar sense: τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ [...] νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἥ τε ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης. See also Col. 2:9: θεότητος. And cf. Eph. 3:14-15.

We should also bear in mind that the pneumatics are concrete, corporeal beings, individualized by their spatial and temporal mode of existence, whereas their spiritual cores of existence are hypercosmic and as such not individualized. Once the grand finale has been reached and the selection or separation of the seeds has taken place, the essential nuclei of the pneumatic human beings are united into the one "third Sonship," which is not individualized materially and spatially.

In this sense, the generation of God's Sonship corresponds to the process of the deification of this Sonship, and in that process everything consequently receives its own definitive status. This throws a different light on the fact that the cosmic Archons, too, immediately produce a Son. Naturally these sons also differ from the Sonships that God deposited in the World Seed. As we shall see, however, they are related to them in a special way.

But if we look at 22, 3-4, where Genesis 1:3 and John 1:9 are quoted, there can only be one conclusion: for Basilides, the text "Let there be Light" expresses the initiative of the highest God to start a process of generation by depositing the World Seed as the totality of all principles. We should remember here that the context of Genesis 1:3 contains words that the LXX translates as follows: "ἐν ἀρχῇ God created the heavens and the earth." Like Philo of Alexandria, Basilides doubtless avoided any reference to time in explaining the words "ἐν ἀρχῇ." It may be that his reference to the World Seed as Ἀρχή and genus or πανσπερμία in Basilides is the result of reflection on the ancient text of Genesis 1. He may have explained Genesis 1:1 as " In the Principle God created the heavens and the earth." In this way he could avoid the suggestion that God himself had anything to do with the *visible* heavens and the *visible* earth.[131]

When he discusses the completion of all things according to Basilides, the author significantly mentions, "thus all things were established according to nature in the seed of the All ἐν ἀρχῇ."[132] Though this contrasts the final phase of cosmic development with its initial phase, it should certainly not be seen as a "beginning" (in time) of the activity of the transcendent God, which is structurally supratemporal.[133]

Basilides presented the resulting process of generation as a process of selection, separation, and differentiation, the final goal being the separation of all purely spiritual principles from the non-spiritual ones, which also develop in the World Seed.

4.5.5. THE "SONSHIP" IN BASILIDES AND THE "IMAGE OF GOD" IN PHILO

It is clear that "the Sonship" formed in the cosmos is the properly divine. It is significantly said to be "of the same essence" as the non-being God. But this also means that Basilides's notion of "the Sonship" can be put on a par with "the image of God" as used by Philo. According to Philo, the intellect (the highest part of the soul) in man is a part of God himself. It is associated with pure πνεῦμα because man owes this highest potentiality to the fact that God himself "breathes into" (Gen. 2:7) man the life-generating πνεῦμα. Philo

[131] Note in this connection that the *Hermetic Corpus* I (*Poimandres*) also describes the cosmogony as a process in which Light enters "Darkness" (I 4) and in which the Darkness changes into a "moist nature" and from the Light the Logos descends upon this "moist nature," like the formative soul-principle in seminal fluid (I 5).
[132] Cf. *Haer.* VII 27, 4: τεθεμελιωμένων [...] ἐν τῷ σπέρματι τῶν ὅλων ἐν ἀρχῇ.
[133] Cf. Bos, "Philo on God as '*archê geneseôs*.'"

already emphasized that "breathing into" should not be understood anthropomorphically but as an indication of the spiritual similarity of the truly divine man to the perfectly transcendent God.

We can surmise that in choosing the term "Sonship" Basilides followed the line of his abstract language theology on the one hand and followed more the terminology of the Gospel of John than of Genesis 2:7 on the other.

But if we can make this identification, this means that, because the first Sonship ascended directly and effortlessly to hypercosmic reality, the Great Archon should be seen as *the cosmic Man who is devoid of the* "*image of God*." He is not an "image of God" but only a "shadow" (εἴδωλον) of true Man. On the other hand, the Son of the Great Archon (because he participates in the Sonship that has stayed behind in the underlying) does possess the potentiality of the "image of God" and therefore the potential to realize the true divine possibility of humanity. The Son of the Great Archon is consequently of a different caliber from his father.

It seems legitimate to interpret the difference between the Great Archon and his Son as the difference between Man who does not possess the image of God and Man who does have the potential to display the image of God. In this sense, the Great Archon is the model of postlapsarian Adam, and the Son of the Great Archon is the model of Man who has the potential to realize his transcendent essence.

But this means that Basilides reinterpreted the "Fall" as an aspect of an eschatology that proceeds by stages: because the first Sonship raises itself effortlessly to its transcendent Origin, the eschatological situation has already arrived for the Ethereal sphere, and the Great Ignorance has descended upon the Great Archon. The Great Archon and his Son should therefore be interpreted as the model of "the first Adam" (a living soul) and "the last Adam" (a life-giving spirit) – 1 Corinthians 15:45.

This scheme also seems responsible for the notion that no salvation was possible for Adam.

4.5.6. A FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD STAGE IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING (22, 7)

In 22, 7, the author announces, "Let us see then what they say came into being in the first, second, or third place from the cosmic Seed."

Two avenues are open to us to explain this: (a) we could think that the author puts the (threefold) Sonship first, then the Great Archon, and finally the Lower Archon; (b) but it may also be that he means the history of the vicissitudes of the first, second, and third Sonship, culminating in the purification and separation of the "third Sonship."

We should undoubtedly opt for (b): the entire theological-cosmogonic system of Basilides centers on the threefold Sonship.[134] But the motivation for this remains opaque as long as we have no clarity about Basilides's reasons for talking about a "threefold Sonship" and as long as it remains unclear why Basilides did not confine himself to one cosmic Archon/Demiurge but distinguished between a Great Archon and a Lower Archon.

[134] The entire exposition on the Great Archon, the Lower Archon, and the mortal beings in the earthly sphere basically contains the story about the role of the revelation of the third Sonship in the two Sons of the Archons and in the Sons of God (the pneumatics) in the earthly domain.

In our attempt to understand *Refutation* 22, 7, we should certainly bear in mind the text of Plato's *Timaeus* 41d, where Plato, after describing the creation of the World Soul and the souls of the celestial beings, talks about a "second and third portion" (δεύτερα καὶ τρίτα) to designate the souls of individual living beings.

4.6. THE TRIPARTITE SONSHIP (22, 7)

In the *Elenchos*'s account, Basilides then goes on to talk about a "threefold Sonship."

> There was, he says, within the Seed itself, a threefold Sonship, throughout of the same being (ὁμοούσιος) as the non-being God, begotten of non-being entities. And of this tripartite Sonship, one part was subtle, one part [less subtle; and one] in need of purification. (22, 7; cf. X 14, 2)

É. de Faye rightly observed that the notion of "Son" or "Sonship" is the core concept in this system.[135] Just as Valentinus's system seems to pivot on his concept of the hypercosmic and the earthly Sophia, so Basilides takes his starting point in the notion of the (essentially hypercosmic) "Sonship" and of the cosmic and earthly "Sons of God." This concept of the tripartite Sonship and the way it is used by Basilides is singularly intriguing. It is not only the core concept of this system but also the core *problem*. Perhaps this is why Irenaeus and Clement say nothing about the "tripartite Sonship" in their accounts of Basilides's views. To say anything comprehensible about it requires an extensive exposition.

The first question here is why Basilides called the Sonship "threefold." This question has not been satisfactorily answered in the modern literature on Basilides, and sometimes it has even been dismissed as irrelevant. Thus W.-D. Hauschild argued that there is no real difference between the first Sonship and the second.[136] But in my view we will have to continue to seek a meaningful explanation for Basilides's distinction of *three* Sonships.

In Basilides, the Sonship is called "of the same being" as God.[137] So it is purely spiritual and transcendent. It is also called "begotten of non-being entities" (plural!).

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[135] É. de Faye, *Gnostiques et gnosticisme: Étude critique des documents du Gnosticisme chrétien aux IIe et IIIe siècles*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Geuthner, 1925), 230. The same could be said about the Gospel of Philip. This Gospel also seems to be dominated by the idea that in the process of cosmic development the "Sons of God" must be revealed or "begotten" and "born."

[136] In *Gottes Geist und der Mensch. Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972), 191-92n4, W.-D. Hauschild criticizes the view of Quispel ("L'homme gnostique," 105-10). Hauschild claims, "Es kommt Basilides offenbar nur darauf an, dass bei Gott die eine Sohnschaft ist und deren Pendant sich 'unten' befindet." Hauschild finds confirmation of this in the P reading of VII 27, 6: "the first Sonship" in the passage "This is [...] the Sonship which has left the soul behind, not to die but to remain as it is by nature, just as the first Sonship left the holy Spirit which is the boundary in its appropriate place and then put on its own special soul." But if we recognize that the third Sonship, after "first clothing itself in an appropriate soul" (27, 6), naturally casts off this new soul too on entering the hypercosmic world, just as the second Sonship had done, then it is understandable that the author of the *Elenchos* here compares the third Sonship only with the second Sonship and that he thus may have referred to the latter Sonship, somewhat confusingly, as "the first."

[137] *Haer.* VII 22, 7: ἦν <οὖν>, φησίν, ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ σπέρματι υἱότης τριμερής, κατὰ πάντα τῷ οὐκ ὄντι θε<ῷ> ὁμοούσιος [...] ταύτης τῆς υἱότητος τῆς τρ(ι)χῇ διῃρημένης τὸ μέν τι ἦν λεπτομερές, τὸ δὲ <παχυμερές, τὸ δὲ> ἀποκαθάρσεως δεόμενον. Cf. X 14, 2. It obviously seems somewhat strange to call the hypercosmic Sonship "of the same οὐσία" as the non-being God. The same remarkable term ὁμοούσιος is also used in *Corp. Herm.* I 10. But there we do not have the problem that God is referred to as non-being. Note that the motif of "the image and

As such it cannot possibly be separate from God. On the other hand, Basilides distinguishes three levels with clearly different characteristics:

(1) The highest level is called "subtle" (λεπτομερές).[138]

(2)The second is called "less subtle" (παχυμερεστέρα) in three places (VII 22, 9; VII 22, 10; X 14, 4) and thus seems clearly related to the "subtle" first Sonship. But once (X 14, 2), it is referred to as "compact" (παχυμερές). And in one place a corruption of the text has occurred, where certainly one of both, either "less subtle" or "compact," must be supplemented.[139] It seems to me that, to characterize the "second Sonship," we must opt for the property "less subtle," the meaning being that the "second Sonship" is of lower quality than the "first Sonship." Nevertheless, it is still of much higher quality than the "third Sonship," which remains imprisoned in the sublunary sphere and coarse materiality. It therefore seems right to me to correct the text in X 14, 2, to "less subtle"[140] and to add "less subtle" to the text of VII 22, 7.

(3) The "third Sonship" is said to be "in need of purification."[141]

Foerster believes that the properties of the three Sonships seem to indicate that they are somatically characterized. But inasmuch as they are "of the same essence" as God, they are also related to the hypercosmic reality that is free of all natural bodies.[142] This is an obvious contradiction. It cannot be that the Sonships are "entirely of the same essence" as the highest God if they are also "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification."

The terms "λεπτομερές" and "παχυμερές" are not found in the New Testament. They are terms known from Greek natural philosophy as characterizations of natural bodies, elements, or basic substances[143] and are introduced here by Basilides for a certain reason.

But perhaps Basilides also associated the term "παχυμερές" with a certain level of knowledge and with the passage in Matthew 13:15 where the words of the prophet Isaiah 6:10 are quoted: "This people's heart has grown thick and their ears are heavy of hearing."[144]

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likeness of God" (Gen. 1:26-27), which in Tatian denotes openness to the transcendent, does not play an explicit role in our text on Basilides. But it was undoubtedly Basilides's intention that "the Sonship" as the likeness of the transcendent God manifests itself in all beings that reveal themselves as "Sons of God."

[138] *Haer.* VII 22, 7; cf. 22, 9; X 14, 2; 14, 4.

[139] *Haer.* VII 22, 7. Marcovich reads there: τὸ δὲ <παχυμερές, τὸ δὲ>.

[140] In Greek: τὸ δὲ παχυμερέστερον. Foerster's translation (in "Das System des Basilides," 238) for the characteristics of the "First" and "Second Sonship": "leicht" and "schwer," seems to me less felicitous. Likewise, Mueller, "Hippolytus, Aristotle, Basilides," 149: "a trinity of sons [...] a heavy son [...] a light son [...] and a son in need of purification." In passing I note that the translation "son" here is careless because Basilides systematically used the abstract term "Sonship."

[141] *Haer.* VII 22, 7; X 14, 2; 14, 5.

[142] Cf. *Haer.* VII 19, 3: "But the limiting surface, which is a fifth *ousia*, <is> free of all natural elements of which the cosmos consists, and it is <immaterial> according to Aristotle, this fifth *ousia*, as it were a hypercosmic *ousia*."

[143] Cf. Arist. *Cael.* III 5, 303b19; 304a30; 305b1 compared with 304a31, where the "fineness of parts" was considered to decrease in the order of Fire, Air, Water, Earth. In I 19, the author of the *Elenchos* called atoms "the most subtle" and in I 20, 4, had called ether "λεπτότερον" in relation to the four elements and had compared it with πνεῦμα. In IV 43, 9, he says that water and earth are "παχυτέρα."

[144] Matt. 13:15: ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν. Matthew is the only witness among the evangelists to this quotation. Paul quotes it in Acts 28:27, after some Jews in Rome had embraced the faith and others remained unbelieving! That same text from Isaiah 6:10 is referred to in the *Apocryphon of John* 70, 26-27, where it is also used to illustrate a diminishing of power of knowledge. Cf. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J. M. Robinson, 3rd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 117.

How can we explain why Basilides could refer to the tripartite Sonship as "of the same being" as the non-being God and at the same time could say that it displays degrees of quality? Perhaps we should assume here that Aristotle explained all levels of life as being caused and initiated by the divine Origin while nevertheless differing in astral, human, animal, and vegetable life. Aristotle tried to make this understandable in *Generation of Animals* II 3, 736b29-737a7, by relating all the levels of sublunary life to πνεῦμα as the (potential) vehicle of life but also indicating degrees and differences in πνεῦμα as the explanation of differences in quality of life.[145] Basilides talks about "life" in the sense of spiritual, hypercosmic life. He seems to have designated "the Sonship" as the principle of this life and πνεῦμα as the cosmic vehicle of this life but then presented πνεῦμα as more or less "bound," "imprisoned in," and mixed with the matter and darkness of cosmic reality.

The fact that the threefold Sonship forms part of a World Seed that necessarily undergoes a development apparently implies that it necessarily receives a natural body as vehicle (the holy Πνεῦμα) but also cosmic components that become connected with it as a result of all seeds being "mixed together" in the World Seed. We will assume that the characteristics "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification" are characteristics of the threefold Sonship that are the consequence of "attachments" to this threefold Sonship in its state of formation and development. These "attachments" or "coverings" more or less obstruct the Sonship from reaching its destination.[146]

We note, too, that the threefold Sonship is said to be "begotten of things that were not" (22, 7) and that it is then said of the first Sonship in 22, 8, that it "pressed its way outside and ascended and went on high from below," while 23, 3, says of the Great Archon that he "pressed his way outside and was born of the cosmic Seed and the heap of the seed mixture."[147] This seems to express a qualitative difference between the Sonship and the cosmic Archon in the sense that the Great Archon belongs to the reality of what is subject to genesis, but the Sonship does not. The Sonship does seem "caused" but not "generated." By nature, it does not belong to the reality of generation and decay.

We also point out that the term "ascend," which Hippolytus repeatedly uses in connection with the "Sonship," is used in *Hermetic Corpus* X 16 for the soul that leaves the visible body and covers itself in a fiery body for the ascent.[148]

4.6.1. WHAT IS MEANT BY "SONSHIP"?

The choice of the term "Sonship" is highly remarkable in Basilides's system, particularly because he repeatedly links up with Paul's statement about the revelation of the "Sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).[149] According to Basilides, these "Sons of God" are "the pneumatic

[145] Cf. also Arist. *Gener. anim.* III 11, 761b13-23, where the different levels of life are related to the four regions of the natural elements and distance to the Origin.

[146] If our analysis is correct, Basilides's theory about the threefold Sonship falls under the criticism of Plotinus in *Enn.* II 9 [33] 1, 23, against a theory that splits up the highest principle into such a principle-in-act and such a principle-in-potentiality. In Basilides we could say that the highest, non-being God as God-in-act produces three Sonships as God-in-potentiality.

[147] Cf. also *Haer.* X 14, 3, and 14, 6.

[148] Cf. *Haer.* VII 22, 8; 22, 9; 22, 10; 26, 10; X 14, 4, and *Corp. Herm.* X 16.

[149] *Haer.* VII 25, 1-2; 27, 1.

human beings" in the sublunary sphere,[150] who must be purified of everything with which their "Sonship" is polluted and must then be enlightened by the Enlightenment resulting from the revelation of the Gospel. We will have to include the Sons of the Archons in this process inasmuch as they also prove receptive to the hypercosmic enlightenment. Basilides's choice of the term "Son*ship*" is once again likely to be informed by systemic motives: the fact that he founds concrete, material, generated substances in immaterial, universal, intelligible, and eternal principles. He founds the plurality of the concrete "sons of God" in cosmic reality in the divine νόημα of the "Son*ship*."

The three "Sonships" stand for principles that are essentially divine but are involved in a process of becoming, which they guide, and as such are burdened with materiality. They are "in the world but not of the world." (Only the highest divine reality is, in an absolute sense, not connected with materiality.) At the same time, these principles are also destined to return to their hypercosmic origin.[151]

We will have to ask why Basilides, unlike the scriptural texts, which talk about the one Λόγος that proceeded from God, talked about a *three*fold Sonship. The big question, of course, is whether this tripartition corresponds to another tripartition in Basilides's system.

We have seen that the author of the *Elenchos* probably assumed an agreement between Basilides and Aristotle in their postulation of a primary distinction between a hypercosmic reality (A) and a cosmos (B) and that they both distinguished within the cosmos between the supralunary celestial sphere (B1) and the sublunary sphere (B2).

Scheme:

(A) hypercosmos

(B) cosmos	(B1) supralunary	Ether
	(B2) sublunary	Air
		Earth / Water

[150] Note that, for Plotinus, one of the most objectionable aspects of his opponents' doctrine is the fact that they characterize themselves as "children of God" in contrast to other people and that they consider themselves higher than all other people and even than the (cosmic) divine beings (*Enn.* II 9 [33] 9, 57; 9, 53). Perhaps we can even hear in Plotinus's words "You are a child of God" an echo of the words heard during Jesus's glorification on the mount (Matt. 17:5) and during his baptism in the Jordan: "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

[151] Because both the "First" and the "Second Sonship" are of the same essence as the hypercosmic God and are both somatically characterized, Quispel ("L'homme gnostique," 111-12) has the wrong end of the stick when he claims: "les deux filialités doivent être conçues comme τὸ παραδειγματικόν, l'intuition introspective de Dieu et le siège des idées, et τὸ ὀργανικόν, l'esprit 'extrovers' de Dieu, à la manière des platoniciens." See also *Asclepius. De volkomen openbaring van Hermes Trismegistus*, intro., trans., and expl. G. Quispel (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 1996), 157-58. G. Verbeke, *L'évolution de la doctrine du* Pneuma*: du stoïcisme à S. Augustin* (Leuven: Desclée de Brouwer, 1945), 296n207, offers the highly improbable explanation: "Le terme υἱότης est appliqué probablement à ces substances cosmiques parce qu'elles naissent successivement de la semence primitive." First, it is not said that the Sonship "is born." Moreover, the Archons, who *are* born, could then also be called "Sonships."

But Basilides also clearly talked about a tripartition *within* the cosmos itself. As we shall see, the World Seed brings to light a "Great Archon" (1) and a "Second Archon" (2); this, finally, leaves the "heap of the totality of seeds" in which the "third Sonship" stays behind.

On the basis of what we read in 27, 10, about the "components" of Jesus, we can suspect that the lowest level of life is characterized by a coarse-material, mortal body.[152] This coarse-material body is lacking on the level of the Lower Archon, but this Archon does have a psychical life.[153] On the level of the Great Archon, both these lower levels are absent. It is possible here to interpret the sphere of the fine-material as the highest level closest in the cosmos to the divine sphere and the sphere of the less fine-material or the coarse-material as lower levels of functioning and life.

We could thus suspect that the "third Sonship" is the divine principle of life on the level of mortal beings that is their formal and organizing principle.

But when these mortal bodies are fully grown and organized, the mortal beings need to be trained and instructed to regulate their passions and emotions so that they change from psychical beings into rational beings. Finally, these rational beings must be clothed in holy Πνεῦμα to be capable of enlightenment.

Perhaps we should also relate to these distinct levels the operations for "arrangement and perfect formation,"[154] "rectification and completion."[155] and "instruction and education."[156]

In my view, Basilides assumed a correspondence between the three parts of the Sonship and the intracosmic tripartition. The Sonship in its totality belongs structurally to the hypercosmic because it is "of the same essence" as the non-being God. But apparently there is a difference in quality between the three parts of the Sonship that corresponds to the difference in value and rank of the cosmic beings. That is to say, the designation "subtle" of the first Sonship indicates that this Sonship belongs to the sphere of the Great Archon, who rules the ethereal, supreme cosmic sphere (23, 7; 24, 3). But the designation "less subtle" indicates that the "second Sonship" belongs to the sphere of the Lower Archon, who rules the domain of the Air (24, 3).

Thus it is said of the "second Sonship" in 22, 9, that it was "much more needy"[157] than the "first Sonship." Likewise, the "Second Archon" is said in 24, 3, to be "much more needy" than the "First Archon" (cf. X 14, 4 and 8). Moreover, the Lower Archon is said to do everything "in the same way" as the Great Archon (24, 4, and 26, 4), while the second Sonship is called "mimetic" (22, 9, and X 14).

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[152] *Haer.* VII 27, 10: σωματικὸν μέρος· ὅ ἦν τῆς ἀμορφίας, καὶ ἀπεκατέστη εἰς τὴν ἀμορφίαν.

[153] Ibid.: ἀνέστη δὲ τοῦτο ὅπερ ἦν ψυχικὸν αὐτοῦ μέρος· ὅπερ ἦν τῆς Ἑβδομάδος, καὶ ἀπεκατέστη εἰς τὴν Ἑβδομάδα.

[154] *Haer.* VII 25, 2: διακοσμῆσαι καὶ διατυπῶσαι.

[155] Ibid.: διορθώσασθαι καὶ τελειῶσαι.

[156] *Haer.* VII 26, 2: κατηχούμενος [...], διδαχθείς; 26, 4.

[157] For Aristotle, difference in quality and value of life always resides in the quality of the soul-principle and its pneumatic vehicle, manifesting itself in lower and higher levels of γνῶσις. Cf. *Gener. anim.* I 23, 731a24-b2. In his dialogue *De philosophia* (frag. 16 Ross; 30 Gigon = Simplicius, *In Arist. Cael.* 288, 28-289, 15), Aristotle had also said that the supreme divine has no neediness but that on account of its "neediness" all the non-divine aspires to the divine. We find the same idea in *Haer.* VII 22, 8.

As regards the "third Sonship," however, our author says explicitly that it stays behind in the great heap after the Great Archon and the Second Archon have pressed their way out of it (25, 1). The "third Sonship" must be liberated from there, after being purified and becoming subtle (26, 10), but it nevertheless remains the divine principle in the great heap of the Formlessness during the entire Age of the World until the Enlightenment.

In the same way, we will therefore have to relate the "first Sonship" to the ethereal part of the cosmos, that is, the ethereal spheres that are the province of the "Great Archon." And finally, we will have to relate the "second Sonship" to the part of the sublunary sphere that is the domain of the "Second Archon." But a crucial factor in the discussion of these two levels must be that the Sonships belonging to these levels have already *separated* from the sphere to which they belong and of which they are the real principles of life and that the second Sonship had already taken along the "holy Πνεῦμα" in which it had clothed itself in order to ascend and had left it behind as Πνεῦμα of the Boundary, *beyond the reach of the Archons*. This must be the reason for the lack of any awareness of the transcendent world among the World Archons. For as a result, there is *no desire for the hypercosmic world* on these levels.[158] We will have to properly understand that there are "Sons" of the Archons on these levels: these Sons come from "the underlying," in which the third Sonship has stayed behind. They are thus *outsiders* in the ethereal sphere or the sphere of the air. They are a kind of "fifth column," a "different generation," a "different seed," which does have the potential for Enlightenment.[159] In these Sons of the Great Archon and of the Lower Archon, Sons of God will reveal themselves! The great change of the Great Archon, who repents, and thus the great change in the process of cosmic development also seems to have been connected by Basilides with the emphatic designation of the Son of the Great Archon by the holy Πνεῦμα as "Beloved Son" of the highest God.[160] This is what also happens later to Jesus of Nazareth and with all the πνευματικοί when they participate in the great Enlightenment through the Gospel and the Light of Truth.

But what does "Sonship" mean? In Basilides's system, it undoubtedly had a Christian connotation. Paul's talk about "the revelation of the sons of God" and John's reference to the power "to become 'children of God'" and about the Λόγος as the "only-begotten (Son of) God" clearly form part of it.

But why doesn't Basilides simply talk about "the Son" or "Sons of God" on the highest level? We should bear in mind here that the "Sonship" stands for the presence of the truly divine inasmuch as it is "of the same essence" as the transcendent God, who is raised above all particularization. Basilides classifies the "Sonship" as belonging to the sphere of non-Being. But God is purely spiritual principle. Hence the various Sonships should certainly be presented as spiritual principles too, but with the crucial difference

[158] Perhaps the Valentinians opted for a different solution here. They maintained that the Great Demiurge possessed the πνεῦμα of his mother Sophia but breathed it into man when creating him and thus lost it himself. But the problem to which they gave an answer in this way was the same: How can γνῶσις occur in the sublunary world but be lacking in the celestial regions?

[159] Foerster, "Das System des Basilides," 254, observed, "Es scheint mir, dass 'die Söhne' jedenfalls auch an die 'Sohnschaft' erinnern sollen." This seems quite right if we recognize that the *third* Sonship manifests itself in the "Sons" of the two Archons.

[160] Cf. Basilides frag. 4 (Löhr).

that they are spiritual principles of beings that are not purely spiritual but living, ensouled beings, which as such are materially characterized. That is to say, every "Sonship" stands for the spiritual principle-in-potentiality that by accident belongs with ensouled living beings in the cosmos of the category "man," "demon," and "divine celestial being" but that is essentially, as a realized spiritual principle, not bound to matter.

This theme of "tripartite Sonship," which is related to three levels of cosmic reality but which at the same time is "of the same essence" as the perfectly transcendent God, is the core of the Basilidean system. And by origin, this core is Greek-philosophical. It is entirely determined by the problem of how it is possible that beings live in the universe that are ensouled and whose soul is essentially connected with σῶμα but whose soul also has the potential for an activity that is perfectly divine and entirely free of all materiality! To this extent, the core of Basilides's cosmo-theology is also entirely Aristotelian.

We must remember here that Aristotle presented man as a transient, mortal being but with the potential to achieve knowledge and finally knowledge of Wisdom, which is knowledge about God and the knowledge God himself possesses! The development of human potentialities leads to the revelation of man's real divine essence. Man then leaves his bat-like condition behind and realizes his true purpose. Philo of Alexandria connected this theme with the biblical talk about "the image of God." Man is essentially a bearer of "the image of God." It is likely that Basilides adopted this scheme[161] and that he assumed three levels of "Man" in the World Seed, bearers of the Sonship but in different ways. In that case, we can surmise that Basilides saw the Great Archon as the cosmic Ἄνθρωπος, the Lower Archon as the demonic Ἄνθρωπος, and mortal human beings as the earthly ἄνθρωποι, with on each level fewer or more obstructions to the realization of "being like to God." The Great Archon stands here for the divine Ἄνθρωπος who no longer participates in the Sonship (which belonged with him, but ascended); his Son, on the other hand, does participate in the Third Sonship from the Underlying and does have the potential for γνώσις and for realization of his divine essence. It is the same with the Lower Archon and his Son. Hence, we will have to relate the text in John 1:9 about the "true Light that enlightens every Man [Ἄνθρωπος]" to all levels of living beings in the cosmos, the ethereal, the demonic, and the mortal.

The first Sonship, as the principle of life and knowledge in the fine-material sphere, brings about the genesis of the Great cosmic Archon and *then separates effortlessly* and enters the hypercosmic sphere. This completes the spiritual development of the highest sphere, and the result is that the Great Archon himself has no notion of a hypercosmic reality. The second Sonship, as the principle of life and knowledge in the less fine-material sphere, brings about the genesis of the Lower cosmic Archon *and separates* with the help of the holy Πνεῦμα and enters the hypercosmic sphere.

Everything else that takes place concerns the third Sonship as the principle of life and knowledge in the coarse-material sphere, which is imprisoned in the perishable bodies of earthly mortals but is also present in the constitution of *the Sons* of the Great

[161] But the expression "image of God" does not seem to have played any role in Basilides. We should consider the possibility that Basilides associated the notion of "εἰκών," "image," too much with visible reality and therefore regarded it as unsuitable for designating a wholly spiritual reality.

Archon and of the Lower Archon (according to the divine plan of the transcendent God!). This third Sonship needs to be liberated from the cosmic bonds of the earthly, the aerial, and the ethereal levels through the "Enlightenment," which can also be referred to as the "awakening" of the νοῦς and as the "opening" of the mind's eye.

An argument supporting this hypothesis is the remarkable fact that, in the great cosmic finale, the Great Archon and the Second Archon both remain imprisoned in Ignorance but that this is emphatically not said of their Sons because they are enlightened![162]

If the above cuts ice, the tripartition of the Sonship can be seen as related to the tripartition of the cosmos. The Great Archon stands in this tripartition for the equivalent of Plato's Demiurge in the *Timaeus* – namely, as the generator of the eternal, ethereal celestial beings of the cosmos. And the Lower Archon can then be interpreted as the equivalent of the "mimetic" "younger or visible gods" in Plato's *Timaeus*, that is, as the one who generates the mortal living creatures. The region of the earth is then the domain regulated by nature.

4.6.2. THE ASCENT OF THE FIRST SONSHIP AS THE CAUSE OF THE GREAT ARCHON'S IGNORANCE

It is not unimportant to establish that the ascent of the first Sonship, whose "subtleness" relates it to the fine-material sphere of the Great Archon enthroned in the sphere of Ether, is the cause of the Great Archon being burdened with Ignorance (Ἄγνοια). The Great Archon (and after him the Lower Archon) is described as being in *a state that ultimately*, at the end of the development of the cosmos, *will apply to all levels of the cosmos*. This is the clearest indication for the proposition that the first Sonship and the Great Archon belong together. Basilides's doctrine of the first Sonship and its relationship with the Great Archon can only be understood as a transformation of a fundamentally Aristotelian theory on the relationship of soul and intellect. (But this theory can only be "revealed" if it has first been rid of the ballast of the "attachments" by Alexander of Aphrodisias and W. Jaeger, P. Moraux, and many more!)

Aristotle had described at length how from conception a human being develops through the stages of vegetative and sensitive functioning to rational functioning, as stages of man's psychical activity. But in mature man, Aristotle had also distinguished between the man engaged in πρᾶξις and the theoretical man. And he characterized the theoretical intellect as being of an entirely different nature from the psychic functions because theoretical activity and the intellect are the only functions to be free of all materiality. Aristotle therefore awarded immortality to the intellect alone, not to the soul.

The ascent of the First Sonship to the Origin of all things characterizes this Sonship as wholly divine and so as perfect intellect. But because it formed the vital principle of the fine-material part of the cosmos, this means that on a cosmic level the Great Archon is the model of a human being *devoid of that which constitutes the essence of humanity!* The Great Archon is a Man who fails to achieve his purpose because his highest principle has broken

[162] Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 291, 299-302, regards the fact that the Great Archon, after being instructed by his Son, is nevertheless overcome by ignorance, as a serious tension in Hippolytus's account. But instead of an internal contradiction, it is proof of the sound system of Basilides's theology.

away. The Great Archon is therefore a kind of residual product but also a cosmic waste product, a monstrosity. That is why quite a few Gnostic texts called the Great Archon or Demiurge an ἔκτρωμα: an embryo that has not been carried to term.[163]

Basilides thus gave a profound alternative answer to the ancient question: "Where does Evil come from?"[164] The cause of Evil is not the acquisition of knowledge, as the biblical story of Genesis 3 seems to suggest, but a lack of knowledge: the *privatio cognitionis*, the lack of γνῶσις on the level of human life that remains after the union of the intellect with the source of all knowledge. What remains is a being who wears himself out in practical, technical activity, without any awareness of the higher purpose of being human.

Basilides also replaces the one-off, capricious action by Adam and Eve with a reflection on the ontological structure underlying the lack of knowledge. But the Great Archon can well be compared with Adam as he is described by Philo of Alexandria: devoid of the image of God after being expelled from the Garden of Eden. Basilides could therefore agree with Paul's remarks about the relation of "sin" with Adam, but he did give it a typical Gnostic twist:

> "Now from Adam to Moses sin reigned," as it is written [cf. Rom. 5:14; 5:13]. For the Great Archon reigned, who had his final goal at the firmament, thinking "that he alone was God and that there was nothing higher than he" [cf. Isa. 45:5-6]. For all things were kept[165] hidden in silence. This, says he, is "the mystery which was not known to the earlier generations" [cf. Eph. 3:4-5; Col. 2:3; 1:26-27]. But in those times the king and lord of all, as it seemed to him, was the great Archon, the Ogdoad. (25, 2-3)

It becomes very clear in 26, 1-4, that sin (ἁμαρτία) for Basilides is Ignorance (Ἄγνοια).[166] It is the condition of a human being who does not achieve his final goal (τέλος), γνῶσις, but gets stuck at a lower level.

Basilides uses the motif of the separation between Intellect and Soul, which was the most fundamental ontological distinction for Aristotle and his main point of disagreement with his teacher Plato (I 20, 4).

Plotinus referred to this separation as an "ἀπόστασις" ("estrangement") between the Demiurge and his Mother, Sophia (*Enneads* II 9 [33] 10, 30).

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[163] Sometimes this is explained by saying that his Mother, Sophia, proceeds to procreate on her own, without the permission and cooperation of her male partner. But in Basilides's system, too, the Great Archon can be interpreted as the monstrosity that remains after the truly divine factor has separated from "matter," the "female" factor in his genesis.

[164] Against Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 314: "Schliesslich fehlt im Basilides-referat [of the *Elenchos*] auch jede Beschäftigung mit dem Problem '*unde malum*'?"

[165] The Greek has "φυλασσόμενα" here. It calls up the association of "being placed into custody," just as Plato in *Phaedo* 62b recalled the ancient Orphic tradition according to which the souls of living beings on earth are placed "into custody" by the gods in order to atone for the evil of their Titanic nature. Plot. *Enn.* II 9 [33] 5, 32, also draws attention to a doctrine of "custody" of souls among his Gnostic opponents.

[166] Cf. *Corp. Herm.* X 8: κακία δὲ ψυχῆς ἡ ἀγνωσία.

We find in Basilides's theory the ultimate explanation for all references to a fall of divine beings from the pleromatic World. Such a fall is freakish, inexplicable, unless it is underpinned in a theoretical framework like that of Basilides.

But an intriguing facet of Basilides's construction is that he effectively situates the principle of Evil in a partial realization of the eschatological situation!

Basilides's profound alternative to the biblical story of the Fall may suggest that Basilides reinterpreted the well-known text in Genesis 3:15 about the hostility between "the seed" of Eve and "the seed" of the Serpent as a hostility between "the seed of the Great Archon" and "the seed of the Sonship." As the one who exposes ignorance, the Serpent, who plays a role in the biblical story, naturally joins the side of "the seed of the Sonship," as in the tradition of the Naassenes, whom the author of the *Elenchos* identifies as the very first Gnostics (IV 6, 3-4).[167]

4.6.3. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE THREE SONSHIPS: A COMPARISON WITH INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, THE *ACTA ANDREAE*, PLUTARCH, AND PLOTINUS

The differences between the three Sonships mentioned in 22, 7, form a difficult problem, so it is good to compare what the author of the *Elenchos* says with information found elsewhere. In the first place, this would be the remarkable doctrine that Clement attributes to Basilides but also texts in the *Acta Andreae*, Plutarch, and Plotinus, which do not discuss Basilides's doctrine but perhaps raise related issues.

A DOCTRINE OF "ATTACHMENTS" TO THE RATIONAL SOUL ATTRIBUTED TO BASILIDES BY CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

According to Clement, Basilides and his followers held a theory that the emotions (πάθη) should be regarded as "attachments" to the rational soul.[168] The text, in the translation by J. Ferguson, reads as follows:[169]

> Basilides and his followers usually call the passions "attachments." They say that they are in essence spirits [πνεύματα] attached to the rational soul in

[167] The central theme of their doctrine is said by the author of the *Elenchos* to be "Man" and "the Son of Man." And "Man" in turn has three "parts": an intelligent, a psychical, and an earthly part (IV 6, 4-7). Like Basilides, they also talk about an "originary seed of all things" (IV 7, 21), and in his discussion of their doctrine the author also brings up the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:3-9 (IV 8, 28-29).

[168] Cf. Clem. *Strom.* II 20, 112-13 (*Clément d'Alexandrie, Les Stromates,* intro. and notes P. Th. Camelot, Greek text and trans. Cl. Mondésert, vol. 2 [Paris : Éd. du Cerf, 1954]): Οἱ δ' ἀμφὶ τὸν Βασιλείδην προσαρτήματα τὰ πάθη καλεῖν εἰώθασι, πνεύματά <τέ> τινα ταῦτα κατ' οὐσίαν ὑπάρχειν προσηρτημένα τῇ λογικῇ ψυχῇ κατά τινα τάραχον καὶ σύγχυσιν ἀρχικὴν ἄλλας τε αὖ πνευμάτων νόθους καὶ ἑτερογενεῖς φύσεις προσεπιφύεσθαι ταύταις οἷον λύκου, πιθήκου, λέοντος, τράγου, ὧν τὰ ἰδιώματα περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν φανταζόμενα τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς τοῖς ζῴοις ἐμφερῶς ἐξομοιοῦν λέγουσιν· ὧν γὰρ ἰδιώματα φέρουσι, τούτων τὰ ἔργα μιμοῦνται, καὶ οὐ μόνον ταῖς ὁρμαῖς καὶ φαντασίαις τῶν ἀλόγων ζῴων προσοικειοῦνται, ἀλλὰ καὶ φυτῶν κινήματα καὶ κάλλη ζηλοῦσι διὰ τὸ καὶ φυτῶν ἰδιώματα προσηρτημένα φέρειν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἕξεως ἰδιώματα, οἷον ἀδάμαντος σκληρίαν. On this text and the doctrine of the "attachments" to the soul, see Hendrix, *De Alexandrijnsche haeresiarch Basilides*, 55-57; Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 78-101 = frag. 5 (where Clem. *Strom.* from II 20, 112, 1, through 114, 2, is discussed).

[169] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, trans. J. Ferguson, bks. 1-3 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 231, with changes.

> some original disturbance and confusion, and that there are other different, bastard spiritual natures [πνεύματα] which grow up in attachment to these – the nature of wolf, ape, lion, goat, for example. Their peculiar characteristics make their appearance in the region of the soul and bring the desires within the soul into a plausible likeness of animals. People then imitate the actions of the animals whose characteristics they hold within them, and not only grow familiar with the impulses and inner perceptions of animals without reason, but are keen to emulate the movement and beauty of plants because they carry attached to them the characteristics of plants. They even have the characteristics of inanimate states, like the hardness of a diamond.

Though this passage is explicitly attributed not to Basilides but to the "people around Basilides" or "the Basilideans,"[170] it contains a number of matters that make for a close connection with the text of the *Elenchos*.

Clement talks about an "original [ἀρχικός] disturbance [τάραχος]" and "confusion" (σύγχυσις). Our author uses the term "σύγχυσις" only once in his *Refutation* but does so in a very central text, when he says in describing Basilides's doctrine, "Their whole theory is in fact: a confusion [σύγχυσις] like that of a seed-mix, seed-selection, and discrimination of the things confused in their proper place" (in his concluding discussion in 27, 11).

This seems a good reason to explain Clement's expression "original confusion" as a reference to the mixture that has already taken place in the ἀρχή – that is, the ἀρχή of the cosmos – or in the World Seed.[171] There was already a difference in quality between the three divine Sonships in the non-being World Seed.

The author of the *Elenchos* also uses the term ταραχή once, to designate the "disturbance" and error resulting from the fact that "words" often do not accurately indicate what is meant owing to the phenomenon of homonymy (20, 4). He is talking there about Basilides's language theology, which flows from his doctrine of the hypercosmic principle of Origin.

We underline that Clement twice uses the term "πνεύματα." This term makes it clear that the attachments in question are *psychical*. (We hypothesized in chaps. 4.4 and 4.6.1 that Basilides may have viewed the differences between the three Sonships as differences in quality and level of life resulting from a difference in the quality of the πνεῦμα that is the vehicle of the Sonships. These differences could be the consequence of a mixture of pure πνεῦμα with other components.)

Clement uses here the term "to imitate" (μιμεῖσθαι) as a characteristic of these "attached πνεύματα." The author of the *Elenchos* calls the second Sonship "mimetic" (VII 22, 9; 25, 1; X 14, 4), and he presents the Lower Archon as a kind of copycat of the Highest Archon (24, 4). Moreover, Clement talks about "vegetative attachments." This

[170] Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, 81ff., concludes that the entire passage from II 20, 112, 1, through 114, 2, may derive from Isidorus's work *On the Attached Soul*, which is specifically mentioned in 113, 3. But if he is right, this would largely remove the reason for including the passage as a fragment by Basilides. Moreover, at the end of 114, 2, Clement attributes a theory of "two souls" to Isidorus.

[171] Cf. *Haer.* VII 27, 4, which talked about "all things established according to nature in the Seed of all things at the beginning" (ἐν ἀρχῇ).

could correspond to what our author says about the sector of things that are not governed by Providence but for which "the calculation which the non-being One made when he created them suffices" (24, 5), a level that corresponds to the level of pure natural reality in Aristotle (19, 2).

But as well as about πνεύματα, Clement also talks about "the rational soul." In his conception, this is what becomes burdened with the pneumatic "attachments." It seems natural to assume that what Clement calls "the rational soul" is the same as what the text of the *Elenchos* refers to as the hypercosmic Sonship that enters the cosmos. Basilides himself probably did not say that "the rational soul" received attachments but that the Sonship did. The Sonship has much more the features of an intellect than of a soul since it is receptive to the divine νοήματα that realize its liberation thanks to the great Enlightenment. Clement seems consistently to have avoided the term "Sonship" in his expositions because he considered this concept too complicated to be introduced without lengthy explanations. If we are permitted to make this identification, then Clement says that the Sonship received "attachments." We could then ask whether our author perhaps referred to the attachments as "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification," characteristics that the Sonship has owing to the deposition of the World Seed.[172]

Conceivably, the school of Basilides distinguished between life on a vegetative, animal, and human level, just as Aristotle did.[173] The fact that man possesses a soul with, as Aristotle calls it, three soul-"parts" because one person displays three levels of life was explained by the Basilideans as being due to "pollution" of the Sonship by psychical "attachments" of a rational, animal, and vegetable nature.[174] In comparable fashion, Aristotle had talked about immaterial entelechies that become the vital principles of concrete living beings on three levels but combine for this with a "σῶμα ὀργανικόν," which is vitalized by πνεῦμα and consists furthermore of Fire, Air, and Water plus Earth.

It goes without saying that someone who talks in this negative way about "attachments" also holds that it is desirable to get rid of these (unwanted) attachments. We find this described in *Refutation* VII 27, 10. P. J. G. A. Hendrix related this doctrine of attachments to the metaphor of the "coverings" or "clothings" of the soul, for which he refers to Macrobius's commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, to the Hermetic *Poimandres*, and to Porphyry.[175]

A special feature is also the idea that these attachments can cause a vital principle to behave in a way that suits a being of lower caliber and thus stays under the level that it could ideally achieve.

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[172] I opt for this hypothesis because Clement talks about "an original disturbance and confusion." This immediately calls the World Seed to mind. Another possibility is that Clement is talking here about the distinction between human and animal soul-functions.

[173] Plato did the same in his *Resp.* and *Phaedrus*. But he distinguished a rational, a conative, and an appetitive soul-part. For the term "tripartite soul" in Plato, cf. Arist. *Virt.* 1, 1249a30, and *Top.* V 4, 133a31.

[174] In fact, this is also Aristotle's answer to the question of why people possess animal and vegetative soul-functions. Cf. Bos, "Aristotle on the Differences between Plants, Animals, and Human Beings."

[175] Hendrix, *De alexandrijnsche Haeresiarch Basilides*, 56-57. Cf. A. P. Bos, "'Aristotelian' and 'Platonic' Dualism in Hellenistic and Early Christian Philosophy and in Gnosticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 3 (2002): 273-91, and "The 'Vehicle of the Soul' and the Debate over the Origin of This Concept," *Philologus* 151, no. 1 (2007): 31-50.

I therefore propose that the tripartition of the cosmos (to which the tripartition of the hypercosmic Sonship corresponds in a special way) as taught by Basilides may have to do with his theory of three levels of cosmic life: (a) the level of the rational soul; (b) the level of a rational soul burdened with animal passions; and (c) the life of rational souls burdened with animal passions *and* with vegetative (metabolic and procreative) processes.

If we can see the Great Archon from the *Elenchos*'s discussion of Basilides as representing the level of life of the rational soul and the Lower Archon as representing a soul burdened by "attachments" of "animal" emotions, it becomes understandable that the school of Basilides talks about the Great Archon in a way that attributes to him emotions such as "ambition" and "pride." And the associations of the Lower Archon (and his servants) with animals make sense too.

Note that Plotinus attributes to his Gnostic opponents the introduction of "a different kind of soul which they compose from the elements" (*Enneads* II 9 [33] 5, 16-18). He also knows that his opponents claim that the Demiurge made the cosmos out of ambition (11, 21).

THE *ACTA ANDREAE* ON THE COVERINGS OF THE TRANSCENDENT PRINCIPLE

A remarkable parallel with what we believe we can attribute to Basilides can be found in the *Acta Andreae*, of which a splendid edition was published in 2007 with an English translation and extensive commentary by L. Roig Lanzillotta.[176] This is the original text of the *Acta Andreae*, dated by Roig Lanzillotta to the second half of the second century (271) and passed down in one Vatican manuscript. The largest part of this text contains four speeches by the apostle Andrew, delivered to members of the congregation in Patras on the west coast of Greece shortly before Andrew died a martyr's death on the orders of the governor Aegeates.

The anthropology developed in these speeches is analyzed painstakingly by Roig Lanzillotta on pages 217-43 of his book. The *Acta Andreae* distinguishes two races of people: that of the "kindred of the Unbegotten" and that of the "kindred of the body." The first race, or "happy race," has received from God the superior ontological status that potentially removes them from the sensible realm and allows them to partake in the world beyond time, movement, and decay. The other race remains trapped in the processes of coming-to-be and passing-away of the lower sublunary world (217). The heart of this anthropology is that original man is identical with his intellect.[177] For the author of the *Acta*, this is the "true" or "inner" man. He must then explain how human intellect has been degraded to its present condition. The author talks here about "the intellect's split" and about "its alienation," which is the result of the intellect's own deficiency (227).

[176] L. Roig Lanzillotta, *Acta Andreae Apocrypha: A New Perspective on the Nature, Intention, and Significance of the Primitive Text* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme XXVI) (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 2007). For a review, see *Philosophia Reformata* 73, no. 1 (2008): 121-22. See also L. Roig Lanzillotta, "One Human Being, Three Early Christian Anthropologies: An Assessment of the *Acta Andreae*'s Tenor on the Basis of Its Anthropological Views," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61, no. 4 (2007): 414-44.

[177] Roig Lanzillotta, *Acta Andreae Apocrypha*, 220. According to the author, this position is not Platonic but Aristotelian.

Roig Lanzillotta describes three stages/levels in this process of the intellect's devolution: (a) the dispersion of the intellect; (b) the soul and its affections; and (c) the physical body and externals (227-30).

For each of these three stages, Roig Lanzillotta gives numerous parallels from philosophical and Gnostic literature in the Middle Hellenistic and Neoplatonic periods. In particular, the second level involves "affects," passions. The third level concerns the functioning of the human body and the senses, with a negative judgement of the senses as instruments through which man can become enchanted by the appearance of visible reality. The end result is the bondage of the intellect and its oblivion to its true nature and origin (250).

At the heart of this view is the concept of the devolution of the purely transcendent, intellectual principle. It loses its absolute orientation to its Origin. And it thus undergoes a process of increasing loss of cognitive ability. But this loss of cognitive ability goes together with an "imprisonment" in bonds of what is alien to this intellect, both psychical (fine-material) coverings and the oppressive bond of the coarse-material, mortal body.

PLUTARCH ON THREE DEGREES OF DENSITY IN XENOCRATES

There is another text that may be relevant to a clarification of Basilides's theory about the "threefold Sonship." We find this text in the myth at the end of the work *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon* by Basilides's contemporary Plutarch of Chaeronea. This myth elaborates the typically Aristotelian anthropology in which a tripartition of intellect–soul–visible body is assumed. Plutarch describes there how the souls of earthly mortals ascend to the region of the Moon after their death. To explain the intermediate position of the Moon in the cosmos, Plutarch quotes Xenocrates, who in 337 BCE had succeeded Speusippus as head of the Academy in Athens. Plutarch says that Xenocrates had a theory about "three degrees of density." The stars and the Sun are ensouled beings, consisting of Fire and the first degree of density. The Moon is connected with the Air and the second degree of density. The Earth consists of Water and the third degree of density (*Facie* 943F-944A). From the remark that immediately follows, that Rarity-in-itself or Density-in-itself is incapable of receiving the soul, we can infer that Xenocrates considered all levels of life to be characterized by a combination of rarity and density, in three degrees. This is a psychological scheme that seems to come very close to Basilides's theory of the threefold Sonship. For Plutarch's entire argument is concerned with the more or less easy ascent through the psychical sphere to the sphere of the pure Intellect. And in this scheme, Plutarch distinguishes between souls of the highest degree of fineness in the region of the stars and planets, of a less fine degree in the region of the Air below the Moon, and of the lowest degree of fineness on the Earth.

PLOTINUS ON PSYCHICAL ΕΙΔΩΛΑ PRODUCED BY MATTER

We add a note on matters raised by Plotinus in his attack on the Gnostics. In chapter 11, 14, he asks:

> How did matter, when it was illumined make images of the soul kind [εἴδωλα ψυχικά] instead of bodily nature? An image of soul would have no sort of

> use for darkness or matter, but when it had come into being, if it did come into being, would correspond to its maker and remain in close connection [συνηρτημένον] with it. Then is this image a substance or, as they say, a "thought" [ἐννόημα]? If it is a substance, what is the difference between it and its origin? But if it is another kind of soul [ἄλλο εἶδος ψυχῆς], then if that higher soul is the rational soul, presumably this latter is the growth-soul which is the principle of generation.[178]

This is in many ways an obscure text. But Plotinus seems familiar here with Gnostic discussions in which the descent of a divine, transcendent Light principle, through the Light that it spreads, causes the matter in which its Light shines to produce "psychical images" (εἴδωλα ψυχικά). And he suggests that this may represent "another kind of soul."

Plotinus is clearly opposed to such an idea, but that is not the point. What matters here for our inquiry is that his polemic seems to suggest that he knows Gnostics who claimed that certain psychical entities did not emanate directly from transcendent reality but are the effect of the entrance of a divine Light principle in the Darkness of matter. As a result, this Darkness does not produce physical, elementary bodies but "another kind of soul."

In the same way, Plotinus observes a contrast in 12, 4-5, between the "images of soul" and "real souls." But earlier on, in 5, 16, Plotinus already blames his opponents for casually introducing "that other soul, which they compose from the elements." It suggests that Plotinus knows about Gnostics who have developed a system in which a transcendent principle enters the non-transcendent (the Darkness) and that in their conception this emanation causes the transcendent principle to act on the Darkness and thus call forth a kind of psychical matter in which this principle itself is clothed. This psychical matter can then be referred to as "accidental," "attached," "spurious," and as "image of soul" inasmuch as the transcendent principle is "the genuine soul."

The fact that Plotinus in 10, 27, also talks about "images of images" that arise from the matter of the Darkness suggests that the process repeated itself in the train of thought followed by the Gnostics, so that the material souls act on the Darkness with their much weaker light and thus produce mortal bodies.

What happens if we introduce this theme into the *Elenchos*'s information about the threefold Sonship? It could mean that according to Basilides the threefold Sonship, by being deposited as World Seed, shone as Light in the Darkness, which is opposite to the Light, and that the Sonship consequently produced "images of soul" from this Darkness in which the Sonship was clothed. After the ascending of the first and the second Sonship, these "images of soul" then stayed behind by their own (limited) power and produced the physical, visible bodies from the Darkness and matter.

"SONSHIP," SOULS, AND ΠΝΕΥΜΑ IN BASILIDES'S SYSTEM ACCORDING TO THE *ELENCHOS*

In this connection, we should briefly add that the author of the *Refutation* talks not only about the three Sonships in his account of Basilides but also about "souls." In the intriguing

[178] *Plotinus*, trans. Armstrong, 269.

passage in 27, 2, he talks about "all the souls of this region, which have a nature to sojourn only in this [region] without dying" (see also 27, 6). These "souls" are left behind by the Third Sonship after it has attained "Enlightenment." Our author does not say where these souls come from, but they must have been produced by the Sonships that were present as principles in the World Seed.

In my view, this can only be explained by the hypothesis that the first effect of the deposition of the World Seed, which shines as Light in the Darkness, is that the Sonship produces the Πνεῦμα as psychical matter and as εἴδωλον. Next, the Πνεῦμα puts on various degrees of psychical covering and functions as the vital principles for "images of soul" of living beings whose Sonship has separated. These are the "souls" that our author talks about, and the "attachments" that Clement discusses, and the "souls composed from the elements" or the "different kind of souls" mentioned by Plotinus.

4.6.4. THE SONSHIP OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY (22, 8)

The Sonship of the highest quality is discussed in 22, 8. It is called "subtle," and as soon as the World Seed has been deposited it is able to push its way outside and ascend with the speed of a "wing or a thought." By quoting these words from Homer, *Odyssey* 7, 36 (which talks about the swiftness of the boats of the Phaeacians),[179] Basilides seems to be referring to the quality of the first Sonship. This is indeed to be expected on our assumption that the first Sonship is related to the ethereal sphere of the Great Archon. Because the first Sonship is in no way obstructed by any material reality but is completely *free*, not subject or bound to any cosmic entity, it can ascend and reach "the non-being [God]."[180] The first Sonship has no impediment limiting its access to the hypercosmic world. It is in a perfect state of Enlightenment and γνῶσις.

4.6.5. BIRTH WAVES AND BIRTH PANGS (22, 8)

Basilides repeatedly seems to have used a word that means "to push one's way out,"[181] and that apart from the description of Basilides's system occurs in the *Elenchos* only in V 9, 1.[182] He thus evokes the image of the birth and pulsating birth pangs that attend the revelation of a new life. This process of "being born" is always, too, a process of "coming to light" of what was in darkness. And just as a difficult delivery can be said to involve

[179] The same quotation is found in Philo, *De mutatione nominum* 179, where it also serves to underline the swiftness of mental activity, by which it even cleaves the air and the ether and is raised to the sphere of the fixed stars. Cf. also Arist. *Mund.* 1, 391a11-16.

[180] *Haer.* VII 22, 8: καὶ ἐγένετο, φησί, πρὸς τὸν οὐκ ὄντα.

[181] *Haer* VII 22, 8: διέσφυξε. Cf. 23, 3; X 14, 3; 14, 6. The Greek word σφυγμός stands for the pulsating movement of the blood, which we know to be the result of the heart's beating and which underlies the medical usage of "taking the pulse." In Arist. *De spiritu* 4, 482b14, it is presented as one of the phenomena connected with πνεῦμα in the veins and resulting from the heating of the blood. For a defense of Aristotle's authorship of the treatise *De spiritu*, see A. P. Bos and R. Ferwerda, "Aristotle's *De spiritu* as a Critique of the Doctrine of pneuma in Plato and His Predecessors," *Mnemosyne* 60, no. 4 (2007): 565-88; and *Aristotle, On the Life-Bearing Spirit* (De spiritu): *A Discussion with Plato and His Predecessors on pneuma as the Instrumental Body of the Soul*, intro., trans., and comm. A. P. Bos and R. Ferwerda (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

[182] This passage talks about an almond (as image of the highest God) and the perfect fruit that it contains: τέλειον καρπόν, οἱονεὶ διασφύζοντα καὶ κινούμενον ἐν βάθει, which is then brought to light from the womb of the Origin.

birth pangs, so the entire cosmic history in Basilides's view could be characterized as a process of "revelation pangs." Though Basilides talks about a World Seed, the resulting process of generation resembles the emergence from a womb. In 26, 7, the situation of the third Sonship, which has stayed behind in the Formlessness, is referred to as an ἔκτρωμα.[183] Basilides also talks repeatedly about two facets that can be distinguished in the World Seed. There is the aspect of being mixed, the "heap," and of formlessness (ἀμορφία).[184] And on the other hand, there is the activity of the threefold Sonship, which "performs a service," and the activity of the pneumatics who form part of the Third Sonship, who "organize and correct."[185] It is the "all being together" in the system of Basilides that the author of the *Elenchos* associated with Aristotle's concept of genus in 15, 1-16, 2, and 22, 5, and the "formlessness" with his concept of matter in 19, 1.

These two facets of Basilides's theory of the World Seed seem the clearest indication of a distinction between a male and a female factor in the process of coming-to-be, or between an active and a passive factor,[186] to be equated with the principle of life and the corporeal, respectively.

What is born is always a manifestation of life, too. In the Aristotelian system, this always involves the activity of ensouled entities, whose quality of life corresponds to the quality of the πνεῦμα that receives the soul-principle, that is, the quality of the soul's σῶμα ὀργανικόν.[187] Aristotle, too, had assumed of the celestial beings that have a pure ethereal soul that their Unmoved Movers were wholly transcendent and hypercosmic.[188]

In Basilides, the spiritual, hypercosmic principles of the Sonship are sown and involved in a process of becoming in which they more or less rapidly reach their goal, that is, their pure spiritual status, depending on whether they are more or less obstructed by the quality of the cosmic beings of which they are the final principle.

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[183] Cf. 1 Cor. 15:8, where Paul applies this term to himself. It is a surprising term. RSV translates it as "one untimely born." NBV (Dutch Bible translation) reads "een misbaksel" (waster). The term derives from Greek medical literature and often refers to a premature embryo that is rejected by "miscarriage." I pointed out earlier that some Gnostic texts also describe the Demiurge as an "ἔκτρωμα." The cause often indicated here is that the Demiurge was produced by Sophia alone, without impregnation by her partner (cf. *Haer.* VI 31, 4 – in the description of Valentinus's system). We will have to assume here that the ἔκτρωμα in our text does not remain an ἔκτρωμα but is brought to true life by the descent of the Gospel.

[184] Cf. *Haer.* VII 22, 15; 25, 6; 26, 7 (twice); 26, 10; 27, 9; 27, 10 (twice); 27, 11. On this, see chap. 4.3.8 above.

[185] In *Haer.* we find the terms διακοσμῆσαι, διατυπῶσαι, διορθώσασθαι, τελειῶσαι in VII 25, 2; κατηχεῖν, διδάσκειν in 26, 2 and 3.

[186] According to the author of the *Elenchos*, the doctrine of the Valentinians talks about an οὐσία ἄμορφος as a product of Sophia that receives form and life through the Πνεῦμα.

[187] This is clearest in the frequently misunderstood text of Arist. *Gener. anim.* III 11, 761b13-23, but it is also meant in *Anim.* II 4, 415b18-20.

[188] Cf. Arist. *Cael.* I 9, 279a16-30, and *Metaph.* Λ 8. This relation of the ensouled celestial bodies, engaged in world-governing praxis, to their transcendent Unmoved Movers could be seen as the model for Basilides's theory about the relation of the Great Archon to the hypercosmic first Sonship. In fact, we could even claim that Basilides's theory about the Sonship that unites with hypercosmic reality and about the astral world that consequently has no part in the highest intellectual activity provides a background for understanding a part of Aristotle's cosmo-theology! Aristotle apparently talked about this in his dialogue *Eudemus*, where he told the story of the myth of the "dreaming World Archon Kronos." Cf. A. P. Bos, "The Dreaming Kronos as World Archon in Plutarch's *De facie in orbe lunae*," in *Plutarch's Statesman and His Aftermath: Political, Philosophical, and Literary Aspects,* vol. 1 of *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works*, ed. L. de Blois et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 175-87.

4.6.6. THE "NATURAL DESIRE" FOR THE TRANSCENDENT GOD (22, 8)

The first Sonship reaches the transcendent God without any obstruction. That is his goal and intention. This is explained in two ways: "For toward Him every nature strains on account of his exceeding beauty and bloom, but each differently."[189]

These words relate to the ascent of the first Sonship. This ascent is said to be motivated by a desire of the Sonship for the highest God. But this is expressed in a general statement: *every* nature has this same desire. Hence the immediate addition of a proviso, which makes it clear that not "every nature" finds its goal in the highest God: there is the one desire for the highest God in several variants. This one, universal desire is realized in very different ways on the various levels of reality.

A fundamental statement here is that the desire for the highest God is the driving force of all reality. Basilides knows about a *desiderium naturale*, a natural desire for God. But he also knows that this desire often takes a wrong direction. In this same way, Plato had forcibly argued that everyone by nature desires the Good, but that knowledge of what the Good is varies widely, so there are great differences between what people hold to be the Good.[190]

We should say at once that this statement about the bond of desire (ὄρεξις) that connects all levels of reality with the highest God is a fundamental dogma of Aristotle's. In *De anima* II 4, 415b1-2, Aristotle states in so many words: "*That is the goal toward which all things strive*, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible." But note that there are degrees of "more and less" (415b6), depending on the degree to which something can participate in the divine. The passage 415b1-2 is also highly relevant because it is immediately followed by the important specification: "for the sake of which" may refer to the goal *of* something and to the goal *for* something.[191] For this distinction, Aristotle refers in various places to an earlier treatise, *Physics* II 2, 194a27-36, in which he says explicitly that it was discussed in *On Philosophy*. In my view, this distinction should be interpreted in the sense that every level of life has its own "goal" but is also orientated to a higher, ultimate goal. Crucially, the author of the *Elenchos* says in VII 27, 2, that in the final phase of cosmic development this "natural desire" will disappear. It no longer has a function.[192]

In Aristotle, ὄρεξις is an ontological principle of structure. It is inextricably linked to matter, and it explains why matter contains a desire for the divine and the good (*Physics*

[189] Hendrix, *De alexandrijnsche Haeresiarch Basilides*, 71, describes this as a "Hegeliaansch zu sich selbst kommen des Geistes." Baur, in "Das System des Gnostikers Basilides," had done so before him.

[190] Plato, *Resp.* VI 505d11: Ὅ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει, ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι, ἀποροῦσα δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ἱκανῶς τί ποτ' ἐστὶν, with a clarification in 507-9.

[191] On this, see M. R. Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 65ff.; A. Graeser, "Aristoteles' Schrift 'Über die Philosophie' und die zweifache Bedeutung der 'causa finalis,'" *Museum Helveticum* 29, no. 1 (1972): 44-61; K. Gaiser, "Das zweifache Telos bei Aristoteles," in *Naturphilosophie bei Aristoteles und Theophrast*, ed. I. Düring (Heidelberg: Stiehm, 1969), 97-113.

[192] This tallies with what Aristotle says about "wonder" as a motor of desire for knowledge and yearning for wisdom. The desire to escape ignorance (ἀγνοία) spurs man on till he has arrived at insight. An educated mathematician no longer wonders about the irreducibility of the diagonal of a square to its side (*Metaph.* A 2, 982b12-983a21).

I 9, 192a16-19). But it also manifests itself on the level of human life in the "desire for knowledge" (*Metaphysics* A 1, 980a1), of which desire for wisdom is the ultimate form.

When Gnostic texts talk about "cosmic Sophia" or "little Sophia," they are personifying this ontological desire, while the "transcendent" or "Great Sophia" is a personification of the divine knowledge to which all things are directed.

For Aristotle, the highest principle is the transcendent Unmoved Mover of all that possesses motion. And this principle is the principle of motion as the object of desire and as the object of intellectual knowledge,[193] as well as the object of erotic desire.[194] But Aristotle means this in the Greek and not the modern way! When we talk about "desire" in general and about "erotic desire," we tend to locate this desire on the side of the desiring subject. Aristotle primarily connects it with an "effect" on the side of the Principle to which the desire is directed. This principle arouses the desire; it exercises "power of attraction." It is therefore entirely legitimate to compare this "power of attraction" of the divine Principle with the pull of a magnet.[195] Though the magnet remains immobile in the same place, it is the power that proceeds from the magnet that "binds" the iron filings or paperclips to the magnet.

This also helps to explain why Aristotle (*Anim.* I 2, 405a19-21) can say that Thales must have seen the soul as a cause of motion, since he said that a magnet possesses soul because it sets iron in motion. At first sight this is a strange remark because we would tend to locate this soul in the iron filings and paperclips that move in the direction of the magnet. But for Aristotle it is absolutely clear that there must be a "power" that acts from the magnet on the iron filings and that this power of the magnet brings about motion. This is also how Plato in the *Timaeus* explains the magnetic phenomena in amber and magnets: these phenomena are the result of impulses that proceed from the amber or the magnet and of the fact that a continuity of impulses arises owing to the impossibility of an empty space.[196]

Significantly, therefore, the author of *On the Cosmos* notes that the ancients who said that "everything is full of gods" formulated a partial truth in the sense that everything is full of the Power (Δύναμις) of God.[197] *On the Cosmos* 5-6 emphatically presents this Power of God as the principle that holds all things together in the cosmos. And in *Physics* VIII 10, Aristotle can talk about the Power needed to maintain the eternal revolution of the outer celestial sphere.

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[193] Arist. *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072a26: κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητόν. Cf. *Motu anim.* 7, 701a33-b1; *Anim.* III 10, 433a9-b30; *Gener. anim.* II 1, 731b27-35; *Gener. corr.* II 10, 336b26-34.

[194] Arist. *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072b3: κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον.

[195] Cf. *Aristoteles, Het Opperwezen. Metaphysica Lambda*, trans., intro., annot. C. Verhoeven (Baarn: Ambo, 1989), 79, 81. The image of the magnet is active wherever Aristotle talks about the "dependence" of all nature on the Unmoved Mover. Cf. *Motu anim.* 4, 700a6; *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072b13-14. As is evident from the passage in *Motu anim.* 4 and from *De mundo* 6, it is also connected with the motif of the "golden chain." For Aristotle, the cosmos is in a certain sense an "attachment" to the hypercosmic Origin.

[196] Pl. *Tim.* 80b8-c8. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato transl. with a running commentary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937), 319-27, formulates the principle used by Plato as the principle of the "circular thrust" ("*antiperistasis*" in Aristotle and later thinkers).

[197] Arist. *On the Cosmos* 6, 397b16-24. It was Aristotle in *Anim.* I 5, 411a8, who explicitly attributed this view to Thales.

The famous opening sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* A 1, 980a20, "All men by nature desire to know," formulates the same fundamental principle of the ὄρεξις for God that inheres in all living beings in natural reality but also underlines that this desire may express itself in the desire for procreation, for perception, for the practice of craft, in music and literature, in science, and finally in the pursuit of all-embracing wisdom.

We find the statement of VII 22, 8, repeated in X 14, 3. Strikingly, it also occurs in the discussion of the Naassenes in V 9, 4. We find this theology in the *Hermetic Corpus*, too.[198] It is also a basic rule of Basilides's contemporary Plutarch of Chaeronea. See his *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon* 944E: "the desirable and fair and divine and blessed towards which all nature in one way or another yearns."[199]

Basilides's statement that every nature yearns for the highest God is also relevant to the assessment of all other theologies. Pagan cosmic theology and the Jewish theology of the law-giving and punitive god Yahweh may certainly have been included here in a positive sense since these theologies show a striving for the true religion but also ignorance about the true God. We should bear in mind here that until the time in which Jesus embarked on his saving proclamation, the "desire" present in every nature could not be fulfilled because the ontological situation did not yet allow it. But after the Gospel's descent, persistence in the old situation can be considered culpable ignorance.

It seems legitimate to see in the admiration and love of the Great Archon for his Son and of the Lower Archon for his Son an expression of the "primeval desire" for the transcendent God but one perverted into worship of cosmic beings as a result of ignorance about the highest God.

Significantly, Basilides assumes for the eschatological situation that there will be no more ὄρεξις for a level of reality that does not befit the ontological status of a being (27,1-4; see chap. 4.12.7 in the next issue of *Kronos: Philosophical Journal*)! Basilides interprets this as evidence of God's compassion.

4.6.7. THE "THIRD SONSHIP" (22, 16)

The Sonship of the third order is mentioned in 22, 16, which says that it remains in the great heap of the Seed-mass and will be discussed in more detail later. This happens in 25, 1. It becomes clear there that Basilides is referring to all the divine principles that are present in concrete, earthly people and that await their liberation and the revelation of their Sonship of God. These are the pneumatic human beings on earth. The "purification" they require (22, 7; 22, 16; X 14, 9) probably alludes first of all to the total Ἄγνοια with which they are burdened as corporeal, mortal human beings and that is partly the result of their imprisonment in a coarse-material, earthly body.[200] We need to bear in mind here that Clement of Alexandria

[198] *C.H.* X 14. Cf. *Corpus Hermeticum*, ed. A. D. Nock, trans. A. J. Festugière, vol. 1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1946), 129-30. See also Plot. *Enn.* II 9 [33] 9, 76.

[199] *Plutarch's Moralia, De Facie in Orbe Lunae*, trans. H. Cherniss (London: Heinemann, 1957), 213. Cherniss wrongly comments in his note on *Fac.* 944E that Plato's *Republic* 507-9 is Plutarch's main inspiration. The passage occurs in a text that argues precisely the Aristotelian tripartition intellect/soul/visible body. The transcendent for which every nature yearns is the transcendent *Intellect*. Plutarch calls the Sun an image of this Intellect.

[200] Cf. Rom. 8:23: καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ἔχοντες ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν, υἱοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν, which was probably interpreted "dualistically," in the sense that man is redeemed "from his body" and not, as Paul seems to have intended, that "our body is redeemed." But

in his *Stromateis* IV 81, 1-83, 1 (= Löhr frag. 7), in a long discussion of divine Providence and man's "undeserved" suffering, states that Basilides in his *Exegetica* endorses the statement in Hiob 14:4 (LXX): "No one is clean of dirt." This could confirm the view that Basilides attributed an ontological meaning to the expression "in need of purification" and that "being born" as such was valued negatively.[201] But the term also calls to mind the "pruning," the removal (καθαίρειν) of superfluous growth in vines, as referred to in John 15:1, where Jesus calls his Father "the gardener" who is responsible for this pruning. According to Basilides's system, this leaves behind the "psychical man" (27, 6) with the "inner" or "spiritual man" (πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος) inside. This "psychical man," who belongs in the sphere of the Hebdomad (27, 10), will later, once he has cast off the visible body, be left behind by the "pneumatic man," who contains the promise of "the Sonship."

In particular, the statement in 27, 6, that the third Sonship "leaves behind its soul" when it ascends and for this purpose "puts on its special soul" is probably very significant. We could interpret this in the sense in which Philo of Alexandria distinguished between the vital soul (residing in the blood) and the spiritual soul (identified with the divine πνεῦμα).[202] The third Sonship is purified of the lower, vital soul and clothes itself in another (pneumatic) soul (comparable with what the second Sonship had done)[203] in order to ascend to hypercosmic reality.

Perhaps we should add that a man can be characterized as "πνευματικός" as long as he merely shares in "the scent" of the Sonship that spreads through the cosmos owing to Πνεῦμα and has not yet himself become pure Sonship (Light)!

4.6.8. THE SECOND SONSHIP AND HOLY ΠΝΕΥΜΑ (22, 9)

We now still need to understand what Basilides meant by "the second Sonship." It is said to be "mimetic" in nature and incapable of following the first Sonship on its own (22, 9; cf. 25, 1; X 14, 4). It is unclear in our text why this Sonship is called "mimetic." We pointed out above that Clement of Alexandria used the term in his discussion of Basilides's theory about the "attachments" to the soul. For the rest, only an imitation of the first Sonship seems plausible. The Lower Archon imitates the activities of the First Archon. The "second Sonship" may have been called mimetic because it is related to the Lower Archon. In parallel to this mimetic relation, the productive activity of the Second Archon is also described as being on a par with the productive activity of the Great Archon.[204]

It is natural to assume an influence from Plato's *Timaeus* here. This work describes at first how the Demiurge produces the World Body and the World Soul. The creation of the stars and planets is also dealt with. Next, the Demiurge exhorts all these (visible)

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there is a problem here. In X 14, 10, it is said that the "Sons of God" stayed behind in the cosmos in order to purify and instruct the souls. But X 14, 9, states that the Sonship left behind is purified.

[201] This could easily call up associations with Aristotle's Revelation of Silenus to King Midas, that "the best" is not attainable for mortals, that is, "not to be born" (Arist. *Eudem.* frag. 6 Ross; 65 Gigon). See also *Protr.* 10b Ross; 73 and 82, 3, Gigon on the torture devised by the Etruscan robbers.

[202] Cf. Philo, *Heres* 55.

[203] Though the text here reads "the first Sonship," we can take this in the sense that the less fine-material Sonship came first in terms of clothing itself in a pneumatic body as a wing.

[204] *Haer.* 24, 4. For the parallelism, see 22, 9: πολὺ γὰρ ἐνδεεστέρα, and 24, 3: πολὺ δὲ ὑποδεέστερος, and X 14, 4, with 14, 8: πολὺ δὲ ἐλάττων. But also, παραπλησίως in 24, 4, and 26, 4.

celestial gods to imitate his activity in producing the bodies of mortal living beings in the sublunary sphere and of the corresponding (mortal) soul-parts. Plato then describes how all this works.[205]

The *Hermetic Corpus* says that the Will of God produced the world of the elements by imitating the beautiful world it had seen.[206] On the other hand, it also says that the Ἄνθρωπος wanted to create just like his elder brother (I 13), the demiurgic Νοῦς (I 9). This Ἄνθρωπος is the one who has power over the cosmos of mortal and irrational creatures (I 14).

Our text of the *Elenchos* goes on to say that the "second Sonship" received its power to ascend from the holy Πνεῦμα, with which it has covered itself.[207] But the holy Πνεῦμα that leads the Sonship upward is left behind when the Sonship comes close to the first Sonship and God. For the holy Πνεῦμα was not of the same essence as the Sonship (22, 12).

This passage once again contains a number of intriguing details. It talks about the "second Sonship," that is, about an essentially hypercosmic principle. We have already suggested that this Sonship is related to the "Second Archon," who will be discussed in 24, 3-4. So it is a spiritual principle of the soul of the aerial region, that is, of the region that does not consist of pure ether but of less subtle matter.

This "second Sonship" cannot cover the distance to the hypercosmic sphere without aid. The Anonymous compares this means of ascent or vehicle with the "wings" of the soul Plato talked about in his dialogue *Phaedo*.[208] Slightly further on, he uses the image of the eagle, who catches his young that cannot yet fly and returns them to the eyrie on his back.[209] That is to say, the second Sonship requires a kind of ὄχημα.[210] The relationship

[205] Pl. *Tim.* 41c and 42e; cf. 69c5.

[206] *C.H.* I 8: Ἐκ βουλῆς θεοῦ, ἥτις λαβοῦσα τὸν Λόγον καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν καλὸν κόσμον ἐμιμήσατο, κοσμοποιηθεῖσα διὰ τῶν ἑαυτῆς στοιχείων καὶ γεννημάτων ψυχῶν.

[207] *Haer.* VII 22, 10: <ἀν>επτέρωσεν οὖν αὑτὴν ἡ υἱότης ἡ παχυμερεστέρα τοιούτῳ τινὶ πτερῷ, ὁποίῳ διδάσκαλος ὢ<ν> Ἀριστοτέλους Πλάτων ἐν Φαίδ(ω)νι τὴν ψυχὴν πτεροῖ, καὶ καλεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτο Βασιλείδης οὐ πτερὸν ἀλλὰ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ὃ εὐεργετεῖ ἡ υἱότης ἐνδυσαμένη καὶ εὐεργετεῖται.

[208] *Haer.* VII 22, 10. Clearly this refers to the myth of the soul-chariot in the *Phaedrus*. In 246d6, Plato says: "The wing is the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine, and which by nature tends to soar aloft and carry that which gravitates downwards into the upper region, which is the habitation of the gods" (trans. Benjamin Jowett). In I 19, 8, and 19, 10, the author even gives two quotations from the *Phaedrus* and also refers to it in 19, 13, but without mentioning the dialogue by name. In his *Plat. quaest* 6, 1004D, Plutarch says that the "wings" of the soul denote the διαλογιστικὴ καὶ διανοητικὴ δύναμις. For this theme, cf. H.-C. Puech and G. Quispel, "Les écrits gnostiques du Codex Jung," *Vigiliae Christianae* 8 (1954): 1-51, 15-18, in connection with *Apocryphon of James* 14: "a chariot of spirit," esp. 18; and P. Courcelle, "Flügel (Flug) der Seele I," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 8 (1972): 29-65. According to the *Elenchos*, Basilides himself did not refer to Πνεῦμα as "wing." But in connecting the holy Πνεῦμα with the power to ascend (VII 22, 11), he was probably influenced by the image of the holy Πνεῦμα as a dove (John 1:32; Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22). It is remarkable in this context that Plotinus, *Enn.* II 9 [33] 4, 1, brings up the motif of "loss of wing" as a theme of his Gnostic opponents. K. Alt, in *Philosophie gegen Gnosis: Plotins Polemik in seiner Schrift II 9* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 45-47, notes that this theme does not occur in the Gnostics.

[209] Cf. Deut. 32:11: "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the LORD alone did lead him," and Exod. 19:4: "You have seen [...] how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." In the Hellenistic period, the eagle is the symbol of the contemplative intellect, which effortlessly contemplates what is most knowable. Cf. also *Haer.* IV 24, 2: ὀφθαλμοῖς ὡς ἀετοῦ.

[210] Note that in a passage on Basilides, Clem. *Strom.* II 36 (= Basilides frag. 4 Löhr), 1, describes Πνεῦμα as διακονουμένος, thus saying that the conversion of the Great Archon is the result of seeing a face and hearing

is mutually beneficial, like that of a lord with his servant or a sailor with his ship. The helmsman makes sure that the ship sails safely, but he needs the ship to reach his own destination.[211]

The typical expression "performed a service and received a service" (22, 10), which we will encounter several times, is striking. Perhaps there is an association with Acts 10:38, which says, "[You know] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good [εὐεργετῶν] and healing." We can note that Philo of Alexandria uses the term "to do good" three times in *De opificio Mundi* 23 as an effect of God's goodness, which is the only explanation for God's creative activity.

But the author of the *Refutation* talks about a pneumatic "covering" in which the second Sonship clothes himself. We should consider here that Aristotle had given the divine celestial beings a pure ethereal body but awarded to every soul in the sublunary sphere an instrumental body that partakes of the ether but is nevertheless less pure.[212] So even if our author here refers explicitly to a dialogue of Plato, it is clear that he attributes to Basilides an Aristotelian transformation of the notion of the soul's "ascent." But as I indicated in chapter 2.5 in describing Book 1 of the *Refutation*,[213] the concept of a vehicle of the soul had become current in the explanation of Plato's psychology, too.[214]

In Plato the criterion for the ascent or fall of the soul is the more or less complete contemplation of the Ideas by the νοῦς of the soul. For Aristotle, every soul is "not without body." Without its instrumental body, the soul cannot realize its psychical activities.

4.6.9. BASILIDES'S DOCTRINE OF ΠΝΕΥΜΑ IN RELATION TO THAT OF ARISTOTLE AND PLATO

According to *Refutation* I 20, 4, Aristotle taught that the soul, after its liberation from the earthly body, dissolved and disappeared into the sphere of the fifth element and that this ether was more subtle than the earthly elements, like πνεῦμα. Basilides, on the other hand, seems to have talked about "holy Πνεῦμα," too.[215] This undoubtedly betrays the influence of New Testament texts.[216] But it is also important to determine whether Basilides used Genesis 2:7, where it is said that man becomes "a living soul" through πνεῦμα (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45). Influenced by this text in Genesis, Philo of Alexandria had presented the Πνεῦμα that God breathes into people as "light" and as immaterial, in contrast to the soul, which Philo, on the basis of Leviticus 17:11, connected with the blood. As a result, πνεῦμα has a higher status in Philo than in Aristotle.

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words from heaven. Clement, too, seems to have seen a serving, instrumental role as characteristic of Πνεῦμα. *Exc. ex Theod.* = Basilides frag. 4a Löhr reports that the Basilideans characterized the holy Πνεῦμα as "διάκονος," "servant." See chap. 4.12.4 in the next issue of *Kronos: Philosophical Journal*.

[211] Arist. *Anim.* II 1, 413a8-10. An interesting text in this connection is Clem. *Strom.* II xix, 102, 2: τῷ γὰρ ὄντι εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος εὐεργετῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ αὐτὸς εὐεργετεῖται· ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ κυβερνήτης ἅμα σῴζει καὶ σῴζεται. (I was alerted to this text by Dr. F. Ledegang.)

[212] Cf. Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 3, 736b29-737a11.

[213] See *Kronos: Philosophical Journal* 11 (2022): 110ff.

[214] Cf. *Haer.* I 19, 10, and A. P. Bos, "The 'Vehicle of Soul' and the Debate over the Origin of This Concept," *Philologus* 151, no. 1 (2007).

[215] *Corp. Herm.* I 5 talks about "holy Λόγος," which strongly suggests a relationship with Old Testament writings.

[216] Cf. Luke 1:35, quoted in VII 26, 9, and the Pauline texts about the "pneumatic body" in 1 Cor. 15:44-56.

In Aristotle, πνεῦμα is the instrumental body of the soul of mortal beings (human beings and higher animals). But Aristotle also postulated a κοινωνία between the δύναμις of every soul and the astral element.[217] So πνεῦμα in Aristotle is not identical with ether but equivalent to the astral element, as an instrumental natural body for the soul.

In Philo, πνεῦμα is that which displays the image of the divine Λόγος in man's soul. In Justin Martyr, too, "Πνεῦμα" is not a fine-material substrate of the immaterial soul, as in Aristotle, but that which gives life to the soul and without which the soul ceases to exist.[218]

Though πνεῦμα is fine-material in Basilides, it is nevertheless material. The "holy Πνεῦμα" is emphatically "not of the same essence" as God, nor does it have the same nature as the Sonship (22, 12-13). We are dealing not just with "subordinationism" of the holy Πνεῦμα in relation to God. The holy Πνεῦμα is not even divine in the highest sense. In Basilides's system, it displays features of a material vehicle for the transcendent principle in living beings of the highest order.[219]

So the threefold Sonship is more divine than the holy Πνεῦμα. The author's discussion of the holy Πνεῦμα in VII 22, 12-13, is a reminder that in his first book he attributes to Aristotle the special view that the soul of an individual person survives after death but later dissolves into the ether, which, like πνεῦμα, is more fine-material than the earthly elements (I 20, 4). In discussing this passage, in chapter 2.3,[220] I already suggested that Aristotle, in our author's view, presented the soul as a fine-material vehicle of the intellect and that the perfect transcendence of the intellect can only be realized after deposition of this pneumatic covering. This interpretation is supported by the particular details that the *Elenchos* provides here about the second Sonship's abandonment of the holy Πνεῦμα in Basilides's doctrine.

Another important theme is that the second Sonship "clothes itself" in the holy Πνεῦμα.[221] Though our Anonymous rightly attributes an Aristotelianizing tendency to Basilides, the theme itself cannot be found in Aristotelian texts.[222] More likely, Basilides is thinking here of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15, where it is said, "a natural body [σῶμα ψυχικόν] is sown, a spiritual body is raised."[223] Paul goes on there to disclose a mystery: "this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality."[224] Basilides seems to have attributed immortality to the pneumatic body,

[217] Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 3, 736b29-31.

[218] Justin Martyr (a contemporary of Basilides) talks about "holy πνεῦμα" in *Dial.* 4, 1; 7, 1, and about "life-giving πνεῦμα" in 6, 1. The same view on the soul's relation to πνεῦμα is found in Tatian, *Or.* 13.

[219] Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch*, 193-94, is right to emphasize that Basilides attaches more importance to participation in the Sonship than to being "pneumatic."

[220] See *Kronos: Philosophical Journal* 11 (2022): 105ff.

[221] *Haer.* VII 22, 10: Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ὃ εὐεργετεῖ ἡ υἱότης ἐνδυσαμένη καὶ εὐεργετεῖται.

[222] In Arist. *Anim.* I 3, 407b22, he does criticize Platonists and Pythagoreans for holding that any soul can "enter" (ἐνδύεσθαι εἰς) any body. Aristotle believes that the soul must be able to use the body as its instrument. Cf. A. P. Bos, "Why the Soul Needs an Instrumental Body according to Aristotle (*Anim.* I 3, 407b13-26)," *Hermes* 128, no. 1 (2000): 20-31. Aristotle's meaning in *Anim.* I 3 is made clear by *Gener. anim.* II 1-5: only the menstrual fluid of a female partner can serve this purpose and receive the soul-principle.

[223] 1 Cor. 15:44: σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν.

[224] 1 Cor. 15:53: δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν. Cf. also 2 Cor. 5:4: οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι. Perhaps we should also relate this to the statement in

even if it is of lower quality than "the Sonship," just as in Aristotle the individual soul-substance disappears into the immortal ether.

If we look back now and ask why the second Sonship needs to be clothed in holy Πνεῦμα and the first Sonship does not and why the second Sonship cannot ascend by its own power, we can only express probabilities. It is likely due to the fact that the second Sonship was "less subtle" than the first Sonship. In my view, holy Πνεῦμα is necessary because the less subtle Sonship as such is the vital principle of the beings in the sphere of the Air. To reach the hypercosmos, its goal, it must cast off its less subtle soul-covering and use the aid of the highest, pure, unmixed form of Πνεῦμα. But as a living being, the Lower Archon is characterized by soul-substance of less subtle quality. In Basilides's system, holy Πνεῦμα is thus the real vehicle of the Sonship, without any "pollution" or "obscuration." The two Archons and all other living beings possess πνεύματα with varying degrees of "Darkness."

So to a large extent Basilides followed Aristotle's anthropology. Only the doctrine of the Πνεῦμα sphere as boundary between the cosmos and the hypercosmic seems a particularity that is the consequence of Basilides's separation between a cosmic and a hypercosmic reality.

4.6.10. THE "SCENT" OF SONSHIP LEFT BEHIND IN ΠΝΕΥΜΑ (22, 13-14)

Basilides attributes another special feature to the holy Πνεῦμα that is left behind after being used by the Second Sonship. The Πνεῦμα stays behind but is not entirely devoid of the Sonship that left it, just as a jar containing myrrh preserves the scent of myrrh long after the myrrh itself has been poured out.[225] Even when the jar containing the myrrh "has been completely emptied," it still retains the scent (22, 14). We could ask whether this "κένωσις" in Basilides was perhaps connected in any way with the κένωσις of Jesus Christ, of which Paul speaks in Philippians 2:7. Christ is said there to have taken "the form of a servant" (δοῦλος). Πνεῦμα was undoubtedly presented by Basilides as "servant" (διάκονος) and as "serving" (διακονούμενος) (Löhr frag. 4). And in discussing the Sethians, our author sets out a very similar doctrine of Πνεῦμα as the mediator between Light and Darkness, with an explicit quotation of Philippians 2:7 (X 11, 11, and V 21, 9).[226]

This association of scent with the holy Πνεῦμα may evoke the original meaning of Πνεῦμα as "breath of life." Basilides himself referred here to the anointment of the high priest Aaron in Psalm 133:2.[227] It seems useful to consider in what way this pneumatology is based on biblical passages that talk about baptism or anointment with the Holy Spirit. It is likely that Basilides saw baptism by water as a symbol of the soul's "purification"

Gal. 3:27: ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε. This was perhaps explained as an event similar to Jesus's baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist.

[225] Plotinus sometimes talks about ἴχνη ("traces") of the transcendent in cosmic reality: *Enn.* I 2 [19] 2, 20; I 6 [1] 8, 7; I 8 [51] 11, 17, etc.

[226] Phil. 2:7 talks about "the form of a servant" (δοῦλος). It is useful to note that Arist. *Metaph.* A 2, 982b29, declares: "in many ways human nature is in bondage" (δούλη).

[227] *Haer.* VII 22,15. Perhaps the anointment in Bethany plays a role: John 12:3; cf. Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3 and 9; Luke 7:37-38. See also Exod. 30:22-33; 37:29; Lev. 8:10-12.

that takes place when it casts off its earthly body and the sublunary component of its instrumental soul-body.[228] He seems to have interpreted the anointment with holy Πνεῦμα as a means by which earthly beings that participate in the third Sonship can cast off the "psychical body" and gain the potential for real spiritual life. For the holy Πνεῦμα is the only entity that can be connected with the Sonship in a proper way.

Also important in this context is Clement of Alexandria's report that the Basilideans paid special attention to the feast of Jesus's baptism.[229] The synoptic gospels present the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist as the occasion when the Πνεῦμα descends on Jesus and a voice from heaven declares: "Thou art my beloved Son."[230] In the conception of Basilides's theology, this should not be taken in the sense of a real "descent" of the holy Πνεῦμα. For nothing that is higher is inclined to go downward (22, 16! Cf. 25, 6). The "descent" should be interpreted spiritually as the process that leads to the deposition of the lower soul-body by the spiritual principle. Jesus of Nazareth was probably presented by the Basilideans as the first earthly man of whom the "Sonship" was revealed through "Enlightenment" via the holy Πνεῦμα. Jesus's "Sonship of God" was therefore probably taken by the Basilideans in an adoptionist sense and not as essentially different from the "Sonship of God" of all other pneumatic human beings.

As a result of the "Enlightenment" mediated by the holy Πνεῦμα, the spiritual core of cosmic living beings therefore arrives at knowledge of itself. And the consequence of this self-knowledge is that the Self separates from everything that is not-the-Self. Thus, arriving at self-knowledge is also knowledge of the transcendent and at the same time self-redeification. In this regard, Basilides's philosophy agrees with the philosophy that the author of the *Elenchos* attributes to the Naassenes elsewhere.[231] It is the essentially Greek-philosophical core of this Christianizing Gnosticism.

So in Basilides's conception, the bi-unity of the second Sonship with the holy Πνεῦμα is a composite substance consisting of two heterogeneous components that is valuable within the cosmic sphere but is ultimately broken up when the Sonship realizes its transcendent essence (22, 12-13). In this respect, Basilides's theory again resembles Aristotle's doctrine of soul, which also talks about a "composite substance" of final goal and instrumental body,[232] which is valuable within the domain of the living beings in the cosmic sphere but which is broken up by the intellect of the soul when it realizes its potential for transcendence. (But it is striking that our author mentions this Aristotelian doctrine of the connection between entelechy and instrumental body in his discussion of the relationship between the Great Archon and his Son and not here!)

Another argument supporting the view that "the Sonship" stands for the intellect or the truly transcendent principle and Πνεῦμα for the (materially characterized) vehicle of the transcendent principle is that the author of the *Elenchos* talks about the "separation"

[228] Cf. *Haer.* VII 27, 6: ἰδίαν τότε περιβεβλημένη ψυχήν, and 26, 10: γενομένη λεπτομερεστάτη.
[229] Clem. *Strom.* I 145, 6-146, 4 = Basil. fr. 1 (Löhr).
[230] Mark 1:10-11: καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν· καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν Σὺ εἶ ὁ Υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. Cf. Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 3:21-22.
[231] *Haer.* V 6, 6: τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτοῦ [viz. of Man] ἀρχὴν τοῦ δύνασθαι γνῶναι τὸν θεόν.
[232] Arist. *Anim.* II 1, 412a16.

between the myrrh and the jar in which it was contained.[233] In Aristotelian philosophy, the terms "χωριστός" and "κεχωρισμένος" are characteristic of the intellect's transcendence.[234]

We should also bear in mind here that the comparison of the myrrh and its scent indicates a distinction that is considered of essential importance in the Aristotelian work *On the Cosmos*. Myrrh is a substance; its scent, an effect or action. In *On the Cosmos* 6, 397b19, the author sees the distinction between οὐσία and δύναμις in the same way. God, it is said there, is completely transcendent according to his essence (οὐσία). But his δύναμις is present in the cosmos. And ether or Πνεῦμα are the vehicles of this power. The *Elenchos*'s text on the spreading of the scent of the myrrh could even, to a trained ear, contain echoes of the text of *On the Cosmos*.

The crucial question this raises is what role the theme of the Sonship's scent plays in Basilides's system. It seems to have the function of exerting a kind of power of attraction in the direction of the Sonship, just as Aristotle talked about a *desiderium naturale* in all reality for the divine. Immediately after the description of the holy Πνεῦμα and its scent, there is talk about the generation of new life-forms (the Archons), which could therefore be seen as the consequence of this scent. The Archons, too, ascend, even though they do not reach the hypercosmic levels of the Sonship. The fact that the Great Archon, despite his Ἄγνοια, executes the great plan of the highest God could well have been considered the effect of the scent of the Πνεῦμα that spreads throughout the cosmos.[235]

In this same way, "the Sonship" is not present in the πνεῦμα but "the δύναμις of the Sonship" is. This means that the Πνεῦμα, as the highest part of the cosmos, is not on a par with the transcendent reality of the Sonship, but it does display its effect. In comparable fashion, the author of *On the Cosmos* 6, 397b27, stated that "the body which is nearest to him most enjoys his power and afterwards the next nearest, and so on successively until the regions wherein we dwell are reached."[236] In my view, this is a fundamental principle that was adopted by Philo of Alexandria in his distinction between God in his perfect transcendence and God's Λόγος as the totality of his Δυνάμεις, which are productively active in the cosmos.[237]

4.6.11. THE ANOINTMENT AS SYMBOL OF "THE SONSHIP" (22, 15)

It seems legitimate to see the passage on "the second Sonship" and holy Πνεῦμα in 22, 12-15, as a reason for considering whether the ritual of "anointment" that plays such an important role in the Gospel of Philip can be understood against such a background. For the "pneumatic man," it is the realization of contact with the Sonship, and it thus symbolizes the union of the pneumatic man with the transcendent God himself. But in Basilides,

[233] *Haer.* VII 22, 14: κεχωρισμένον. But it is also said of the jar in 22, 13: οὐ παντάπασιν ἔρημον οὐδὲ ἀπηλλαγμένον τῆς υἱότητος.
[234] Arist. *Anim.* III 5, 430a17; a22; II 2, 413b24-28.
[235] Plot. *Enn.* II 9 [33] 12, 1-12, raises the point how the Gnostics thought about the "knowledge" of the Demiurge by which he produced the visible cosmos if the Demiurge did not have perfect "memory."
[236] Aristotle, *On the Cosmos*, trans. and ed. J. Barnes, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 635. Arist. *Mu.* 6, 397b27: μάλιστα δέ πως αὐτοῦ τῆς δυνάμεως ἀπολαύει τὸ πλησίον αὐτοῦ σῶμα, καὶ ἔπειτα [...] ἄχρι τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς τόπων. Cf. *Haer.* VII 22, 13 and 15!
[237] Cf. Bos, "Philo of Alexandria"; Bos, "God as 'Father' and 'Maker' in Philo of Alexandria."

Πνεῦμα is not the anointing oil itself but rather the empty container of the oil, which is itself of an even higher order.

We can add that Basilides, in typically Greek fashion, declares emphatically that the higher never feels the desire to "descend" (25, 6), but the lower only has a great desire to ascend. However, the quotation from Psalm 133:2 in *Refutation* VII 22, 15, does talk about the "running down" of the anointing oil from Aaron's head onto his beard. It seems likely that the text in John 1:32, which talks about "the descent of the Spirit" in the form of a dove, was explained "spiritually" by Basilides in the passage described here.

But the motif of "scent" should perhaps also be traced back to Paul's reference to "the fragrance of the knowledge" of God that is spread everywhere.[238]

These Gnostic Christians took the name "Christ" to mean "the Anointed"[239] and saw a connection here with the (literal) anointment of the (high) priests in the line of Aaron in the Jewish religion but also in the sense of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). But they interpreted this anointment "spiritually," as an anointment/baptism with the hypercosmic γνῶσις by means of the holy Πνεῦμα, which contains the scent of the divine Sonship. In this system, the cosmic "Christ," the Son of the Great Archon, may have been presented as "Mediator." But properly speaking, the holy Πνεῦμα is the mediating entity.

This also apparently plays a role in the Sethians, whom the author of the *Refutation* discusses in V 19. According to the Sethians, the Πνεῦμα is located between the (higher) sphere of the Light and the (lower) sphere of the Darkness. Our author goes on to say:

> The πνεῦμα [...] is not πνεῦμα as a current of wind, or some gentle breeze that can be felt; but, as it were, some odour of ointment or of incense formed out of a compound. It is a subtle δύναμις, that insinuates itself by means of some impulsive quality in a fragrance, which is inconceivable and better than could be expressed by words. Since, however, Light is above and Darkness below, and πνεῦμα is intermediate in such a way as stated between these; and since Light is so constituted, that, like a ray of the sun, it shines from above upon the underlying Darkness; and again since the fragrance of the πνεῦμα, holding an intermediate place, is extended and carried in every direction, as in the case of incense offerings placed upon fire, we detect the fragrance that is being wafted in every direction: when, I say, there is a δύναμις of this description belonging unto the principles which are classified under three divisions, the δύναμις of πνεῦμα and Light simultaneously exists in the Darkness that is situated underneath them.[240]

Anticipating what we will encounter in 25, 6-7, and 26, 9, we can point here to the analogy that can be found between the anointment with the scent of the Sonship by means of the holy πνεῦμα and the "Enlightenment" that is brought about by the

[238] 2 Cor 2:14: τὴν ὀσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως.
[239] Likewise, the Gospel of Philip §44, 47, 67, and especially 95.
[240] *Refutation*, trans. MacMahon, 172.

Sonship itself. The anointing oil fills with "the fragrance of Christ," we could say. The naphtha (a fuel as inflammable as modern kerosene) sets everything it meets "ablaze" and travels like "wildfire."

4.6.12. HOLY ΠΝΕΥΜΑ AS FIRMAMENT AND BOUNDARY (23, 1)

According to Basilides, the holy πνεῦμα that has ascended but could not enter the hypercosmic sphere forms the "Firmament" (στερέωμα),[241] which separates the hypercosmos from the cosmos. The word "Firmament" used here is a typically biblical term, derived from the creation account in Genesis 1. There, on the second day of creation, God created a Firmament to separate the waters, that is, the waters under and above the Firmament. The Firmament is then given the name "heaven" (Gen. 1:6-8).

Here, too, Basilides's doctrine of creation is much more "spiritual" than that of the author of Genesis. Whereas the "Firmament" can be considered the outer celestial sphere, it is for Basilides the boundary[242] between the cosmic and the hypercosmic and higher than heaven (23, 3). The Greek word "στερέωμα," which stands for "Firmament" in the LXX, can easily call up associations with "(solid) matter" and corporeality.[243] The term does not suggest a spiritual dimension. It is used just once in the NT, Col. 2:5, where it is translated as "the firmness (of your faith)." In Basilides, the Πνεῦμα is often called "μεθόριος" in the sense of "forming the boundary/separation."[244] And this appellation does not occur anywhere else in the *Refutation*.

It is intriguing, to say the least, that in the Greek philosophical tradition the word "οὐρανός" (heaven) was sometimes also etymologized as "ὅρος ἄνω."[245]

In Valentinus, the concept of Ὅρος as the separation between cosmic reality and that of the Aeons and the highest God played an important role. Sometimes Ὅρος is synonymous there with "Cross" (Σταυρός).[246]

But we should again recognize that Basilides needed Πνεῦμα as a Boundary in order to explain in the rest of his creation doctrine (23, 4) why the Great Archon could hold that he himself was the highest and only God. The Great Archon had no sense of what lay beyond the Boundary of the cosmos and was unaware of the existence of a hypercosmic

[241] Cf. *Haer.* VII 23, 1; 3; 4; 25, 3; X 14, 6.

[242] Cf. *Haer.* VII 23, 5; 25, 7: τὸ μεθόριον <Πνεῦμα> and passim.

[243] Cf. Philo, *Opif.* 36: ἐποίει τὸν οὐρανὸν ὁ δημιουργός, ὃν ἐτύμως στερέωμα προσηγόρευσεν ἅτε σωματικὸν ὄντα· τὸ γὰρ σῶμα φύσει στερεόν, ὅτιπερ καὶ τριχῇ διαστατόν. But in *Tim.* 31b6, Plato had largely attributed the massiveness of the cosmos to the element Earth.

[244] *Haer.* VII 23, 2; 25, 1; 26, 9; 27, 1; 27, 7; 27, 10; X 14, 5. In Philo, the *Logos* is called μεθόριος στὰς τὸ γενόμενον διακρίνῃ τοῦ πεποιηκότος (*Heres* 42; 205). The term "μεθόριος" is very common in his work.

[245] Arist. *Mu.* 6, 400a7: οὐρανὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὅρον εἶναι τὸν ἄνω. See also Eudorus frag. 37; C. Mazzarelli, "Raccolta e interpretazione delle testimonianze e dei frammenti del medioplatonico Eudoro di Alessandria," *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-scolastica* 77, nos. 2 and 4 (1985): 197-209, 535-55, esp. 544. Mueller, "Hippolytus, Aristotle, Basilides," 153, points out that, according to Sextus Emp. *Pyrrh.* 3, 218, Aristotle had characterized God as πέρας of heaven. Cf. also Philo, *Heres* 228; *Q.E.* II 64; *Plant.* 3.

[246] *Haer.* VI 31, 5 and 6: καλεῖται δὲ Ὅρος μὲν οὗτος, ὅτι ἀφορίζει ἀπὸ τοῦ πληρώ(μ)ατος ἔξω τὸ ὑστέρημα. 31, 7 and 8.

reality.[247] Moreover, Basilides lived in a time when for more than four hundred years the Stoa had used ether and πνεῦμα as synonyms for the substance of the soul.

Note, too, that in Basilides's system the holy Πνεῦμα is the highest and outermost part of the cosmos. But it does *not* itself form part of the hypercosmic world. In effect, it has the place that the author of the *Elenchos* had attributed to the outer celestial sphere (ἐπιφάνεια) in Aristotle's system. In Basilides's system, it has the role that is assigned in the Gospel of Philip to the "veil" that demarcated the Holy of Holies from the other parts of the temple (Philip §125 and 76).

[247] Cf. 1 Cor. 2.14: "The unspiritual (the Greek text reads ψυχικὸς) man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Andrzej Serafin

PLATO AND ELEUSIS

Affinities between Plato's dialogues and the Eleusinian Mysteries are an unquestionable fact. The most obvious are Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* with two grades of initiation, as in Eleusis, the palinode of the *Phaedrus* with the famous οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα passage (247c), and the cave allegory of the *Republic*. Undoubtedly these are the fundamental *loci classici* of the entire Platonic corpus. Are these only superficial allusions, rhetorical ornaments, or does the Eleusinian topos constitute the core of Plato's narrative? We know that it was forbidden to reveal the content of the Eleusinian Mysteries publicly under penalty of Athenian law. However, this prohibition was often circumvented by means of indirect allusion. According to Giorgio Colli, Platonic dialogues were meant to achieve such a purpose. Another important context is the accusation of Alcibiades and his friends of profaning the Eleusinian Mysteries. Regardless of how such a profanation was to be accomplished (by parodying the hierophant's gesture, or by illegally consuming the kykeon outside of the mysteries), the fact is that Plato's circle was somehow involved in it. Finally, the infamous Eleusinian eroticism, condemned by the church fathers, might be a key to understanding the riddle of Platonic eroticism, permeating even the crucial metaphors of Plato's ontology. Still, the problem of Platonic and Eleusinian sexuality is a difficult one to handle. There is no doubt that it is a key factor in both traditions. The Eleusinian testimonies known to us show that sexuality must have played a vital role in the ritual, either symbolically or perhaps even in direct ritual enactment. It was also an important part of the activities in the Socratic circle, as attested not only by Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* but also by Xenophon, for example, *Memorabilia* III.11 or the final scene of his *Symposium*, where the actors playing Dionysos and Ariadne pretend to make love and then stop pretending, thereby enacting the hierogamic ritual, perhaps performing a profanation of the Eleusinian mystery.

We should consider this problem without imposing our inhibitions upon the Greeks. Schopenhauer had already noticed that their lives were permeated with "presentations of life's most powerful urge [...] to the point of showing us the sexual intercourse between satyrs and goats" and that the phallus was omnipresent in the Greek world as a "symbol of generation which appears as the counterpart of death" – intimating "that generation and death are essential correlatives which reciprocally neutralize and eliminate each other"[1] – as well as a "symbol of the affirmation of the will," since "far more than any other external member of

[1] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 276.

the body, the genitals are subject merely to the will."[2] In fact, according to Schopenhauer, this is the ultimate meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries: "sexual satisfaction as the affirmation of the will-to-live beyond the individual life."[3] Jane Ellen Harrison confirms that "we may now be certain that [...] the Sacred Marriage was enacted," forming "part of the ritual of Eleusis, as it formed part of the Orphic mysteries of Sabazios and the Great Mother."[4] This is what Diotima's speech of the *Symposium* alludes to.

Thus, the Eleusinian testimonies gathered by Nicola Turchi, Giorgio Colli, and Paolo Scarpi,[5] allowing us to gain insight into the structure of the mysteries, are of equal importance to understanding Platonism as the *Testimonia Platonica* collected by Konrad Gaiser.[6] It is not enough to accept the parallelism of Platonic philosophy and the Eleusinian Mysteries[7] or to acknowledge Plato's use of Eleusinian terminology.[8] Instead, one has to assume the possibility that the experience undergone at Eleusis constitutes the basis of his philosophy, that this peak experience is transmitted in the Platonic ἄγραφα δόγματα, that the Platonic θεωρία is equivalent to the Eleusinian ἐποπτεία,[9] and, furthermore, that Platonic dialectics is a means of attaining such an experience. Therefore, the study of the Eleusinian testimonies is equally important for understanding Platonism as the reconstruction of Plato's ἄγραφα δόγματα undertaken by Konrad Gaiser upon the basis of preserved testimonies of Plato's unwritten teaching, the so-called *Testimonia Platonica*. The stronger version of this claim would be that we are unable to properly understand Plato and Platonism in general, and the theory of principles in particular, without studying its Greek religious background, or, to be precise, the Eleusinian Mysteries. According to Szlezák, one cannot properly understand Plato's dialogues without relating them to the testimonies of the ἄγραφα δόγματα.[10] This insight should be further supplemented by referring to the context of the mysteries. A careful examination of the Eleusinian fragments in conjunction with a study of the religious experience could give an unprecedented insight into the nature of Plato's philosophy, in particular: the reservations concerning writing (in the final part of the *Phaedrus* and in the *Seventh Letter*), the esotericism of the Academy,

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2 Ibid., 330.

3 Ibid., 329.

4 Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), 551.

5 Nicola Turchi, *Fontes historiae mysteriorum aevi Hellenistici* (Rome: Libreria di scienze e lettere del dott. G. Bardi, 1930); Giorgio Colli, *La sapienza greca I: Dioniso, Apollo, Eleusi, Orfeo, Museo, Iperborei, Enigma* (Milan: Adelphi, 1977); Paolo Scarpi, *Eleusi, Dionisismo, Orfismo*, vol. 1 of *Le religioni dei Misteri* (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 2002).

6 Konrad Gaiser, "Testimonia Platonica. Quellentexte zur Schule und mündlichen Lehre Platons," in *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1968), 441-557.

7 Thomas A. Szlezák acknowledges Plato's "parallelization of philosophy and mystery initiation" (*Platon: Meisterdenker der Antike* [Munich: C. H. Beck, 2021], 578-79).

8 Christoph Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 1-69. The phraseology of *Phdr.* 250bc is of utmost interest: ἐτελοῦντο, ὠργιάζομεν, ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ.

9 Krämer shows how the Platonic dialectics prepares the noetic grasp of the one ("die noetische Erfassung des Einen"), culminating in the nondiscursive intuition of the ἀρχαί: Hans Joachim Krämer, "Über den Zusammenhang von Prinzipienlehre und Dialektik bei Platon," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Platon* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 33-71, esp. 66-69.

10 Thomas A. Szlezák, "The Importance of the Allusions for Reading Plato," in *Reading Plato* (Routledge: London, 1999), 79-84.

the function of erotic imagery in Platonic metaphysics in conjunction with the theory of the ἀρχαί, and finally the eschatological myths and visions of Plato.

PLATO, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE MYSTERIES

We can distinguish several attitudes toward Platonism that correspond to the attitude toward the Eleusinian Mysteries. First, there are those who don't know what it is and who at most claim to know what it is not, thus defining it negatively;[11] second, there are those who claim to know what it is but do not reveal it for a certain reason, claiming that it is either impossible as being beyond discourse (ἄνευ λόγου), unspeakable (ἄρρητον; cf. *Phdr.* 247c), or forbidden to reveal (ἀπόρρητον; cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1111a), one can only hint or allude to it; a variation of this attitude is the claim that one can reveal it to those who are capable or prepared to grasp it (*Phdr.* 276a), for the nature of this knowledge is such that it should not be revealed prematurely (ἀπρόρρητον; cf. *Leg.* 968e); finally, there is the bold claim of knowing combined with a revelatory attitude, as in Hegel or in the maxim "Guard the Mysteries! Constantly reveal Them!"[12] Such a revelation can be twofold, as in the apocryphal letter of Aristotle to Alexander in which he says that his esoteric works "are published and not published, for they can be understood by my auditors alone."[13] Furthermore, there is the riddle of the Academy, the unsolved question of its modus operandi: whether it was a scientific association similar to modern universities, or rather a religious organization similar to the Pythagorean θίασος, or perhaps something in-between, using the mathematical discourse as a theological metaphor (ἀγεωμέτρητος μηδεὶς εἰσίτω, "the ungeometrized may not enter," sounds like a deliberate paraphrase of ἀμύητον μὴ εἰσιέναι εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, "the uninitiated may not enter the temple").[14] There are also suggestions of orgiastic activities in the Academy,[15] and Pausanias attests the cult of Eros, including his altar at the site.[16] The former, that is, the religious activities, does not have to necessarily exclude the latter, as in the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Plato's dialogues are full of references to the Mysteries. They are even counted by the historians of Eleusis, such as Colli or Scarpi, among the major sources.[17] According to Hadot, Plato "plays with"[18] the highest grade of Eleusinian initiation in *Phaedrus* 250c. Moreschini, in his critical edition of the *Phaedrus*, admits an explicit terminological adherence in 250c (ὀργιάζω, ἐποπτεύω, μυέω).[19] Victor Cousin, in his 1823 note on the *Phaedrus*, notices that

[11] Lloyd Gerson, "What Is Platonism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (July 2005): 253-76 (esp. 264-69: §3. *Platonism by Negation*). See also Lloyd Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 9ff., on negatively defined Ur-Platonism as the "via negativa to Plato's philosophy."

[12] Lew Welsh quoted by Dale Pendell in *The Language of Birds: Some Notes on Chance and Divination* (Hercules, CA: Three Hands Press, 2009), 12.

[13] Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 7, 4-5; Simpl. *In. Phys.* 8, 21-29; Gellius 20, 5, 11-12.

[14] This inscription, found at the Samothrace temple complex; cf. Franciszek Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques: supplément* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1962), 135 (LSS 75).

[15] Athenaios XII, 547f-548a = TP 2 Gaiser and Plutarch *Adv. Colotem* 1107f (who speaks of "the most frantic celebrators of Plato's orgies," ἐμμανέστατον ὀργιαστὴν Πλάτωνος).

[16] Pausanias I, 30, 1; cf. Athenaios XIII, 561d and 609d.

[17] Frags. 3 [A 10]-3 [A 17] Colli.

[18] Pierre Hadot, "Epopteia," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter and K. Gründer, vol. 2: D-F (Basel: Schwabe, 1972), 599.

[19] Platon, *Phèdre*, ed. Claudio Moreschini and Paul Vicaire (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994), 43.

the place where the dialogue takes place is "near a temple dedicated to the mysteries," that is, Agra, where the lesser mysteries took place (*Phdr.* 229c-230b).[20] But Hermeias, in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*, already referred the soul's ascent in Socrates's palinode to the ἐποπτεία of the Eleusinian Mysteries.[21] The final part of the dialogue, on the criticism of writing, is interpreted by Szlezák, in conjunction with the statements of the *Seventh Letter*, within the context of the Eleusinian secrecy and the fertility rituals of Adonis (276b).[22] Schefer demonstrates that the central subject of rhetorics is a figure of the initiation into the mysteries, claiming that "Plato does not only use mystery terminology and mystery images, but also [...] presents the whole dialogue as a real mystery initiation,"[23] describing the procession from Athens to Eleusis with a preparatory purification (κάθαρσις) in Agra and in Socrates's palinode. During his first speech, Socrates is veiled like the Eleusinian μύστης during θρονισμός. The excitement (πτόησις), shuddering (φρίκη, 251a7), stifling (καῦμα, 242a3), and burning heat (πνῖγος, 279b4) are also signs of the initiation, culminating in the final vision (ἐποπτεία). According to Rinella, these are bodily symptoms of ingesting psychoactive alkaloids contained in the vision-inducing potion (κυκεών) administered at Eleusis.[24] Ustinova agrees that the Eleusinian ἐποπτεία was a result of an "alteration of consciousness," constituting the divine μανία.[25] Such states of mind could have been induced by psychoactive substances, according to contemporary research.[26] Recent archeological discoveries seem to confirm this.[27] If this supposition is true, then the profanation of the mysteries by Alcibiades, subsequently persecuted, could be understood as an unauthorized usage of the Eleusinian κυκεών.[28] Otherwise, one would have to accept W. F. Otto's conjecture that the μύσται were "put into a state which is not subject to natural explanation,"[29] raptured by a divine ἐνθουσιασμός (ἐνθεάζειν).

Despite the secrecy surrounding the mystery rituals at Eleusis, we know from various reports that its core was a visionary experience, repeated annually, available publicly for all Athenian citizens. Speaking of the mysteries by means of allusions, without violating the

[20] Platon, *Œuvres*, ed. Victor Cousin, vol. 5 (Paris: Bossange Frères, 1823), 354.

[21] Hermeias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, 180, 1-9; 186, 8ff.

[22] Szlezák, *Reading Plato*, 41-49; *Platon: Meisterdenker der Antike*, 168-69, 573. Cf. Frazer's description of the Eleusinian and Adonalian fertility rituals in *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, pt. 4, *Adonis Attis Osiris* (London: Macmillan, 1906); pt. 5, *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1912).

[23] Christina Schefer, "Rhetoric as Part of an Initiation into the Mysteries: A New Interpretation of the Platonic *Phaedrus*," in *Plato as Author*, ed. Ann N. Michelini (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 192.

[24] Michael A. Rinella, "Supplementing the Ecstatic: Plato, the Eleusinian Mysteries and the *Phaedrus*," *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought* 17, no. 1-2 (2000): 61-78, esp. 71-73.

[25] Yulia Ustinova. *Divine Mania: Alteration of Consciousness in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[26] See, for example, Michael J. Winkelman, "The Mechanisms of Psychedelic Visionary Experiences: Hypotheses from Evolutionary Psychology," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 11 (2017): 1-17, or William A. Richards, "Mystical/Religious Experiences with Psychedelics," in *The Handbook of Medical Hallucinogens*, ed. Charles S. Grob and Jim Grigsby (New York: Guilford Press, 2021): 529-35.

[27] Elisa Guerra-Doce, "Psychoactive Drugs in European Prehistory," in *Oxford Handbook of Global Drug History*, ed. Paul Gootenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 35-55.

[28] Fritz Graf, "Der Mysterienprozeß," in *Große Prozesse im antiken Athen*, ed. L. Burckhardt and J. von Ungern-Sternberg (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000): 114-27.

[29] Walter F. Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries [1939]," in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 24.

interdiction, was even a kind of sport for the Athenian rhetors.[30] Thus, one could put forward a hypothesis that what Plato did was not only to allude to or "borrow phrases from the Eleusinian rites"[31] but to create a sophisticated rhetorical construct, the Platonic dialogues, meant to reveal the unspeakable content of the mysteries. This was explicitly claimed by Colli: "the theory of ideas, in its inception, was an attempt at literary popularization of the Eleusinian Mysteries, so that the accusation of impiety was prevented by avoiding any reference to the mythical content of initiation."[32] Such a claim had its predecessors, most notably Olympiodorus, according to whom "Plato alludes to Orpheus everywhere" (πανταχοῦ γὰρ ὁ Πλάτων παρῳδεῖ τὰ Ὀρφέως).[33] Alluding (παρῳδεῖν) could be understood not only as a reference to the particular Orphic poems, but, since Orpheus was said to be "the originator of the mysteries,"[34] it could rather refer to the mysteries as the urtext of Platonism, intertextually paraphrased by Plato in the dialogues, detached from its original source once the shrine had been closed, sustaining the after-life of Eleusis under the inconspicuous label of philosophy and metaphysics. In this vein, the highest summit and completion of philosophy was called epoptics (τὰ ἐποπτικά) by later Platonists such as Theon of Smyrna, Plutarch, and Origen.[35] Aristotle says that "those who have directly touched pure truth claim to possess philosophy's ultimate goal [τέλος], as in a mystery initiation [ἐν τελετῇ],"[36] using the same wordplay as Plato in the *Phaedrus*, where a philosopher is described as "a man ceaselessly initiated into mysteries" (τελέους ἀεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενος, 249c).

From such a perspective, one can claim that not only do certain of Plato's works contain initiatory motives but the entire Platonic philosophy has the structure of a mystery initiation, orchestrated into dialogues, forming a gradual ascent toward the goal of dialectical striving, which itself remains beyond discourse and can only be hinted at by it. Such an assumption constituted the basis of the Neoplatonic curriculum in Athens and Alexandria, where Platonic dialogues were subsequently studied in the triadic order corresponding to the Eleusinian stages of κάθαρσις, μύησις, and ἐποπτεία. As Ricoeur put it, the entire movement of a Platonic philosopher is equivalent to a voyage of the initiate in the mysteries, where the "initial, closed, blinded situation," described as captivity (*Phaedo*, *Republic*), whirlpool (*Cratylus*), fall (*Phaedrus*), or poverty (*Symposium*), is "more than mere ignorance or simple error" and "calls for purification," "opening a void in the soul, a night, an impotence, an absence that is the prelude to the revelation."[37] Szlezák draws an even closer analogy between Platonic philosophy and the Eleusinian Mysteries:[38] the initiate (1) had to undergo a purification beforehand; (2) had no claim

[30] Walter Burkert, "Eleusis," in *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 250: "To speak of the mysteries in allusions, while avoiding the secret it[s]elf, became almost a sport for the orators. Sopatros' fictitious speech for the friend of a man who had experienced the whole initiation in a dream was the culmination of this trend."

[31] *The Phaedrus of Plato*, ed. William Hepworth Thompson (London: Whittaker, 1868), 59.

[32] Colli, *La sapienza greca I*, 28-29.

[33] Olymp. *In Phaed.* 10.3.13.

[34] Clem. *Protr.* 20, 1-21, 1 = frag. 52 Kern = 4 [B 36] Colli.

[35] Plut. *De Iside* 382d; Theon *Expos, rer. math.* 14.18ff.; Clem. *Stromata* I, 28; Origenes *In Cant. cant.* 75, 6.

[36] Plut. *De Iside* 382de = *Eudemus* frag. 10 Ross = 1012 Gigon = 3 [A 19] Colli = E29 Scarpi.

[37] Paul Ricoeur, *Being, Essence and Substance in Plato and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 130-31.

[38] Szlezák, *Platon: Meisterdenker der Antike*, 578.

to learn everything at the first acquaintance (participation in the Small Mysteries was a prerequisite for admission to the Great Mysteries a year later – cf. *Grg.* 497c; Seneca *QNat.* VII: *Eleusis servat quod ostendat revisentibus* [Eleusis preserves something that it reveals to those who revisit it]); (3) was introduced to the tradition (παράδοσις) at the Lesser Mysteries; (4) experienced things in the darkness of night that frightened him (*mysterium tremendum*); (5) was assisted by a μυσταγωγός, who guided him; (6) ultimately became the one who has seen (ἐπόπτης); (6) saw what he was not allowed to see the first time – a great light that (7) appeared suddenly (ἐξαίφνης), which (8) secured a better fate in the afterlife – but (9) was not allowed to speak to the uninitiated about his experience. "Whoever would claim that the secrecy about the content of the mysteries forms the only junction between the Eleusinian cult and Plato's philosophy would have understood little of the mysteries and even less of Plato."[39] Schefer supplements this by drawing an analogy[40] between (1) the publicly known myths and Plato's exoteric works (the dialogues); (2) the secret mystery doctrine, forbidden to reveal (e.g., the esoteric interpretation of Dionysos as the God who looks into the mirror and sees the world, that is, himself;[41] or the myth of his dismemberment by the Titans),[42] equivalent to the Platonic ἄγραφα δόγματα; (3) the unspeakable vision of the divine, irreducible to any doctrine, figure, or name. Gaiser has no doubts that such a vision, an immediate "Evidenz-Erlebnis,"[43] is the ultimate goal of Platonic dialectics and that was experienced by Plato himself.

According to Plotinus, the nature of such an experience is the very reason for the impossibility of communicating it: "This is indeed what the injunction about the mysteries makes clear, not to communicate them to the uninitiated; since that is not communicable, it forbids explaining the divine to anyone who has not had the good fortune to see for himself. So, since they were not two, but the seer was one with what is seen, as though it was not being seen by him, but was unified with him, if he remembers who he became when he mingled with the One, then he will have in himself an image of it [...] then he reaches journey's end."[44] This passage can be regarded as an interpretation of the soul's ascension in *Phaedrus* 247ff. But can we unreservedly assume the identity of Plato and Neoplatonism? Contemporary scholars of Platonism tend to agree that Plato's metaphysical vision "is recognizably that of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists."[45] Also according to Aristotle, "the discovery of principles occurs beyond discourse [ἄνευ λόγου], it is a pure νοεῖν, a simple

[39] Ibid.

[40] Christina Schefer, "Rhetoric as Part of an Initiation into the Mysteries: A New Interpretation of the Platonic *Phaedrus*," in *Plato as Author*, ed. Ann N. Michelini (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 190.

[41] Giorgio Colli, *La nascita della filosofia* (Milan: Adelphi, 1975), 34: "When Dionysus looks in the mirror, he does not see himself in it, but the reflected world. The world, people and things of this world have no reality in themselves, they are only a vision of Dionysus. Only Dionysus exists."

[42] Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 86: "Dionysus is said to stand for the divine principle that is divided up in the plurality of real bodies in this world of ours, to be reassembled again and restored to the primordial unity." This myth, constitutive for the Greek mysteries, was later transposed into Platonic metaphysics.

[43] Konrad Gaiser, "Platons esoterische Lehre," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Thomas A. Szlezák and Karl-Heinz Stanzel (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004), 332.

[44] *Enn.* VI.9.11 (ed. Gerson).

[45] Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66.

apprehension."[46] Philosophy thus proceeds in two stages: "first the activity of νοῦς, which consists in contemplation of the everlasting and is in itself ‹ἄνευ λόγου›, speechless; then followed by the attempt to translate the vision into words."[47] Such statements are clear remains of the original experience of the Eleusinian Mysteries, where, according to Aristotle, the initiates have nothing to learn (μαθεῖν), they only experience (παθεῖν) and are disposed to something (διατεθῆναι).[48] A further insight into this experience can be gained by examining the Eleusinian testimonies.

SECRECY AND ESOTERICISM

Plato's remarks on the critique of writing from the *Phaedrus* and *Epistle* VII[49] are among the fundamental testimonials of secrecy surrounding the mysteries, but their meaning can be fully appreciated only within the larger context of Eleusinian ἀπόρρητα. Scarpi gathered thirty-six fragments in his anthology.[50] First and foremost is the crucial passage from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter: "when confronted with the gods, great wonder silences the voice" (μέγα γάρ τι θεῶν σέβας ἰσχάνει αὐδήν).[51] One should keep in mind that μυεῖν means not only "to initiate" but etymologically "to close" (i.e., the mouth). This is indeed how Tzetzes explains the term: "They are in fact called mysteries because they pursue their lips, that is, the initiates close their mouths and do not talk about it with any of the uninitiated."[52] Accordingly, in the *Odyssey* Homer says, "Father, verily this is a great marvel that my eyes behold. [...] Surely some god is within, [...] Hush (σίγα), check thy thought, and ask no question."[53] Aristotle remarks that the mysteries were something forbidden to discuss, ἀπόρρητον.[54] Isocrates is more precise: it was forbidden in the company of the uninitiated.[55] The mouth of the initiate was "shut with a golden key."[56] Hence Hippolytus was speaking of "the great and unspeakable mystery of the Eleusinian rites."[57]

According to the proclamation uttered by the hierophant before the mystery proper, those who were not initiated (ἀμύητος), impious (ἄθεος), and not purified (μὴ καθαρεύων) were obliged to leave the sanctuary (ἱερόν).[58] According to Iamblichus, it is not only forbidden to divulge the mystery to the impious, the mere act of such a profanation is equally impious.[59] This explains the reservations of Herodotus, who shuns describing the mysteries of Saïs and Eleusis, even though he knows them.[60] It was not only forbidden by the *lex sacra*.

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46 Martin Heidegger, "Dasein und Wahrsein (nach Aristoteles)," in *Unveröffentlichte Abhandlungen. Vorträge und Gedachtes*, Gesamtausgabe, vol. 80.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2016), 78.
47 Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 137.
48 *De philosophia* frag. 15 Ross = E26 Scarpi = 3 [A 21] a Colli.
49 *Ep.* VII 341cd = frag. 3 [A 17] Colli.
50 Scarpi, *Eleusi, Dionisismo, Orfismo*, 182-207 (sec. F: "Segreto e interdizioni").
51 *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 479 = frag. F1 Scarpi = 3 [A 1] Colli.
52 Scholia to Aristoph. *Ranae* 456a = frag. E28 Scarpi.
53 Hom. *Od.* XIX 36-40 (trans. A. T. Murray).
54 *Eth. Nic.* 1111a8-10 = frag. 3 [A 22] Colli.
55 Isocrates *Paneg.* 28 = frag. 3 [A 18] Colli.
56 Sophocles *OC* 1049-1053 = frag. 3 [A 6] Colli.
57 Hippolytus *Haer.* 5.7.34 = frag. D59 Scarpi = 129 Turchi.
58 Tzetzes *Scholia ad Ran.* 369 = frag. F17 Scarpi.
59 Iamblichus *VP* 28, 151.
60 Herodotus II 171, 2-3.

Those who were about to do so received warnings in dreams – for example, Pausanias, who was stopped in such a way from describing the Athenian Eleusinion.[61] Numenius had a dream with the Eleusinian goddesses standing in front of a brothel, clad in the robes of a ἑταίρα. When he asked them about the reason for such a disgrace, they replied that he himself had removed them from the sanctuary and prostituted them to all the passers-by. He concluded, thus, that his explicit philosophical interpretation of the mysteries is equivalent to prostitution.[62] According to Burkert, what he meant was "a philosophical interpretation in the manner of Plato." The atheist philosopher Theodorus was trying to ridicule this in a conversation with a hierophant: "Who are those who commit the profanation of the mysteries? Those who divulge them to the uninitiated. Then you also profane them by revealing them to the uninitiated."[63] What Theodoros clearly ignores is the question of authority: the Eumolpids and Kerykes were in charge of the Eleusinian rituals according to ancient ancestral traditions, and their office was appointed by the divinity itself.[64]

The secrecy pertained not only to the mysteries in general, the event as such, but in particular to that which was done (δρώμενα), said (λεγόμενα), and shown (δεικνύμενα), and even to the architectural details of the site. We are told of ἀπόρρητα μυστήρια, ἄρρητος τελετή, ἄρρητα ὄργια, ἄρρητα ἱερά.[65] But, in particular, ἄρρητον refers to the identity or name of the divinity,[66] unspeakable because it is beyond any name, πολυώνυμος, encompassing them all;[67] hence no single utterable name is proper for the divine.[68] Although we know that something was shown and said and various sources describe these words and actions despite the interdiction, the most essential part of the initiation, ἐποπτεία, was impossible to disclose; it was, to quote Goethe, a "holy open secret" (*ein heilig öffentlich Geheimnis*),[69] or, as Rohde has it, "It was impossible to reveal the mystery because there was nothing to reveal."[70] It was "a teaching beyond the language of man,"[71] "no longer

[61] Pausanias I 14, 2-3 = frag. 4 [B 32] = A14 Scarpi.

[62] Macrobius *In Somn.* I. 2.19.

[63] Laertios II.101.

[64] *Hom. Hymn* 6 149-56, 473-76; Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 39.2.

[65] Euripides *Rhe.* 943; IG I3 953; Eur. *Bacch.* 470-72; Aristoph. *Nub.* 302; cf. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 137.

[66] Euripides *Hel.* 1307 = frag. A4 Scarpi; Euripides, frag. 63 Nauck = 3 [A 8] Colli; Herodotus II 171, 2-3 = frag. A21 Scarpi.

[67] Sophocles *Ant.* 1115-1121 = frag. 3 [A 5] Colli. Cf. Aluleius *Met.* 11, 5: "my single godhead is adored by the whole world in varied forms, in differing rites and with many diverse names [...] to the Eleusinians I am Ceres." Similar statements can be found in the *Bhagavadgita* (e.g., VII.21).

[68] Porphyry *Hist. Phil.* frag. 15 = TP 52; cf. *Corp. Herm.* II, 20; Cusanus, *De Docta Ign.* I.24.

[69] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Epirrhema," in *Werke*, vol. 2 (Weimar, 1888), 252. Goethe clearly knew what he was talking about. In one of the conversations with Eckermann (dated 17.02.1831), he quoted Seneca's *Nat. Quest.* VII: "Eleusis servat quod ostendat revisentibus," a phrase that later became the epigraph to Kerényi's *Eleusis*. The entire passage from Seneca runs as follows: "Eleusis retains some of its mysteries to show to votaries on their second visit. Nature does not reveal all her secrets at once. We imagine we are initiated in her mysteries: we are, as yet, but hanging around her outer courts. Those secrets of hers are not opened to all indiscriminately. They are withdrawn and shut up in the inner shrine. Of one of them this age will catch a glimpse, of another, the age that will come after" (trans. John Clarke).

[70] Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (London: Kegan Paul, 1925), 289.

[71] Apuleius *Met.* 11, 23 = 3 [B 4] b Colli. Despite this reservation, Apuleius lifts the veil of secrecy: "I approached the boundary of death and treading on Proserpine's threshold, I was carried through all the elements, after which I returned. At dead of night I saw the sun flashing with bright effulgence. I approached close to the gods above and

knowledge, rather a mystical vision of being,"[72] "the perfect enormous illumination from the unportrayable one,"[73] an "unsurpassable religious experience."[74] Certainly, the first and foremost function of secrecy is to guard the secret against the profane. For the initiate, "secrecy increases the value of what has been revealed."[75] Thus it "guards closely what it is finally about to reveal."[76] Secrecy is a necessary condition of revelation.

INITIATION, PURIFICATION, SEXUALITY

The most famous reference to the two stages of initiation at Eleusis is in Plato's Diotima speech:[77] Socrates can take part in the Lesser Mysteries (μύησις) but not in the Greater Mysteries (τὰ ἐποπτικά) to which the Lesser lead. The distinction between μύησις and ἐποπτεία clearly refer to Eleusis. In *Gorgias*, Socrates reproaches Callicles for being initiated into the Greater Mysteries before the Lesser, that is, without prior purification (*Grg.* 497c), which took place, among others, at Agrai (*Phdr.* 229). Besides the explicit references, "this purification, expressly named as such in the most mystical of Plato's texts [*Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic VI*], is the implicit theme in the apparently purely epistemological preoccupations; hence this is what must be heard as underlying the aporetic method of a good number of dialogues."[78] Ultimately, it leads to an intuition, θεωρία, an insight beyond any possible discursive knowledge (οὐδέ τις λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη, *Symp.* 211a). The Lesser Mysteries were conceived of as a necessary prerequisite for the sake of "attaining a state of purity preliminary to the Great Mysteries,"[79] "so that nothing stood in the way of divine revelation."[80] According to Hippolytus, the Lesser Mysteries are "fleshly, appertaining to carnal generation," while the Greater are "celestial, reserved for the spiritual only," into which "no unclean person shall enter";[81] exactly this order was reflected by Plato in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*: one "must begin on the level of physical love" to be eventually led "to the great vision";[82] "you must not behold them before your body has received the purification" (πρὶν σῶμα τελεσθῇς).[83] Hence Phaedrus's reference to the pure river (καθαρά, *Phdr.* 229b) and Socrates's "I must purify myself" (καθήρασθαι

the gods below and worshipped them face to face. Behold, 1 have related things about which you must remain in ignorance, though you have heard them" (11, 23; trans. J. Gwyn Griffiths).

[72] Clem. *Strom.* IV 1, 3, 1 = E19 Scarpi.

[73] Hippolytus *Haer.* 5, 8, 39-40 = frag. 3 [B 8] Colli.

[74] Marguerite Yourcenar, *Memoirs of Hadrian*, trans. Grace Frick (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955), 154: "it proved nevertheless to be a religious experience without equal. These ancient rites serve only to symbolize what happens in human life, but the symbol has a deeper purport than the act [...]. What is taught at Eleusis must remain secret [...] its nature is ineffable. If formulated, it would result only in commonplaces; therein lies its real profundity."

[75] Plutarch, *Vit. Hom.* 92.

[76] Tertullian, *Adv. Valent.* 1, 1-3 = D62 Scarpi.

[77] *Symp.* 209e = frag. 3 [A 10] Colli.

[78] Ricoeur, *Being, Essence and Substance*, 130.

[79] Scholia to Aristoph. *Pl.* 845f. = B9 Scarpi.

[80] Clem. *Strom.* IV 1, 3, 1 = E19 Scarpi.

[81] Hippolytus *Haer.* 5.8.39-40 = frag. 3 [B 8] Colli.

[82] Karl Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge, 1967), 46.

[83] *Orac. Chald.* 135 Des Places = Procl. *In Alc.* 18.

ἀνάγκη, *Phdr.* 243a). Hence also the inscription on the Samothraki ἱερόν: ἀμύητον μὴ εἰσιέναι, meaning: the unpurified may not enter.[84]

What exactly took place at the initiation hall (τελεστήριον) is obviously impossible to tell. Nevertheless, the preserved testimonies allow us to remove the veil of secrecy at least partially. We know that the initiation (τελετή) was akin to dying (τελευτάω). According to Plutarch, "dying is an experience like that of the initiates to the Great Mysteries, hence even the words dying [τελευτᾶν] and being initiated [τελεῖσθαι] resemble one another."[85] Already Plato juxtaposed the words τελευτάω and τελετή.[86] This suggests a certain initiatory death, a symbolic or ritually performed descent into the underworld (κατάβασις), along with its equivalent philosophical practice of dying (μελέτη θανάτου, *Phd.* 81a). The Eleusinian mythology was focused on the descent into the underworld, and one can surmise that the ritual must have been a reenactment of the myth. In *Axiochus* 371e, Socrates admonishes not to fear death but to enjoy it, for through initiation one becomes a kinsman (γεννητής) of the gods. This initiatory descent into death must have been experienced directly by the initiate.[87] Apuleius confesses, "I approached the confines of death, trod the threshold of Proserpine," and through this "voluntary death" obtained a "sacred rebirth."[88] According to Rohde, "the τέλος, ultimate goal or the promise of salvation of the Mysteries was to lead its initiates back to the divine origins from which they were believed to descend."[89]

The Latin term for μύησις is *initia*, origins. An initiation into the mysteries is an initiation into the origins. "According to the name of the initiations, *initia*, which also means first beginnings, we have indeed discovered the origins."[90] Kerenyi claims it was "a revelation of the female source of life," which was revealed to the μύσται "not in the form of an intellectual vision." One cannot but think here of Courbet's famous painting *L'Origine du monde*. The *initia* were, thus, either the private parts of the Goddess, or shown to the Goddess, as reported by Clemens: "she drew aside her robes, and showed a sight of her αἰδοῖα,"[91] thereby "uncovering the holiness" (ἀπογυμνῶσαι τὰ ἅγια)[92] and giving a "spectaculum maximum."[93] Frazer calls it "the sacred peep-show in the Eleusinian Mysteries."[94] Hippolytus speaks of a "doctrine concerning the womb" as "the tenet of Orpheus."[95] One of the Orphic tablets found at Sybaris describes "entering the womb of the lady," "the underground queen" (δεσποίνας ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας).[96]

[84] LSS 75.
[85] Plutarch frag. 178 Sandbach = Stob. *Flor.* 4, 52, 49 = frag. 3 [B 4] a Colli.
[86] *Resp.* 365a = frag. 3 Kern.
[87] Pindar frag. 137 Snell = frag. 3 [A 2] Colli; Sophocles frag. 837 = frag. 3 [A 4] Colli; Euripides *HF.* 613 = frag. 3 [A 7] Colli.
[88] Apuleius *Met.* 11, 23 = frag. 3 [B 4] b Colli.
[89] Rohde, *Psyche*, 345.
[90] Cicero *Leg.* 2, 14, 36 = frag. 3 [B 2] Colli.
[91] Clem. *Protr.* 2, 21, 2 = frag. 3 [B 7] Colli.
[92] Clem. *Protr.* 22, 4 = frag. F8 Scarpi.
[93] Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 5.39.
[94] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 5, chap. 1, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1911), 66.
[95] Hippolytus *Haer.* V 20, 5 = frag. A23 Scarpi.
[96] OF 488 Bernabé = II B 1 Pugliese Carratelli = Graf and Johnston 5.7; "schmiegt sich in den Schooss der Herrin der Unterwelt" (trans. Rohde).

The Eleusinian casket (κίστη) upon which the Eleusinian Goddess was seated in the company of a serpent also seems to have been the symbol of the female womb: "First purify yourselves, and then we'll welcome you with what we have in our caskets [κίσται]," says Lysistrata with a clearly sexual undertone.[97]

The womb is sacred as the entrance to the most holy temple: "for the most holy and wondrous temple is the world; it is into it that man enters by birth."[98] One can, therefore, interpret the entrance into the underworld (κατάβασις, symbolic death) as the entry into the female womb (into Hades as the domain beyond sight, the un-seen, ἀ-ιδής), with birth being the return from the underworld into the world (into the domain of light, of the visible), just as the seed goes underground when planted, a fundamental symbol of the Eleusinian rite. Such a conjecture is confirmed by the association of the descent into the underworld with "solemn conjugations of the hierophant with the priestess."[99] This association is reflected by the cryptic understatement in the fundamental source of the Eleusinian mystery: "Happy is he who descends underground: he knows the end of life [τελευτάν], he know its beginning [ἀρχάν],"[100] a figure paraphrased endlessly by poets of all ages ("In my beginning is my end," says Eliot in *Four Quartets*). This explains why "the symbol of the Bacchic orgies is the holy serpent,"[101] "arousing both a fear of death and a secret sexual fascination,"[102] the primordial symbol of an infinite "circle revolving in a circle" (*Tim.* 34b), in which the beginning is met with the end, reflecting the primordial affinity between reproduction and death.[103]

An insightful analysis of the figure of ouroboros is provided by Erich Neumann in his landmark *Origins and History of Consciousness*.[104] Ouroboros, "the great round," is the figure of the infinite, primordial maternal womb, giving birth to itself in an endless cycle of perpetual reiterations, but also the figure of the union of masculine and feminine opposites, "the World Parents joined in perpetual cohabitation," and thus, ultimately, a figure of "the One standing at the beginning," "the creative force contained in the uroboric unity of the World Parents." As such, it is the figure of the Great Mother in its eternal rebirth, manifesting her fecundity by the display of her genitals, appearing as the Great Mother goddess of Crete, the Demeter of the Greeks, as mistress of the underworld, "sitting with splayed legs, even in the supreme mystery of Eleusis," showing "the primordial symbol of the place of origin from whence we come," a "multiple womb" in her priestesses, unifying them in herself, "the one Goddess." Her rites are orgiastic, enacting the "primary sacrament of fertility" in an "impersonal and suprapersonal ritual" recognizing "the priority of the transpersonal and the derivative nature of the personal,"

[97] Aristoph. *Lys.* 1182-4.
[98] Arist. *De phil.* frag. 14 Ross = frag. 3 [A 20] Colli.
[99] Asterius *Hom.* 10 = frag. 133 Turchi.
[100] Pindar frag. 137 Snell = frag. 3 [A 2] Colli.
[101] Clem. *Protr.* 12, 2; 13, 5 = frag. D44 Scarpi.
[102] Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 269.
[103] Georges Bataille, "Affinities between Reproduction and Death," in *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), 55-62.
[104] Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 13-14, 17, 22, 42, 50-53, 84, 158.

where "two principles come together beyond the person, in holiness, where the personal is shed away and remains insignificant."

According to Frazer, this mythical, impersonal unity was not only symbolically presented but also ritually enacted: "the rape of Persephone was acted at the Mysteries."[105] The Eleusinian Demeter is only an instance of "a great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature, was worshiped under different names," and "associated with her was a lover, or rather series of lovers, divine yet mortal, with whom she mated year by year," so that, as a part of the ritual, "the fabulous union of the divine pair was simulated and, as it were, multiplied on earth by the real, though temporary, union of the human sexes at the sanctuary of the goddess for the sake of thereby ensuring the fruitfulness of the ground and the increase of man."[106]

Not only does the insignificance of the personal remind one of the *ladder of love* depicted in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, but also the figure of the Eleusinian primordial womb seems to be identical with the ultimate beauty perceived at the height of the ἐποπτεία (Goethe's "*Ewig-Weibliche*" that "*zieht uns hinan*").[107] Furthermore, one cannot help but identify the dual principles united in the Eleusinian mystery with the ἀρχαί that constitute the summit of Platonic theory. Thus, behind the mathematical metaphors of later Platonism, a primordial Orphic-Eleusinian erotic meaning would lurk, concealing not only a mere physiological reproductive act but an entire cosmological or rather cosmogonic process of the primordial One divided, reuniting with itself. Such a supposition is confirmed by Creuzer's observation that the hierogamic symbolism of the Eleusinian Mysteries are founded on the "secret doctrine of μονάς as a male and δυάς as female."[108] From such a perspective, Platonism seems like a homoerotic heresy to the Eleusinian Mysteries. The psychoanalytical research of Lou Andreas-Salomé offers similar insights: "the most primitive mode of union between two living beings, the complete fusion of single-celled organisms, so wonderfully corresponds to the highest symbols of humanity"; "in the union of unicellular organisms, the two cell nuclei fuse together to form a new being"; "here fecundity, offspring, death and immortality still form a unity: the child can be taken for its own parents, the effect for the cause."[109] This primordial identity of life and death is still unconsciously present in higher forms of beings, in an unconscious remembrance of the primordial, undifferentiated origin of all life that manifests itself in the ultimate religious symbolism. The original living substance in the form of its highest complexity, man, longs for the primordial undivided simplicity. Symbols, mysteries, and rituals – including the most abstract philosophical symbolism of unity – are one form of such a longing; another is human sexuality, where that which is most carnal and lowly becomes elevated into the highest spiritual act, physically embodying the ultimate symbol of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Hence, human sexuality is a trace of the primordial in man,

[105] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 5, chap. 1, 66.
[106] Ibid., vol. 4, 22-24.
[107] Goethe, "Faust II," in *Werke*, vol. 15.1, 337 (v. 12110-12111).
[108] Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker besonders der Griechen* (Leipzig und Darmstadt: C. W. Leske, 1822), 177. One can find traces of such a doctrine in Pythagorean lists of binary opposites (Arist. *Met.* 986a).
[109] Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Die Erotik* (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten und Löenig, 1910), 16-18.

originating in the reproductive cells, the only ones that exist from the beginning of each organism's life, constituting its memory of what is most archaic: the primordial cellular unity, its own non-differentiation, behind which there is a previous duality, hidden away from us: "The deeper we descend into ourselves, the deeper this fecund entanglement of duality reveals itself as oneness, and the oneness again as duality."[110] The young Hegel saw love as the original meaning of dialectics, not only unifying two opposite sexes but also overcoming the opposition of life and death, transgressing life finite, and divided into limitless, eternal, complete, and perfect life.[111] Such a completion, τελέωσις, is the τέλος of all life as ἐντελέχεια: it is that which is to come, the coming, ἐλευσίς.

EPOPTEIA, HIEROGAMY, PHOTIC EPIPHANY

It is impossible to say whether the ritual involved the sexual activities of the initiates. It certainly used erotic symbolism, which was perhaps more than enough. As Burkert remarked, there is a notable "sexual innuendo surrounding the Eleusinian priesthood"; nevertheless, "the sacred ritual acquires its stability precisely by symbolizing and sublimating that which is all too direct." Still, Cicero complained about the "debauchery" of the mysteries.[112] Testimonies explicitly attest that "shameful actions were performed during the ceremonies."[113] According to Strabo, the Greeks assigned to Demeter "an orgiastic or Bacchic nature."[114] Diodorus interestingly remarks that what was performed secretly in Eleusis was held unconcealed in the mysteries of Crete.[115] This is a clear reference to the "*orgiastische Kommunionen*" described by Charles Picard in his study *Die Grosse Mutter von Kreta bis Eleusis*.[116] Furthermore, many sources refer to the activities performed after extinguishing the torches: "Are not the torches extinguished while the crowd believes its salvation to lie in the things done by the two [i.e., the hierophant and the priestess] in the dark?"[117]

Insight could be gained from comparative religion. Gershom Scholem describes a seventeenth-century kabbalistic sect (the Sabbateans) that performed "an orgiastic rite called the extinguishing of the lights," "borrowed from the pagan cult of the Great Mother which flourished in antiquity and continued to be practiced after its general demise by a small sect of Light Extinguishers in Asia Minor."[118] The sexual practices of this sect are very well documented: "Two or more couples attend the ceremony; the ladies in their best garments and jewelry serve a meal of mutton to the diners. After dinner, the candles are extinguished, and the husbands exchange wives. It is believed that children born of

[110] Ibid., 52.
[111] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Love," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox and Richard Kroner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 302-8; cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Entwürfe über Religion und Liebe," in *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 239-54.
[112] Cicero *Leg.* 2, 14, 36 = frag. 3 [B 2] Colli.
[113] Scholia in Platonem in *Gorg.* 497 c = frag. D55 Scarpi.
[114] Strabo, 10, 3, 10 = frag. 3 [B 3] Colli.
[115] Diodorus *Bibl.* V, 77, 3.
[116] Charles Picard, "Die Grosse Mutter von Kreta bis Eleusis," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 6 (1938): 97.
[117] Asterius *Hom.* 10 = frag. C19 Scarpi.
[118] Gershom Scholem, "Redemption Through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 114.

such unions are regarded as saintly."[119] According to the doctrine underlying such ritual activities, "men and women not only sanctify themselves through sexual acts [...] but they actually make the divine forces unite in holy intercourse";[120] in the sexual act, "the masculine and the feminine principles [...] is nothing other than the substance of God Himself, His life-giving energy transferred to the lower material worlds."[121] In many religions throughout the world we are dealing with a figure of the primeval couple, "the result of a separation that occurred within the supreme deity who is seen to be androgynous," "whose union gives rise to all living beings."[122] This primordial union is then enacted in rituals: "Every great historic religion has given rise, on its margins or at its very heart, to sects, movements, rites and liturgies in which the flesh and sex are paths to divinity. [...] Collective ritual copulation was practiced by the Tantric sects of India, by the Taoists in China, and by the Gnostic Christians of the Mediterranean region."[123] According to Eliade, we are dealing with a ritual homology, that is, correspondence and equivalence between the ritual (sacrificial) act occurring in time and space, and the original cosmic event *in illo tempore*.[124] One has to understand such ritual acts in the context of sacrificial rituality: "sexual symbolism necessarily and fundamentally lies at the heart of every sacrifice," and "all symbols are only substitutes for the primordial sexual symbol."[125] This primordial symbol is, from the outset, purely physical: human sexual organs "represent something divine [...] and take symbolic form by means of sex, even though – no, because – they represent unconditioned reality itself. The material component is thus as much the basis of existence as it is its mysterium; so too, sexuality can signify the basis of naked existence and at the same time God,"[126] thus "the forms of these symbols have the more to say, the less pretensions they make."[127] In the Vedic offering, "every sacrificial act is interwoven with a sexual act. And vice versa. [...] The altar is female and the fire is male."[128] Eliade explicitly identifies the female womb with the altar in which the offering is performed. All this occurs within a context in which "the sexual plane is sanctified and homologized to the planes of ritual and myth," thereby achieving "the transformation of physiology into

[119] Abraham Galanté, *Nouveaux Documents sur Sabbetaï Sevi* (Istanbul: Société Anonyme de Papeterie et d'Imprimerie, 1935), 52, quoted in Cengiz Sisman, *The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Dönmes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 184.

[120] David Biale, "Sexuality and Spirituality in the Kabbalah," in *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 104.

[121] Charles Mopsik, *Kabała* (Warsaw: Cyklady, 2001), 51.

[122] Charles Mopsik, *Sex of the Soul: The Vicissitudes of Sexual Difference in Kabbalah* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press. 2005), 1-2; see, in general, chap. 1, "The Primeval Couple and the Primordial One in the Religions of the World," and chap. 6, "Union and Unity in the Kabbalah: The Proclamation of the Divine Unity and the Male/Female Couple." On the primordial androgynous deity, see also Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 410-36, and Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Tantric Doctrine of Divine Biunity," in *Selected Papers: Metaphysics*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 231-40.

[123] Octavio Paz, *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism*, trans. Helen Lane (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 15-16.

[124] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), 166-80.

[125] Alain Daniélou, *The Hindu Temple. Deification of Eroticism* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2001), 8-9.

[126] Lou Andreas-Salomé, *The Freud Journal* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 186.

[127] Andreas-Salomé, *Die Erotik*, 36.

[128] Roberto Calasso, *Ardor*, trans. Richard Dixon (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 181.

liturgy."[129] This must have been attained by means of cathartic, purificatory rituals. The crucial question to ask would then be: Could the Platonic dialectics or Socratic ἔλεγχος serve a similar purpose? If so, Hösle would be correct in his supposition that "the hiding techniques of the [Platonic] dialogues, this esotericism and this slow coming out were a particularly subtle way of exerting power over young men Plato longed for sexually."[130] The only thing missing here is the religious context without which we are left with mere physiology. In the final interplay of the *Symposium* (222de), Agathon is both the man Agathon and αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν. That would explain why, in the *Phaedrus*, ἐποπτεία is the outcome of an erotic endeavor (254b).

The final ἐποπτεία itself must not have been sexual, although the symbolism of the Eleusinian Mysteries is rooted in sexuality. According to the Derveni papyrus, "Orpheus said that the sun is the genitals."[131] The entire symbolism of Orphism, that is, of Greek mystery cults *in toto* collected by Otto Kern, could be described as "the pornographic poetry of the Orphics."[132] One of the testimonies associates the figure of an ithyphallic man with the inscription "flowing light" (φάος ῥυέντης).[133] The association of the central symbol of light with seed is confirmed by Eliade's studies in comparative religion. In the "original homologization divinity-spirit-light-sperm," the "solar seed" is identified with the *semen virile* and, ultimately, with a solar epiphany:[134] "When the human father emits the seed into the womb, it is really the Sun that emits him as seed into the womb";[135] "He who is present in the semen, whom the semen does not know, whose body [vehicle] the semen is, that is your self, the Immortal";[136] also in Aristotle "man and the sun generate man" (ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ καὶ ἥλιος).[137] In the Upanishads, the "primeval seed" is identified with the "highest light," that is, the sun; similarly in Tantrism, Manichaeism, and Basilidean Gnosis.[138] This primeval seed, or *Ur-Sperma*, is identified with the σπέρμα κόσμου, the world-seed that contains the entire world.[139] In Eleusis this "original homologization" (Eliade) is present in the intertwined symbolism of original light, primordial seed (identified with Kore),[140] or "the abyss of the seed" (Kerényi), the cutting of the ear of grain as the

[129] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 252, 256; cf. *Brihandaranyaka Upanishad* VI.4.
[130] Vittorio Hösle, "Platonism and Its Interpretations: The Three Paradigms and Their Place in the History of Hermeneutics," in *Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Dermot Moran (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 76.
[131] *Pap. Derv.* XVI 1.
[132] Otto Kern, *Die griechischen Mysterien der klassischen Zeit* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1927), 55.
[133] Hippolytus *Haer.* V 20, 5 = frag. A23 Scarpi = 243 Kern.
[134] Mircea Eliade, "Spirit, Light, and Seed," *History of Religions* 11, no. 1 (August 1971): 23; cf. Eliade's "The Sun and Sun-Worship," in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 124-51 (esp. 145-46), and Coomaraswamy's "The 'E' at Delphi," in *Selected Papers: Metaphysics*, 43-45.
[135] *Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana* III, 10, 45.
[136] *Brihandaranyaka Upanishad* III, 7, 23.
[137] Arist. *Phys.* II.2, 194b.
[138] Abraham Bos, "Basilides of Alexandria as an Aristotelian Gnostic I: Aristotle's Philosophy according to Refutation of All Heresies," *Kronos*: *Philosophical Journal* 11 (2022): 100-136.
[139] Hippolytus *Haer.* VII.21.3; cf. Hans Joachim Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1964), 235-37.
[140] Ps.-Clemens *Homiliae* 6, 9, 5 = frag. D48 Scarpi.

separation of the seed,[141] as well as the ritual chant "ὕε, κύε." The μύσται looked up to the sky, shouting, "fall" (ὕε), and toward the ground, crying "conceive!" (κύε).[142] This cosmic hierogamy has a counterpart in the Vedic sacrifice of the Upanishads: "I am heaven, you are earth, moisten your womb, let the offering be made in thy altar."[143] Burkert suggests that the unspeakable ἄρρητον of the mysteries refers to the performance of the hierogamic act, in fact consisting of an "unspeakable touching," and the practice of ἀρρητοποιία or ἀρρητουργία, associating the "unspeakable touch" with "giving birth with the mouth."[144] Also according to Aristotle, "those who have directly touched [θιγόντες ἀληθῶς] possess philosophy's ultimate τέλος as in a mystery initiation [οἷον ἐν τελετῇ]."[145] Such a context certainly casts more light on the Eleusinian passages of *Phaedrus* 250bc and resonates in the crucial passage on the ἄρρητον in *Epinomis* VII 341cd, where light (φῶς) appears suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) after a long intercourse (συνουσία) with the thing itself (περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ).

On the other hand, no reference to sexuality, even in the most sublime narrative frame, explains the religious experiences of the initiates and the corresponding passages of the Platonic dialogues. The central figure of light (φέγγος) of the Eleusinian Mysteries has been described as "holy," "splendid," "unfigured," "marvelous," as the "bright star of the nocturnal mysteries" (νυκτέρου τελετῆς φωσφόρος ἀστήρ),[146] "the white nights of light,"[147] the "underground sun,"[148] or "the sun shining with blinding brilliance" and "dazzling radiance,"[149] even as "the sun of truth."[150] In Aristophanes's *Frogs*, the phrase "bright star of the nocturnal mysteries" refers to Iakhos of the mysteries, functionally equivalent to the Orphic figure of Eros Protogonos, "bringer of pure, radiant light, therefore called Phanes and Priapos."[151] Furthermore, the illumination was preceded by "dreadful things, the chills and tremors, the torments and terrors," "suffering from various types of fear,"[152] a feeling of alienation ("I felt like a stranger to myself"),[153] an experience of terrifying darkness; only then came a "climax full of illumination," "an admirable light [...] after endless and disturbing walks in midst of darkness."[154] Generally, the entire event bore the hallmarks of a religious experience, an experience of *numinosum*, both *tremendum* and *fascinans*. It was explicitly described as "the presence of the god" (πρὸ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ παρουσίας),[155] as an "immortal vision" (ἄμβροτον ὄψιν),[156] as a "seeing of numerous secret

[141] Cf. Eliade on separation in "Spirit, Light, and Seed," 18-20.
[142] Proclus *In Ti.* 40e (Diehl) = frag. D60 Scarpi; Hippolytus *Haer.* V 7, 34 = frag. D59 Scarpi.
[143] *Brihandaranyaka Upanishad* VI.4.
[144] Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 285-86; cf. Lucian *Lex.* 10 (δᾳδούχῳ τε καὶ ἱεροφάντῃ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀρρητοποιοῖς).
[145] Plut. *De Iside* 382de = *Eudemus* frag. 10 Ross = 1012 Gigon = 3 [A 19] Colli = E29 Scarpi.
[146] Aristophanes *Ran*. 342 = frag. D29 Scarpi.
[147] IG II² 3811 = frag. D57 Scarpi.
[148] Aristophanes *Ran*. 440-53 = frag. Colli 3 [A 9] = D41 Scarpi.
[149] Plutarch frag. 178 Sandbach = Stob. *Flor.* 4, 52, 49 = frag. 3 [B 4] a Colli; Apuleius *Met.* 11, 23 = frag. 3 [B 4] b Colli; cf. frag. 236-40 Kern, esp. 236-37, where Dionysus is identified with the Sun.
[150] Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries," 23.
[151] *Orph. Hymn* 6 (to Protogonus) = frag. 87 Kern.
[152] Plutarch frag. 178 Sandbach = Stob. *Flor.* 4, 52, 49 = 3 [B 4] a Colli.
[153] Sopatros in *Rhetores Graeci* VIII 114-15; cf. Ficino's remark that "Plato [...] furorem in Phaedro mentis alienationem definit" (*Argumentum Marsilii Ficini in Platonis lonem*, 1).
[154] Plutarch *Moralia* 81d-e and frag. 178 Sandbach = 3 [B 4] a Colli.
[155] Proclus *In Alc.* I 39, 17.
[156] Aristoph. *Thesm*. 1152 = frag. F13 Scarpi.

images,"[157] as "standing before the countenance of the divine," "whose face is the common face of all the gods and goddesses," "whose one and only deity the whole world worships in many shapes, rites, and names,[158] of "the unportrayable one,"[159] a "*visio beatifica*," a "*visitatio* of the Ineffable One,"[160] "an encounter with the divine," an "experience of the divine presence," having been first "put into a state which is not subject to natural explanation."[161] Kerényi is speaking of a "natural capacity of the Greeks to see visions" that "could occasionally be stimulated."[162] This seems an understatement. The fact that it was a vision repeated annually, induced efficiently in a large number of initiates, has led some to the supposition that it must have been caused by a hallucinogen or an entheogen, which, according to Burkert, is a "dubious borrowing from chemistry."[163] Nevertheless, recent literature gives strong evidence of such a possibility, including archeological discoveries of ergot in the ritual vessels.[164] Eliade describes contemporary South American rituals in which "the ceremonial drinking of yagé" (equivalent to the Eleusinian κυκεών) leads to "a spiritual coitus" or a "spiritual communion" with the Sun's light, experienced as death and giving an unspeakable vision.[165] Frazer describes the primordial "custom of eating bread sacramentally as the body of a god," familiar to the ancient Mexicans, who "entered into a mystic communion with the deity by receiving a portion of his divine substance into themselves."[166] The substances used in these rituals, some of them still extant, have been identified by contemporary ethnobotanical studies.[167]

R. Gordon Wasson, who took part in such a ritual in 1955, has no doubt: it is the experience of the Eleusinian μύστης depicted in the dialogues of Plato. Wasson's claims are bold: "on the night of 29-30 June 1955 [...] I participated [...] in a midnight agape conducted by a shaman of extraordinary quality. [...] It was a soul-shattering experience [...] holding the secret to the Eleusinian Mysteries."[168] In a report dated 16 November 1956, Wasson spoke of "seeing the Archetypes, the very Ideas of Plato [...] so clearly, so truly [...] not as through a glass darkly [...] in the mind's eye," accompanied by "feelings of awe and

[157] Dio Chrysostomus *Or.* 12 = frag. 3 [B 4] c Colli.
[158] Apuleius *Met.* 11, 23 = frag. 3 [B 4] b Colli.
[159] Hippolytus *Haer.* 5, 8, 39-40 = frag. 3 [B 8].
[160] Kerényi, *Eleusis*, 147.
[161] Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries," 24.
[162] Kerényi, *Eleusis*, xxxvi.
[163] Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 287: "in order to explain a vision repeated annually by the μύσται, he [Kerényi] was forced to consider whether the seasoning in the κυκεών might be a hallucinogen – a dubious borrowing from chemistry." In another statement, Burkert is open to such a possibility: "It may rather be asked, even without the prospect of a certain answer, whether the basis of the mysteries there were prehistoric drug rituals, some festival of immortality which, through the expansion of consciousness, seemed to guarantee some psychedelic Beyond." Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 277.
[164] Guerra-Doce, *Psychoactive Drugs in European Prehistory*, 40-41.
[165] Eliade, "Spirit, Light, and Seed," 28-29.
[166] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 2, 86-89.
[167] See, for example, Richard Evans Schultes, "Plants and Plant Constituents as Mind-Altering Agents Throughout History," in *Handbook of Psychopharmacology: Stimulants*, ed. Leslie L. Iversen, Susan D. Iversen, and Solomon H. Snyder, vol. 11 (New York: Springer, 1978), 219-41; Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann, *Plants of the Gods: Origins of Hallucinogenic Use* (New York: Alfred van der Marck, 1987).
[168] R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008), 27.

reverence" and "the very idea of a Superior Being."[169] In 1957, he admitted having "felt in the presence of the Ideas that Plato had talked about," "seeing the archetypes, the Platonic ideas, that underlie the imperfect images of everyday life," "the only reality, of which the counterparts of every day are mere imperfect adumbrations," "more authoritative [...] than what passes for mundane reality."[170] In 1960, it was already "clear to him where Plato found his Ideas; it was clear to those who were initiated into the Mysteries among his contemporaries too. Plato had drunk of the potion in the Temple of Eleusis and had spent the night seeing the great Vision."[171] In 1986, he could conclude that

> [T]he Forms that Plato would see in the early phase of the effects of the potion at the Greater Mystery would be commanding in his mind and he could easily have transmuted them into his famous Ideas. Plato's revelation of this would have violated the Athenian law, which set the severest penalties on disclosure of the secrets of Eleusis, but since he did not mention his source, the hierophants of Eleusis could not have brought charges against him without themselves giving away a portion of the secret of the Mystery.[172]

Contemporary neuroscientific research seems to confirm Wasson's intuitive insight. A recent study by Cristoph Koch focuses on the state of mind induced by the chemical substance 5-MeO-DMT, almost explicitly repeating Plato's statements from the *Phaedo*: "I ceased to exist in any recognizable way, shape, or form. No more Christof, no more ego, no more self; no memories, dreams, desires, hopes, fears – everything personal was stripped away. Nothing was left but a nonself: this remaining essence wasn't man, woman, child, animal, spirit, or anything else; it didn't want anything, expect anything, think anything, remember anything, dread anything. But it experienced. [...] a profound feeling of both terror and ecstasy, the awfulness of pure experience lasting indefinitely – for there was no perception of time. The experience wasn't brief or long. It simply was."[173] An experience induced by the same substance is described by another author as follows:

> I beheld every thought that was going on everywhere in the universe and all possible realities [...]. The entire universe imploded through my consciousness. It's as if the mind is capable of experiencing a very large number of objects, situations and feelings, but normally perceives them only one at a time. I felt that my mind was perceiving them all at once. There was

[169] R. Gordon Wasson, "The Divine Mushroom: Primitive Religion and Hallucinatory Agents," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 102, no. 3 (1958): 222-23.
[170] R. Gordon Wasson, "Seeking the Magic Mushroom," *Life Magazine* 49, no. 19 (1957): 109.
[171] R. Gordon Wasson, "The Hallucinogenic Fungi of Mexico: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Religious Idea among Primitive Peoples," *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 19, no. 7 (1961): 155.
[172] R. Gordon Wasson, Stella Kramrisch, Jonathan Ott, and Carl A. P. Ruck, *Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origins of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 41.
[173] Christoph Koch, *Then I Am Myself the World: What Consciousness Is and How to Expand It* (New York: Basic Books, 2024), 1-2.

> no distance, no possibility of examining the experience. This was simply the most intense experience possible.[174]

In such an experience, the separation of the subject and the object is overcome; there is no separate knower and the known. The subject and the object – the entire universe – are one, as in Plotinus's report from the Eleusinian Mysteries in the final *Ennead*: the seer and the seen is one and the same.

FINAL CONCLUSION

Walter Pater pointedly remarked that "he who in the *Symposium* describes so vividly the pathway, the ladder, of love [...] knew all that, we may be sure, τὰ ἐρωτικά [...]. Just there, then, is the secret of Plato [...]: he is a lover."[175] The experience of love is certainly the fons et origo of Platonic metaphysical discourse, but one might object to Pater's claim that Plato transferred the qualities of personal intercourse to the invisible world of ideas, for both are inseparable; if one does not see the original beauty in the beauty of the world, one does not see it at all.[176] Thus, Platonic metaphysics is erotic par excellence. But in the Eleusinian Mysteries, when we interpret them from the perspective of a possible experience that transcends the limits of an individual subjectivity, one deals with much more than merely carnal love. The act of Eleusinian hierogamy can no longer be understood merely as sexual intercourse endowed with symbolic meaning. We have to perceive it as an act of unifying the subject with the entire universe as its object, thereby explaining the mysterious Aristotelian phrase from *De Anima* 431b21: ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πώς ἐστι πάντα, "the soul in a sense is all beings." The esotericism of Plato's ἄγραφα δόγματα consists precisely in such an ontologically conceived eroticism. We have been dealing here with a primordial layer of experience behind the metaphysical discourse, both erotic and religious, embodied in the tradition of the Eleusinian Mysteries, with Plato's dialogues as its utmost artifact. This is exactly what Plato pointed to in the Seventh Letter: that experience precedes discourse, "once grasped by the soul, it can't be forgotten, the shortest possible words can express it" (344e), these words remain empty, though, when one is not akin, συγγενής, with their object. The Platonic text is, therefore, a metatext, pointing toward an original experience prior to discourse that we nowadays know only from the Eleusinian testimonies, yet testimonies so numerous and sources of such authority that one cannot deny their credibility.

[174] Alexander Shulgin and Ann Shulgin, *Tihkal: The Continuation* (Berkeley: Transform Press, 1997), 533-34.
[175] Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures* (New York: Macmillan, 1893), 120-21.
[176] Werner Beierwaltes, "The Love of Beauty and the Love of God," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad), 293-313; see also Gilles Quispel, "God Is Eros," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition*, ed. William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 189-205.

GREAT BRITAIN, GREAT ART: WHY ORWELL WAS WRONG! – ZBIGNIEW JANOWSKI INTERVIEWS MARK STOCKER

THE BEGINNINGS

1. When you ask someone about great English artists of the past, the names that come to mind are Hogarth, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Turner, Constable, Blake, Watts, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones. Yet the list could be longer, much longer. Napoleon said about England that it is a nation of shopkeepers. Several years ago, you introduced me to English art. I wouldn't call myself ignorant about art (I have been collecting prints for four decades), but I didn't realize how ignorant I was about English painting. When you follow the art auctions in the UK, several hundred works get sold at auctions every other day. There were literally hundreds of painters in the nineteenth century. You get the impression that the English did nothing but paint. To paraphrase Napoleon, England was a nation of painters. How can you explain this phenomenon?

I think the nineteenth century was a golden moment when fewer people were facing famine or war and when advances in affordable technology could make this situation possible. There was an expectation among the upper and middle classes that every educated and refined man and woman should have some ability to draw and paint. Consistent with that was having art hanging on the walls of your home – it could be prints for poorer people – in which you had a certain pride and affection.

2. That may have been the case, but I'm not sure your explanation accounts for the explosion that we witness in the nineteenth century. It's one thing to learn to paint in an amateurish way, but it's another to reach the level that makes you good enough to exhibit your paintings in artistic societies or to be sold at auctions. England had already established the first art and book auction houses in the late eighteenth century (a topic I will refer to later). Who did all the teaching to make this art possible?

In the first half of the nineteenth century, training was still very much based on artists' studios. Artists are notoriously "democratic" people, and anyone having the skills or willingness to learn quickly and help the master would have been welcome. In the second half of the century, a comprehensive system of subsidized or free government art schools swept all corners of the country, so, unless you came from very remote parts, you could

take a train, carriage, or even walk to the one in your nearest town. Consider British art education history and particularly the South Kensington System – a highly specific syllabus for teaching art that extended throughout the English-speaking world, apart from America. For people in the workforce, they could go to evening classes to do the same thing. This lasted well into the 1930s and ensured a thoroughly good skills base. Our enemy, modernism, de-skilled art, of course!

If you want to learn about the Kensington system, I would recommend that you read Quentin Bell's book *Schools of Design* and Nikolaus Pevsner's more generic *Academies of Art*.[1]

ORIGINS

3. I would like to quote a passage from an important Russian historian, Nikolay M. Karamzin . He visited England in 1790. In writing about the English aristocracy, the way it lived, describing their country houses, he says:

> **And how many treasures in painting and antiques are scattered throughout the country houses. For a long time now, the English have had a passion for traveling in Italy and buying up everything magnificent, ancient and modern, for which that country is famous. The grandson increases the grandfather's collection, and a painting or statue, which artists once admired in Italy, is buried forever in a country castle. Here the lord cares for it as though it were his "golden fleece" because some curious artist, lost in the labyrinth of the rural parks, might imagine himself to be Jason.**[2]

How essential for the development of English painting, in your opinion, was it that the aristocracy collected foreign art? Matthew Arnold was a fierce defender of the aristocratic nature of England, was worried that once aristocracy was gone, "who will dictate the tone for the rest of the nation?" One could apply his words to art by saying that aristocratic taste permeated to the lower classes, creating aesthetic awareness in the English people, which resulted in institutions, associations, museums, and public art schools.

I think you've answered your own question in your last sentence! The aristocracy certainly kicked things off and built their fabulous country houses – Holkham, Stourhead, and many more. But if they had remained exclusive and static in number, nothing would have become of it. Instead, something unthinkable in France happened: men who made their fortunes in trade, commerce, and increasingly industry wanted to have their country houses, too – Josiah Wedgwood and his Etruria Hall is one such example. These men were into "upward emulation," they too wanted an aristocratic lifestyle, which meant aristocratic culture,

[1] Quentin Bell, *Schools of Design* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art: Past and Present* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940).

[2] Nikolay M. Karamzin, *The Letters of a Russian Traveller*, trans. Florence Jonas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 297.

literature, music, theater, and art enjoyed by people of middle-class origins. And you didn't need to own a grand country house to live at least part of your life aristocratically. Tea from a Wedgwood service depicting the country houses of Britain must have tasted all the sweeter to lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and even innkeepers. A commercial and consumer revolution made this possible. The question is the extent to which the British loved their lords and wanted to emulate them, or the extent to which they were perfectly contented to be middle class and lords were next to irrelevant, even silly. I suspect the latter was a more common feeling than is traditionally assumed, and certainly the status of the monarchy was remarkably low for remarkably long, but that is not to devalue Arnold's sentiments. You mention that the English bought "foreign" art: well, Hogarth made it his life's mission to prove "English artists can do anything!" To a large extent he succeeded – Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Wilson made sure of this, building on his achievement – even if there's been a strangely persistent belief that somehow offshore artists do things better. We'll return to this when we talk about Roger Fry.

4. Another quotation from Karamzin:

> **England, rich in philosophers and writers of every kind but poor in artists, has at least produced some good painters, whose best historical pictures have been assembled in the so-called "Shakespeare gallery." Mr. Boydell [1719-1804; engraver, print publisher, and lord mayor of London] conceived the idea, and the artists and public displayed the greatest patriotic fervor in making this happy idea reality of presenting pictures of the best scenes from Shakespeare's dramas, to the glory of the immortal poet and English art as well.**[3]

His words may have been true about the late eighteenth century but have no application to England a generation later. Since then, England has produced many great painters and an immense variety of paintings. My question is, How important was building institutions, such as the one created by Boydell, for the development of art, as well as for aesthetic public awareness in England?

What Boydell did proved to be a commercial disaster but a culturally significant and influential achievement at the same time. He was catering to a public whose thirst for reading, knowledge, culture, and art makes you weep when you look at their equivalents almost 250 years later. Many in his target audience were patriotic too – after all, it was a time of war, the 1790s to 1815. Shakespeare had been pretty big for perhaps 40-50 years by the time Boydell appeared on the scene. He helped make him huge, inescapable, though we also have to thank Garrick, Johnson, and a bit later the great actor Edmund Kean for this. As well as being very English, Shakespeare is an intensely visual writer (unlike the far more static and formalized French tragic playwrights of the seventeenth century), so it's no surprise that Boydell envisaged a huge series of paintings – and more affordable

[3] Karamzin, *The Letters of a Russian Traveller*, 290-91.

prints – inspired by Shakespearean scenes. Some of them, such as Fuseli's scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Scottish play have become classics of British art; Reynolds also painted Shakespearean works, and the genre continued to thrive till perhaps 1900. Of course, Boydell was by no means alone in encouraging the development and awareness of art in England. It's comparing apples and oranges, but the establishment of the Royal Academy with Boydell's contemporary Reynolds as its first and greatest president was actually far more significant in terms of art history; add to that, institutions such as the Royal Watercolour Society and the British Institution both formed by the time of Boydell's death. The National Gallery came not long after.

ENGLISH SPECIFICITY

5. Let's talk about the genre of painting that appears to be *specifically* English or British – namely, watercolor painting. Why watercolor? How do you explain the English love for this painting technique? Given the sheer volume of watercolorists that your nation produced, I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that it is English par excellence.

This question is surprisingly easy to answer. Soluble watercolor paint was an English invention in the late eighteenth century, and the English were first on the scene in the mid-nineteenth with moist paint in tubes. British light – often subdued, subtle, even drab – lends itself to watercolors, whereas bright Asian, African, or even Mediterranean light does not. One could say that the British with their taste for subtlety, moderation, and nuance, together with their patience, hugely important for this difficult medium, are temperamentally far better suited to the medium than most other nations, not least America. Watercolors can't be huge, and the relatively moderate (till recently) ego of the British and British artists made them enjoy the medium. Less is more! Another often-overlooked factor is the British climate – not too hot if, like most watercolorists, you're working on the spot, painting the landscape or townscape. In Italy, you'd fry; in Finland, you'd freeze.

6. We mentioned watercolor technique for which the English are well-known. However, this is not the only English contribution to painting. Let's talk about the equally famous genre where the English excelled: landscape. Who was the father of it? I want to quote a passage from the 1824 book on Richard Wilson. The author quotes the anecdote that one finds in Michael Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*:

> **Wilson and Sir Joshua Reynolds were not on the most perfect terms. When the president proposed to the Academicians to drink the health of Gainsborough, as "our best landscape painter," Wilson, in his turn, retorted the health of Gainsborough, as "our best portrait painter." Wilson was, however, liberal to his brother artists, and reverenced the powers of Wright of Derby highly.**[4]

[4] T. Wright, *Some Account of the Life of Richard Wilson* (London: Longman, 1824), 70.

Did the historical verdict ultimately tip the scale in favor of Wilson (who, by the way, was Welsh) as the father of landscape in England? Also, who in your opinion deserves our attention as good landscape painters?

I'm going to answer this question in an original and facetious way by saying that the first and greatest English landscape painter was Claude Lorrain, with maybe Gaspard Dughet coming second. Of course, neither of them ever went to England. But posthumously they became uniquely English. The English are never ones to stress the importance of mind over matter, least of all in art. Art has got to look good for them. And there's a good case for saying that Claude, with his gorgeous sense of light and pictorial structure, is one of the most beautiful painters in the whole of art history. He painted, as we know, the Campagna in lovely places such as Tivoli, not far from Rome. But the thing is that (a) the climate of Tivoli with its scorching summers only ever looks like Claude's paintings for a couple of months every year, whereas the cooler, wetter climate of England makes it look Claudian from May till early October; and (b) the English had the genius to see how the parks of their country houses could be landscaped, planted, and cultivated to look like an infinite number of Claudian paintings. I call this genius, but it's been inadequately acknowledged both in Britain and on the Continent, and I still don't quite get why.

You may say that I'm cheating and that you want the names of formative figures who are British-born. There are several contenders: Gainsborough (who could also paint lovely portraits), Richard Wilson as you say, and Paul Sandby (often overlooked because his mastery of watercolors in the snobbish world of art history occupies a lower rung). When he died, he was acclaimed as the father of modern landscape painting (in watercolors) – my parenthesis! Wright of Derby was a sometimes-great painter, but landscape was rarely his major concern. Wilson was probably the greatest of the three in his handling of light, while Gainsborough was a total natural in his brushwork. He's slightly later – a pupil of Wilson's – but the lesser-known Welsh painter Thomas Jones is an artist I love: when you see him you're reminded of Corot, working almost a century later. He shows you that the landscape needn't be dramatic – you look inwardly into his color and light in the way you do Vermeer or Piero. He's up there! Another more recent discovery for me was the short-lived Irishman Thomas Roberts. His landscapes are limpid, serene, and wonderful. Like the slightly later Thomas Girtin, what might he have achieved had he lived longer! Yet another painter I would add to the list and do so for good, patriotic reasons is William Hodges, who accompanied Captain Cook on the second of his great South Pacific voyages. Hodges did a remarkable thing: responding to Hawaiian, Easter Island, and not least New Zealand light, he altered his palette from Claudian harmonies to an altogether brighter and wider range, risking overturning academic conventions in the process. He did so because this was what he saw and experienced – he was an "experimental gentleman" worthy of a place alongside the naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. So, without contesting Wilson, Gainsborough, or Sandby, there's a highly impressive supporting cast of foundational British landscape painters before Turner and Constable.

PORTRAITS

7. Another English topic: portraits. The portrait, one can say, is universal, but the English elevated it to an unprecedented level. England (and Scotland) are flooded with

portraits; you are the only country in which there are National Portrait Galleries: one in London and the other one in Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh. However, interesting or characteristic faces, such as those of Mick Jagger or Bertrand Russell, are another thing. Let me give you another quotation from Karamzin, who has this to say about English faces:

> **I have also given some attention to English men. Their faces may be divided into three types; sullen, good-natured, and brutish. I give you my word, nowhere have I seen so many of the last as here. I am certain that Hogarth drew from nature. To be sure, one encounters such loathsome faces only among the most common people. But they are so varied, so expressive, and so striking that there could never be enough Lavaters to describe all the base qualities which they express.**[5]

Karamzin was an appalling snob, and it wouldn't surprise me if there were just as many "loathsome faces" in Italy (think of Leonardo's studies of facial features) or the Low Countries (Teniers and his boors carousing in taverns). That aside, it's not surprising that Britain led the world in portrait galleries – where is the equivalent of the (British or Scottish) National Portrait Gallery in France or Italy? Perhaps the Prado, with its great portraits of Spanish monarchs and aristocrats comes closest. The Uffizi has a great collection, but it's mostly artists' self-portraits. This fascination with the art of the people, for the people extends throughout the British world. In Wellington, New Zealand, the only significant art gallery currently exhibiting anything of note is the New Zealand Portrait Gallery. In Washington, DC, a must-see is the National Portrait Gallery Smithsonian, with its permanent exhibit of American presidents.

Besides portraiture, there are several distinctive and significant British contributions to the art world that are underrated even by British art historians and ignored by often ignorant overseas counterparts. They include the following:

The beautiful yet eminently functional country house, in its pomp between about 1720 and 1900. The totality of a good country house is simply phenomenal: its architecture, both elevations and planning; interior decoration including plasterwork; furniture; contents such as pictures, ceramics, clocks, and silver; and not least the gardens, which are like Claude Lorrain paintings in three dimensions on a vast scale, something the hot, dry campagna near Rome that inspired Claude in the first place cannot possibly rival.

Church monuments. With the Anglican discouragement of sculpted Assumptions of the Virgin, reliquaries, and even major church paintings and frescoes, our monuments more than compensate. From the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, they are astonishing, often remarkably beautiful testaments to the esteem in which the great, good, and, importantly, wealthy were held (of course they pre-date and to a lesser extent post-date this period). They spring surprises on visitors – sometimes quirky, sometime pompous, and sometimes moving. Both in their sculptures and in their lengthy inscriptions, you feel you are getting to know the deceased worthy. No other art form involving a historical or art historical

[5] Karamzin, *The Letters of a Russian Traveller*, 270.

nexus has this power. It's a crying shame that people only seem to show any awareness of them, in a highly negative, often philistine way, when the deceased was involved in the slave trade.

Landscape paintings and portraits, as we've agreed. The British were by and large completely uninterested in so-called "history painting," showing human and religious episodes at their most noble, heroic, and often vast. There are absolutely no equivalents of the Sistine Chapel. But there are no Italian equivalents of the wealth of landscape painters from Sandby to Sickert, exploring both in oils and watercolors – the latter a British invention – the lower-key delights of the landscape, and sometimes, as in Turner, its more dramatic moments. Likewise, British art is remarkably people-centered: any family of status would get their portraits painted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was a source of much distress to me when two portraits of my own ancestors (the Stockers are a solidly middle-class family) were stolen from my uncle and aunt's house. A nineteenth-century Stocker – or Lord Bloggs – would point to his art with pride and say, "Welcome to our country house and its park! Meet my ancestors! Meet the family's horses!" Portraits obviously vary in quality from naive, anonymous ones to tantalizingly unsigned ones by a very good hand, to portraits by great artists who include Dobson, Lely, Hogarth, Hudson, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Lawrence, Watts, Millais, and Sargent. What an art historical journey that is!

I could add further British contributions: the Arts and Crafts movement and William Morris; middle-class urban architecture of the Georgian and Regency periods; Perpendicular Gothic and Gothic Revival Architecture. And though you deplore Modernism somewhat sweepingly, Dr. Janowski, Spencer, Moore, Bacon, and Freud are huge figures in the twentieth century, while Pop Art had its origins not in Andy Warhol but in 1950s Britain. Then there are the great cartoonists/caricaturists/illustrators (Rowlandson, Gilray, Tenniel, etc.). In ceramics there is Wedgwood, a giant of the late eighteenth century, while in the twentieth Bernard Leech united the aesthetics of Britain and Japan.

CRITICS AND ART CRITICISM

8. Another British contribution to art is its criticism, which goes back to the end of the eighteenth century. Among well-known English men of letters concerned with art criticism was John Ruskin. Can you tell me more about his role in the art societies, his influence, and his organization of exhibitions?

Ruskin wasn't an exhibition organizer; he was too impractical here. He was emphatically an art critic and one of the most eloquent and influential in art history. Though he seems very wordy today, he was an eloquent, passionate, and beautiful writer, who could also be devastatingly funny. When I read passages of him aloud to students, they could see this, and it made me immediately realize why he was such a huge drawcard. He had a magnetic personality and would champion but then could drop a protégé – the most famous example of this was John Brett. Make or break! The major painter Ford Madox Brown wouldn't touch him with a bargepole – found him both annoying and dangerous. Others, especially younger artists such as Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Morris, were all friends and admirers, though Ruskin and Burne-Jones fell out over their differing views on

Michelangelo. What Ruskin said in his lectures and wrote in his voluminous publications could be very influential, especially *The Stones of Venice* and within it "The Nature of Gothic," early socialism here really and a powerful inspiration on Morris. For a book that tells you about the Ruskin phenomenon, you still can't do better than Kenneth Clark's excellent *Ruskin Today* – though "today" was about sixty years ago!

9. What about Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), a distinguished painter, a portrait painter, and the first president of the Royal Academy of Arts? How influential was he, both as a painter and as a president?

Hugely famous and important. As the founding president of the Royal Academy, he set out what he considered to be the precepts and principles of art. He was aware that Britain lagged behind France, Italy, and even Germany and was in catch-up mode. If you asked Reynolds if art was a matter of life and death, he would have replied "It's far more important than that." He aspired to painting's having the same status as literature and music, and to a remarkable extent he helped to bring this about. In his lectures, though he attempted to set up hierarchies in subject matter, with history painting (great moments from history, ancient and modern) and biblical/mythological at the top and still life at the bottom, Reynolds was also a pragmatist who would have admitted how a very good practitioner of still life was more worthy than an inept history painter. He himself realized that the market for history painting was very limited, so he worked in portraiture. This doesn't make him a hypocrite, as some silly critics maintain, because he invests some of his greatest portraits with the grandeur of history painting.

Yet Reynolds could paint tender portraits of young children – he was remarkably versatile within his subject area. He was ultimately generous in recognizing the greater natural genius of his great contemporary and rival Gainsborough. But Reynolds, I feel, tried harder, and you can't help but feel impressed and sometimes quite moved. In today's art market, outside a relative handful of truly major works, he is almost criminally underrated. Sadly, his frequent use of bitumen to give his paintings a patina of Old Masters has had disastrous chemical effects on the paint.

10. You went to the same Cambridge college as Roger Fry, a very influential art critic. Speaking about English art, he supposedly stated: "Gentlemen, we are second division." After talking with you and reading about English art, I start having doubts about the validity of his claim. If you skip the Italian painters, who, like the ancient Greeks, must in any consideration be left out on account of their indisputable cultural genius, the English contribution to art seems to be without precedence. Just think what we said about the different aspects of painting that England contributed to art.

Regrading Fry and British art being second division, I want to mention what he added, which makes me warm to him. It was something on the lines of "That does not prevent our art from being intensely interesting." At the time of his death, he was planning to write a substantial piece, possibly even a book, on Burne-Jones. I'm certain he felt that he had been unfair on him 25 years earlier in his flush of enthusiasm for Cézanne, Gauguin, and

the early Picasso and Matisse. He could see how formally interesting, indeed beautiful Burne-Jones was. It's a tragedy that he didn't produce this – I think it would have prevented Burne-Jones and other Victorians from being considered beneath contempt for the next thirty years, till the early 1960s.

I feel intensely ambivalent about Roger Fry himself. I would have liked him personally and he – and Keynes and Forster, fellow luminaries of the Bloomsbury Group – were, as you say, all at King's College, Cambridge, where I myself studied for four years. On the negative side, his contemptuous attitude towards Victorian art and his unforgivable attitude to Sargent and (early on) to Burne-Jones had far too big an impact, putting people off it and making the British ashamed of British art for a couple of generations. Only my generation really reversed this, and some still hold out. He also betrayed his friend and Kingsman Charles Robert Ashbee in scorning one of British art's finest achievements: the Arts and Crafts movement inspired by William Morris. His crony, Clive Bell, could be very glib and did equal harm.

But – take a deep breath – you can understand why Fry championed Cézanne and modernism in the way he did, persuasively and elegantly. He felt that Victorian art, often sentimental, anecdotal, and banal, however well executed (that perhaps made it worse), was going nowhere, whereas Cézanne, Seurat, and to a lesser extent Gauguin and Van Gogh, and that brilliant young fellow Picasso, were the way forward. His championship of Cézanne, who is a difficult artist, is intelligent and lucid – nobody before or since has rivalled Fry here. And I find myself invoking Fry especially today by myself championing art and art history as all about the visual – look at the damn painting or construction in front of you and for once forget about the wrongs of racism, colonialism, and sexism. Fry coined the term "significant form," and I tell woke idiots today "it's the form that's significant, stupid." So thank you Roger!

The other time I support Fry is when I read half-educated denunciations of the Bloomsbury Group and its members coming from the British, for its elitism, classism, and sexism. This is rubbish. Its members were remarkable, incredibly enlightened for the time, and twice as intelligent as you folk today – what you say comes from a kind of class resentment that blights British culture. They may have their limitations. Yes, they could be cliquey, yes, they were patronizing to artists outside the group – Epstein, Spencer, and Gill spring to mind, who were better than Fry, Grant, and Bell – but look at yourselves, are you any greater? Nope. Finally, back to Roger. He was not only a lucid man but a generous one. He would happily talk to any art club or working men's club up and down the country for the price of a first-class return ticket to share the importance of his cause. Who does that today?

SCHOOLS OF ART

11. Painting, like every discipline, has a tendency to create centers, so-called schools. It is written in the nature of the discipline. A master creates a style, and followers work within the framework of the style. In some cases, it's a school organized in a formal way, where you learn from teachers, such as Munich used to be in the second half of the nineteenth century. I have the impression that, in England or Scotland, it was less a matter of studying under someone and more a question of imitating the

style. I came across many paintings that were made by followers of George Morland, Samuel Prout, Sidney Cooper, and so forth. They did not study under them. They imitated their style. The great John Constable had not only followers but forgers, such as the infamous Joseph Paul!

Can you tell me more about British "schools" of painting, such as Norwich or Birmingham? Did they operate in the same manner as others did on the Continent?

I'm not sure of any significant qualitative difference between Britain and the Continent. The term Birmingham school is necessarily a loose one, as Birmingham was, and is, a huge place. Probably there was less mystique or prestige in Britain if you studied under a particular master than say in France, where we often hear about David's students. As for the question of artists influencing others, that's been the case for time immemorial. Generally speaking – and this still applies today – artists aren't interested in art history, but they are fascinated by what other artists, past and present, do.

HISTORY AND PAINTINGS

12. Another well-known genre of painting is historical. When did it develop and why?

The nineteenth century was a period when, as never before, people became conscious and proud of their history, unlike today's cringing attitudes. Nationalism and the thirst for independence among states ruled by the Ottomans or Austrians was founded on history, ditto the cause of German unification, while the world's most powerful nation-state, the United Kingdom, was proud of its history, as was France. History was taught for the first time on the school curriculum in every country, and every schoolboy and schoolgirl in Britain – with education being made compulsory in 1870 – knew the dates 55 BCE, 1066 and 1815; in France, 1789. History was much more than about learning dates; it was texts, sometimes remarkably readable even today, and pictures. All the past could be pictured, and each one of them worth a thousand words. Favorite episodes from the past included the medieval period (this of course relates to Gothic Revival, the style deliberately chosen for the British Houses of Parliament) and the Civil War, the latter particularly attractive to minor but delightful painters such as Cattermole and later Bundy, with their anecdotes and costumes. Which side are you on? The austere, God-fearing, and cheerless Puritans (or Roundheads)? Or the irresponsible, politically and religiously lazy, but often warmer-hearted and lavishly dressed Royalists (or Cavaliers)?

13. You visited Kraków two years ago, and your visit happened to fall at a time when there was a big exhibit of Jan Matejko's paintings at the National Museum. Matejko was a painter of history. Are there British painters who elevated historical painting to such a degree?

Not really. Some of the most distinguished history painters of the nineteenth century – Matejko in Poland, Munkácsy in Hungary, indeed Repin in Russia – were able to thrive because of the very turbulence of their times, the fragility of their nation-states. France championed history painting, but it had a more chauvinistic and grander (the British

would say pompous) idea of itself than its more quietly achieving neighbor. Furthermore, it had effectively created the whole academic system and the hierarchies of subject matter in painting – history painting at the top and still life at the bottom. I'd go so far as to say there was a positive prejudice against grandiose history painting: Reynolds advocated it in theory, but in practice (to survive and thrive) he painted portraits. Two artists, Barry (an Irishman) and Haydon railed against this, but they were unfortunately not that talented and died impoverished and disappointed men. But where Britain thrived was in a category called historical genre or, to use a current term, cosplay art. It wasn't necessarily on a big scale, and it didn't impart the high morals and truths that history painting advocated. You could name many artists who fitted into this category in the century between Wilkie and Bundy: Millais, Frith, Yeames, Ward (both Mr. and Mrs.), Goodall, Stone, and so forth. The absence of a flourishing historical painting posed problems when it came to the mural decorations of one of the most wonderful buildings of the entire nineteenth century worldwide: the Houses of Parliament. Pugin could do the Gothic Revival detailing superbly. But who would do the murals? Perhaps the one great nineteenth-century painter whose vision did extend to history painting, certainly larger-scale comments on the human condition, was George Frederick Watts, whom we still haven't quite come to terms with today. And then there was Leighton with his classical idealism, but a criticism made of this superb painter was that he was a foreigner in his training and perfectionism!

14. We've talked about *English* art. However, talking about English art is not the same as talking about *national* art. How do you understand the difference? I have my own reservations regarding the validity of the latter term, but I would be interested in hearing what you have to say about the distinction that I drew.

Okay – here we go. I'm not sure if I'm on the right lines, but I'm linking national character traits with English art and artists.

English art doesn't set out to be as remarkable as French, Italian, or more recently American. If it tried to do so, it would look show-off, arrogant, up-itself. But if you like an art that reflects traditional traits of the national character, something that the English prize in themselves, then it certainly doesn't disappoint and sometimes has the edge over our more-fancy foreign counterparts. English art, like the English, tends to be understated. There were no English expressionists of note really until Francis Bacon, thirty or forty years after the Germans. There are no English equivalents of Rubens. English Romanticism unusually pulls out the stops in Turner, but he was a remarkable one-off. Constable and Bonington are far more typical, and they are so much more reticent than Delacroix or Church in the United States. English art is preoccupied with portraiture, more per capita than anywhere else. We claim to be private people, but we love looking at people (preferably the rich and well-bred) and visiting their country houses. It's preoccupied with landscape – less spectacular than Continental or the USA, but we are brilliant at making something special out of the unremarkable. The English are traditionally patient, phlegmatic; they keep calm and carry on – so did our landscape painters, not least in watercolor, a medium that absolutely requires these characteristics. It's easy to mistake

subtle, limpid colors, using a narrow tonal range, as insipid, but even I would recognize that a lot of English art, however skilled, can look drab.

And yet, probably more than anywhere else, the English have a tolerance for, even love of, individual nonconformists and eccentrics. No other country can vie with us; we're seemingly the most sane of people, yet we cherish our brilliant misfits. Who belongs in this category? Hogarth, who created a whole new genre in art single-handed, the modern moral subject; Turner, who tied himself to ships' masts and risked decapitation by sticking his head out of railway carriage windows to see what he would soon be painting; Blake, who constructed a parallel universe and theology and who saw art and language as continuous and contiguous; Holman Hunt, who took pride in immaculately painting no more than a shilling-sized coin on a large canvas a day; and, in the twentieth century, Stanley Spencer, one of the most startling talents of his time anywhere in the world, who painted some of the most candid paintings of any artist's love life – you almost daren't look; and Lowry, who created a symphony out of polluted northern factory skies and stick-like workers and schoolkids ... All of this shows that while the sum achievement of it may be less great than French art (or in the more distant past, Italian), as Roger Fry argued, English art is nonetheless "intensely interesting." And I haven't even mentioned here the English phenomenon of country houses and church monuments, art forms that are unique worldwide and really do reflect national economic, economic, and perhaps even cultural leadership of the world.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

15. The world of painting went hand in hand with art associations and art criticism. Can you tell me a bit about professional associations and name a few important ones. What role did they play and how did they operate?

The Royal Academy of Arts (founded in 1768) is the best-known one, and its Scottish counterpart, the Royal Scottish Academy (1826). Also, the Royal Society of British Artists (founded in 1823). Royal Watercolour Society (founded as the Society of Painters in Water Colours in 1804) and Royal Institute for Painters in Watercolours (founded as the New Society of Painters in Water Colours), competing with the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS). Membership was by election, but anybody, man or woman, rich or poor, British or foreign, could (and can) submit their works for their annual "salon." And they are still going strong.

16. How did the exhibitions work, and how and when did the idea originate? Correct me if I'm wrong, but as far as I know, the idea of two or three rows originated in exhibition halls. Since space to accommodate many artists was limited, it was natural to conceive two and later three rows. The most important, of course, was the lower or middle row, which could be best assessed, as opposed to the highest one, several meters above you.

The prime position was to be hung "on the line" – that is, parallel to most people's lines of sight. The nightmare was for your painting to be "skied." Hangings often tended to be pretty

dense, hence the term "salon hang." There are a couple of books that are likely to answer your question further, notably Paula Gillett's excellent *The Victorian Painter's World*.[6]

17. Was it just London where the artists would go, or were there other cities and centers?

There were important provincial centers, especially Birmingham and Liverpool. And, of course, there was the prestigious Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh and the Hibernian Academy in Dublin. Both of these had schools as well as exhibition spaces. Getting your work hung on the walls of the Royal Academy in Piccadilly, however, was almost every artist's dream. There wasn't the hostility to the Academy that there was in France toward the official Salon. It continued to enjoy great prestige under the presidency of Leighton. All of the serious academies had a two-tier system: election to membership for the elite, and an annual – or sometimes more frequent – exhibition open to all and vetted by a jury. New Zealand copied British institutions here, notably the Canterbury Society of Arts, serving Christchurch and the South Island.

18. No other nation has such an uninterrupted history of institutions as England or the United Kingdom. Let me give you a few examples: the London *Times* was founded in 1785, *The Spectator* in 1828, *The Economist* in 1843, and they are still going strong. The same goes for publishing houses. Last but not least, in the context of our conversation, one must mention auction houses. I will mention a few, but you are welcome to add more: Sotheby's (1744), Bonhams (1793), McTear's (1832), Christie's (1766), Mallams (1788), Sworders (1782), Cheffins (1825), and Reeman Dansie (1881). They are only a handful, the oldest among literally hundreds of operating auction houses selling art almost every day. They are gathered in "The Saleroom" or "LiveAuction," an umbrella internet institution through which one can bid in any auction house.

I am somewhat familiar with the French art world, dealers, and so forth, but there is nothing like this, it seems, anywhere in the world. If you follow auctions, you get the impression that the British buy paintings like the French buy baguettes. It takes about thirty to forty-five seconds for a painting to be sold. Hammer goes down (sold!), and we move on to another painting. Remember what I cited from Karamzin's travel log about aristocrats gathering art? Who replaced aristocracy and collects art in England today, given all those sales? After all, hundreds of paintings are sold just about every day.

I think the English have placed great importance on continuance. As you say, newspapers (you can add *The Manchester Guardian*, founded in 1821) and art auctioneers reflect this. Sadly, globalization and the Internet have undermined old established art dealers. Others have gone contemporary to keep up with the marketplace, saying bye-bye to the Old Guard. Customer loyalty has declined, as has the old-school dealer only willing

[6] Paula Gillett, *The Victorian Painter's World* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1990).

to sell a particularly nice work to a good, appreciative home. *O tempore, o mores!* As for your question about the English/British buying more art than other countries, you have a point, but I'm not an expert in the area. I very much doubt if France, Germany, or Italy has the same density of auction houses. What does this show? It could point to Napoleon's comment about Britain being a nation of shopkeepers and shoppers, whether this applies to baked beans or to art. Again, I can't supply an obvious answer as to who collects art, but obviously, for the past two hundred years or more, there has been a thriving middle-class market for it. Yet when I go to English homes I'm sometimes struck by how indifferent educated and well-off people seem to be about the art (or lack of art) on their walls. They may go enthusiastically to exhibitions and admire art on overseas holidays, but there's little evidence of that at home. The same people are often quite surprised when I tell them how affordable art by talented and sometimes quite famous artists can be. But not all of them are like you – they don't start buying it as a consequence!

19. In his well-known essay "England Your England," George Orwell refers to the English quality of being collectors. Let me quote the appropriate passage:

> **We are a nation of flower-lovers, but also a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans. All the culture that is most truly native centres round things which even when they are communal are not official – the pub, the football match, the back garden, the fireside and the "nice cup of tea." The liberty of the individual is still believed in, almost as in the nineteenth century.**[7]

One can expand it to other areas, especially painting. Would you agree that this particular national quality – being collectors – contributed to building the greatest art collections, museums, in the world?

Unquestionably, Britain wasn't necessarily the first nation of art collectors. Think of the Cabinet of Curiosities in German, French, and Italian equivalents. But with its commercial and industrial explosion in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they surpassed everyone else. At the top of the social tree, collecting went hand in hand with furnishing one's country house. But this extended through the social ranks – think of our grandmothers and their china cabinets, grandfathers and their stamps. The British traditionally excelled in what I call the social, friendly, chatty side of collecting, which is very different from vulgar one-upmanship – far more civilized. They're proud of what they've got, and they want you to enjoy it too, whether it's Lord Stocker and his country house, or Granny and her china cabinet. What's also significant – and sad – is when Britain slipped down the league table in power, wealth, and prestige, the Americans took over,

[7] George Orwell, "England Your England," pt. 1, sec. 2; originally published in George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1941).

and Gainsborough's *Blue Boy* was sold to the Californians. Market forces for sure, but the Americans, unlike the British, devour and don't digest.

SIR KENNETH CLARK AND GEORGE ORWELL

20. We've mentioned Reynolds, Ruskin, and Fry. It would be inexcusable not to mention one more name: Sir Kenneth Clark. One cannot think of art history without Sir Kenneth. He became very well-known outside the narrow circle of art historians because of his best-selling book *Civilization* and the TV series based on it. He wrote and spoke beautifully. Looking at him, he equals art. Neil MacGregor, former director of the National Gallery and the British Museum, once said that Sir Kenneth "was the most brilliant cultural populist of the twentieth century" and "Nobody can talk about pictures on the radio or on television without knowing that Clark did it first and did it better."[8] How significant was he for the art world?

If I had a hero in art history (as opposed to art), it would be Sir Kenneth Clark. When I was asked at my Cambridge interview when I applied there what I wanted to be in later life, I immodestly blurted out "Another Kenneth Clark!" I didn't quite make it, but I tried: I like to think my art history writing and talking is reasonably intelligent, informative, even entertaining, but above all accessible. These are qualities that Clark incorporated into everything he did – and elegance, too. He wrote *Civilization* (most famously), *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Landscape into Art*, *The Nude*, *Ruskin Today*, and, when it was incredibly unfashionable, *The Gothic Revival*. He got people *Looking at Pictures* – another Clark title. I snigger in order not to cry when I hear of academics today warning against "art history privileging the visual." I was brought up not to swear, but what the hell is art history doing if it *doesn't* "privilege the visual"? Clark was written out of art history for many years, but the very fact that some people accused him of being an elitist and others of being a populist suggests that he got it pretty much right, as Neil McGregor observes. Now I think the tide has turned, and a few years ago an exhibition about him and his art collection – both for himself and for the nation when he was director of the National Gallery – was shown to acclaim in Tate Britain. At the time, I wrote a blog in his honor for the website of the Museum of New Zealand (Te Papa Tongarewa) and was touched when a Pacific art curator warmly thanked me for having broadened his education. I think Sir Kenneth would have been touched, too. White, male, and privileged, he wrote for *all* of us. Is there anyone half as good as he today?

21. Before we end, I want to invoke Orwell one more time, his words regarding art and the English. I have difficulties agreeing with his assessment and suspect you do, too:

> **Here are a couple of generalizations about England that would be accepted by almost all observers. One is that the English are not gifted artistically. They are not as musical as the Germans or Italians, painting and sculpture have never flourished in England as they have in France.**

[8] See James Stourton, *Kenneth Clark: Life, Art and Civilization* (London: William Collins, 2016; New York: Knopf, 2016).

> **Another is that, as Europeans go, the English are not intellectual. They have a horror of abstract thought, they feel no need for any philosophy or systematic "world-view."**[9]

What Orwell said about English traits is wonderful and still to a large extent true. He should have added train spotters and bird spotters – and feeding garden birds (though this is covered by the back garden). As for art, well, we've intellectually disproved him here! In music, Britain has caught up and overtaken the continentals. If by "intellectual" Orwell means poncy old farts like Foucault and Adorno, he's spot on, but he overlooks what I'd call practical thinkers who can explain their reasoning to intelligent members of the servant classes (of yesteryear) and to students with a modicum of intelligence today.

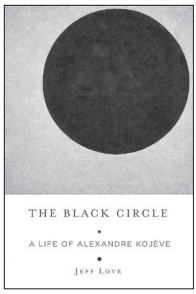
22. We started this conversation with my making a short list of well-known (classic) English painters. We covered a lot, and, I am sure, readers would be interested in learning about other painters. Maybe you can do it according to my made-up "topography" of England's contribution to different genres of paintings, such as landscape, portrait, watercolor. We should not forget about Scottish painters.

Landscapes:
Wilson, Gainsborough (though also portraits), Morland, Turner, Constable, Palmer, Ford Madox Brown, Leader, Whistler, Wilson Steer.
Portraits:
Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Lawrence, Millais, Watts, Whistler, Sargent. Holl and Herkomer aren't bad either.
Watercolorists:
Sandby, Girtin, Crome, Bonington (also landscapes), Cotman, Foster, Allingham (I know we could add a fair few more, but these are the standouts).
Scottish:
Ramsay, Raeburn, Wilkie, Nasmyth, McTaggart, Orchardson, Melville, David Young Cameron, Strang (taking you into the early twentieth century)
Then there are artists who are none of these things really, and they're all important:
Frith, Holman Hunt, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Leighton, Alma-Tadema, Sickert.

Thank you, Dr. Stocker, for this enlightening and insightful conversation.

[9] Orwell, "England Your England," pt. 1, sec. 2.

Luis J. Pedrazuela



ON THE WAY TO FINALITY: JEFF LOVE AND ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE'S RUSSIAN ROOTS

[Jeff Love, *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.]

Jeff Love's book *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève* is a thorough study of Alexandre Kojève's work. The book is not only full of insights, but it also acquaints the reader with an original approach to the Russo-French philosopher's thought. More specifically, the way in which Love's book deals with the controversial question of Alexandre Kojève's loyalty to Hegel's original work as a Hegelian commentator deserves to be highlighted from the very start. Regardless of whether Kojève's real intent was to reproduce Hegel's original thought to the letter, Love's intellectual biography features Kojève as "a provocative thinker in his own right."[1] According to Love, Kojève would have likely clothed his own ideas in the academic robes of a philosophical commentary on Hegel so as to further them undercover. In this sense, Love has no problem in linking Kojève's approach to the German philosopher with a philosophical pedagogy or propaganda that would aim at persuading his potential interlocutors of certain truths. In so doing, the Russo-French thinker shattered the genre conventions within which he framed his speech, but as Love notes, Kojève was not the first one in resorting to such schemes,

[1] Jeff Love, *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 2.

since Heidegger, Nietzsche, or even Rousseau would not have proceeded very differently before him. Be that as it may, Love's intriguing account of Kojève's loyalty to Hegel does not stop here, and he further claims that Kojève's "betrayal of the master" could well be one that "first allows the master to appear in his true role."[2] Love's acuity leads him to connect this Kojèvean ambivalence to the letter Kojève wrote to the Vietnamese philosopher Tran Duc Thao, in which he openly reveals that his reading of Hegel was intended as a work of philosophical propaganda.

His perusal of the propagandistic strand in Kojève's work, however, does not make Love downplay its philosophical breadth, which would prove to be inextricable from a pedagogic scope that would stand for a sort of trademark. Kojève's conspicuous Stalinism does not escape Love's conscientious scrutiny either. Far from simply ascribing it to Kojève's irony, as has been the common approach to this issue, Love takes Kojève's Stalinism in earnest, tracing it back to the Russo-French thinker's deepest philosophical convictions. Worth noting is also the change of focus that Love's book brings about. Indeed, whereas the literature on Kojève has traditionally focused on his reception of Heidegger and Marx, Love's book subordinates that influence to others that make up its unifying thread. This does not necessarily mean that the former influence is neglected but rather that it is referred to threads that Love develops mainly in the endnotes. The endnotes themselves are so well assembled that they might even be considered a book within the book. They not only offer a cutting-edge bibliography, but they transform the meaningful questions they expand on into powerful subthreads that the reader would like to follow further. As examples of this function of the endnotes, one may mention, among others, Love's treatment of the indicated Heideggerian influence, his way of dealing with Rousseau's background in Kojève, or the affinities he finds between some of Arendt's propositions and the attitude toward life of Dostoyevsky´s underground man. A review of Love's book on Kojève should equally not miss highlighting the richness of its informative content, one that makes it possible, for instance, to learn that the English translation of Kojève's seminal lectures on Hegel eliminates "almost three hundred pages of the original French text, including an important appendix on death, all the lectures from 1935-1936 and 1936-1937, and half of the lectures from 1938-1939."[3] As far as the book's main thread goes, the author sets it out clearly in his introduction. The unifying theme linking the three parts into which the book is divided is nothing less than the broad philosophical theme of what the "proper ends of human life" and a "genuine human emancipation"[4] are according to some late-nineteenth-century Russian authors. The breakdown of this theme into its three parts may already give us an idea of the interpretative richness that awaits us. The discussion of "the Platonic notion of perfection or divinization"[5] within the Russian context cited above makes up the book's first part. Love explicitly relates the content of this part to one of his aims when writing it – namely, to correct the omission of the Russian tradition that has "surprisingly"[6] dominated the literature on a Kojève who

[2] Ibid., 110.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 3.
[5] Ibid., 4.
[6] Ibid., 2.

was born Kozhevnikov. The second part addresses the narratives of *master-slave / desire for recognition* and *access to wisdom* that, according to Love, form the two-pronged axis upon which Kojève unfolds his reading of Hegel. These narratives are featured, moreover, as a further radicalization of the Russian tradition of the divinization of man examined in the book's first part. In the light of such an interpretation, Kojève's idea of the end of history appears as the most radical response to the philosophical question of what a good life is. If a specific Russian reading of the good life demands a complete assumption of Plato's idea of perfection, Kojève's idea of the end of history would prove to be Platonic to the extent that the idea of perfection underlying it implies the final "emancipation from the individual self"[7] as the origin of every imperfection. Thus, if brought to its fullest expression, Kojève's idea of putting an end to history entails the disposal by each man of his own individuality in a way that much resembles the collective suicide of mankind. The final part of Love's book explores how Kojève would have coped with such a radical finality in his later works.

Having set out the structure and general purpose of Love's book, I would now like to dwell on the one subthread of those mentioned above that has particularly captured my attention before sketching the compelling Russian journey that the author invites us to take.

THE ROUSSEAUIAN SUBTHREAD

As stated above, Love's refreshing head-on approach to the propagandistic strand in Kojève's work does not make him underestimate its philosophical value. In this sense, he holds that it would not be "wise to take Kojève so lightly"[8] as someone who "lies to us in order to convince us"[9] as one might too hastily infer from the Kojèvean letter to the Vietnamese philosopher Tran Duc Thao. The goal of Kojève's philosophical propaganda would have lain elsewhere. More plausibly, it would function as a means to reinforce Kojève's own rational arguments in favor of the self-abandonment of individuality as the only way to overcome the fear of death. Accordingly, Kojève sought to convey to his audience that "the modern social compact as established by Hobbes"[10] deserves nothing but outright rejection, as it relies on fear for its perpetuation, fueling that fear at almost any cost. Kojève's strong anti-Hobbesian stance, as portrayed by Love, is further complemented by the Rousseauian subthread that Love develops in his book, in both the main text and the endnotes. This subthread, in turn, connects to an essay titled "Lectures de Mauss," written by the anthropologist Carlo Ginzburg in 2010, in which he explores the Rousseauian aspect of Kojève's thought (and ultimately Hegel's), drawing on the same lines that Kojève addressed in 1948 to Tran Duc Thao.[11] These connections help fill the gap created by the notable scarcity of references to Rousseau in Kojève's work, a point highlighted by Bryan-Paul Frost in a recent essay.[12] Ginzburg's compelling disclosure of the Rousseauian

[7] Ibid., 173.
[8] Ibid., 112.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 8.
[11] Carlo Ginzburg, "Lectures de Mauss," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 65, no. 6 (2010): 1303-20.
[12] Bryan-Paul Frost, "Authority and Legitimacy in Alexandre Kojève's 'The Notion of Authority,'" in *Alexandre Kojève: A Man of Influence*, ed. Luis J. Pedrazuela (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 183-207.

influence on Kojève's thought begins with the highly plausible assumption that Kojève read *The Gift*, an essay by the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss. *The Gift* examines the ceremonial distribution of goods in primitive cultures, presenting this practice as the crucial act of recognition and as a total social fact. Ginzburg's assumption is further supported by the fact that Kojève devotes several pages at the end of his book *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right* to *La Foi Jurée*, a doctoral thesis by Georges Davy, a disciple of Mauss's. Davy was particularly focused on reconciling Rousseau's theories with certain primitive forms of exchange and, like the legal scholar Henry James Sumner Maine – whose work Kojève also comments on in the same book – examined the social implications of the transition from status to contract. In his essay, Ginzburg argues that Mauss's central claim in *The Gift* – namely, that the distribution of recognition through gift exchange constitutes the total social fact –ultimately draws on Rousseau, specifically on the role the Genevan thinker assigns to reciprocal recognition as the decisive stage in humanity's ascent to civilization. Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education*, on which aspects of Mauss's thesis in *The Gift* were based, is itself, according to Ginzburg, a pedagogical treatise that can, we might add, be closely associated with Kojève's own narratives of wisdom and recognition. We might especially argue this point since Kojève's wisdom narrative reveals his profound misgivings about philosophers who perpetuate elitist prejudices rather than embracing the life of *voyous*, hooligans, or perhaps even savages, figures capable of recognizing their fellow humans amidst the chaos of the streets or marketplace. In *Émile*, Rousseau similarly expresses reservations about the biases of philosophy, deeming its practitioners ill-suited to educate Emile, who "is and is not a savage."[13] Émile's education unfolds in what Ginzburg describes as "a most paradoxical ambivalence"[14] where an apparent freedom conceals a deeper submission as it "gets hold of the will."[15]

Turning now to Kojève's narrative of the desire for recognition, we find a striking parallel. Just as the Kojèvean slave initially recognizes his master out of gratitude for sparing his life, the Rousseauian recipient of a gift becomes bound by gratitude to his secret benefactor, yearning for his recognition over years. Yet, there is a notable difference. While Rousseau's civilized subject appears to have no choice but to reconcile himself with the freedom he believes (or has been made to believe) to deserve, the Kojèvean slave retains a hidden advantage: the services he freely performs for his master. These acts blur the line between the slave's subjugation and the master's freedom, a dynamic that Love's book on Kojève explores in detail.[16]

Love also observes that "Rousseau is arguably the originator of the recognition thesis in his notion of the relation between *amour de soi* and *amour propre*."[17] Indeed, the transition from the former to the latter can be understood in Kojèvean terms as a movement from mere animal desire to a distinctly human desire for recognition. This desire, as Rousseau portrays it, compels Émile to stop gazing inwardly and instead turn his attention

[13] Ginzburg, "Lectures de Mauss," 1303-20.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Love, *The Black Circle*, 171.
[17] Ibid., 309n44.

to his fellow humans, comparing himself to them and feeling driven by the aspiration to surpass them.[18]

THE RUSSIAN JOURNEY

As early as in his exposition of the book's structure, Love links the creation of an "emancipatory community of equals"[19] with the realization of the Platonic idea of perfection. Accordingly, he sets out to trace this link from Dostoevsky to Nikolai Fedorov and Vladimir Soloviev all the way up to Alexandre Kojève. Should human beings strive to be like Gods? This is the kind of question that underlies the idea of perfection that guides the reader throughout the Russian journey that Love proposes. Such a question goes hand in hand with that of devising a perfect polity that puts a true end to history. The Platonic notion of "divine madness"[20] would define those few who, yearning for the things that they have seen in the realm of ideas, subsequently make the decision to follow a certain course of action to realize in the world the beauty they have glimpsed. This Platonic Eros gives rise to two different human types: the "hero of non-finality" or "negation" and the "hero of finality." The former heroes draw their inspiration for their actions from the idea of an unlimited freedom, the latter from their awareness of the worldly limitations that surround them. This awareness grants to the actions of these second heroes the possibility of their final realization in a perfectly coherent fashion. In other words, only these heroes of finality enjoy the opportunity of seeing their emancipation actualized in this world one day, namely the last day. In the light of this reading, Love's book appears as the description of a journey whose point of departure lies in a full unawareness of all limitations and its destination in both a complete consciousness of them and their historical-social overcoming through thought and action. The motivation for the journey is to free oneself from nature's coercive force once and for all. Yet following from this freedom, the question arises as to whether one's real freedom does not rather imply having to take into one's hands the decision about one's death – that is, the decision about the suppression of one's own body, about becoming God through suicide thanks to that decision. Thus, the political project concomitant with the perfect realization of one's freed potentially leads to the creation of a community of the dead at whose threshold Plato himself would have halted, appalled by its strange beauty. Walking back on what his own thought foreboded, Plato eventually shied away from the idea that true perfection was feasible and took shelter in myth. Hence, what Love calls in his book the "Platonic challenge"[21] is rather something that its chief proponent decidedly turned away from. After having climbed up the ladder of love toward beauty in his *Symposium*, as the author of the book so nicely puts it, Plato would have climbed down holding under his arm the rather discouraging "narrative of the errant soul"[22] and an infinite task of "self-improvement," which have almost *colonized* Western culture since then. Love's book comes to tell us the story of a specific Russian refutation of that

[18] Ginzburg, "Lectures de Mauss," 1303-20.
[19] Love, *The Black Circle*, 5.
[20] Ibid., 17-27.
[21] Ibid., 26.
[22] Ibid., 23.

narrative, the peak and trough of which may well be represented by Alexandre Kojève's philosophical project and Dostoevsky's character of the underground man, respectively.

DOSTOEVSKY'S HEROES OF NONFINALITY: FROM THE UNDERGROUND MAN TO ZOSIMA

Love's book features Dostoevsky's work as a sort of battleground on which the mythical component of Plato's ascent to wisdom is challenged with an unprecedented radicality. That work would reflect a desperate groping for a way out of the platonic mythical task into a concrete and finite one. Yet, no matter the strength of Dostoevsky's longings for a God-like perfection, the attempts of his heroes to reach it in this world down below fail one after the other. They are, Love tells us, the heroes of will and nonfinality whose striving for a personal salvation leads them astray and to err without end.

THE UNDERGROUND MAN

The underground man is the main character of Dostoevsky's novella *Notes from Underground*. It is far from being clear that the behavior of that man is rooted in any striving for perfection whatsoever. To the extent that, of the four Dostoevskian heroes that Love examines in his book, the underground man seems to be the least concerned about attaining that perfection; he may well perform as a counterfigure whose influence would prove to be more far-reaching than the others. His sensuous attachment to man's miserable life down below, on the one hand, and his unrelenting complaints about it, on the other, are the two traits that best define him. He is the representative par excellence of a Sisyphean effort that is hard to distinguish from a nonsensical and futile task. Mired in hesitation, the underground man is also the hero of discourse whose violence-ridden resentment of his own failure makes him lucid enough to vindicate his irrational freedom against any practical "calculus of relations."[23] Time and again his verbal disobedience reassures him of the self-righteousness of his continuous ranting against the incongruous demands that nature imposes on him. Both "unable to overcome his self-interest" and reluctant "to completely succumbing to it," the underground man embodies the "hero of infinite negation"[24] as opposed to finality.

RASKOLNIKOV

Raskolnikov, Jeff Love tells us, "is a response to the underground man."[25] If the latter is impervious to change, Raskolnikov shows an evolution that takes him from an initial hesitation to action with the aim of achieving perfection. His musings on the construction of the perfect city, the "New Jerusalem,"[26] make him think in universal terms, in terms of a political authority that would even hold the right to kill thousands for the sake of humanity as a whole.[27] His criterion to determine the truth of that universal cause is based both on the extraordinary ability of the great man of power Napoleon and on the well-being of the mass of humanity. Still, Raskolnikov clearly distinguishes between the conservative

[23] Ibid., 34.
[24] Ibid., 278.
[25] Ibid., 45.
[26] Ibid., 48.
[27] Ibid., 46.

inertia that characterizes the masses for whose well-being he cares and the true humanity inherent in the bearer of the universal cause. As stated, the collective goodness that the latter can bring about entitles him to commit a crime. His crimes, however, are not merely common ones. Instead, they attest to a ruler's legitimate freedom to remove undesirable hindrances on his way to the universal goal. Only future generations would be in a position to grasp the true significance of these crimes. Love's pages on Raskolnikov's crime likely invite the reader to understand the final murder of the pawnbroker in *Crime and Punishment* as the grotesque outcome of a half-baked universality.

KIRILLOV

If, on the one hand, the freedom of the underground man is one that is merely discursive and, on the other, Raskolnikov thinks about his own freedom as being an eminently political one, then the nature of Kirillov's quest for freedom could well be described as a metaphysical one to the extent that its all-absorbing imperative drives the latter to overcome God. Additionally, that quest for freedom imposes itself on this rather peripheral character in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* in the form of an excruciating rivalry with the divine figure. In this regard, Kirillov senses that the only chance for him to outperform his eternal rival consists in killing himself, in overcoming through suicide the fear of death that keeps him in thrall to God. Indeed, it is no small thing that Kirillov awaits from his voluntary death – namely, a rational "destruction of God,"[28] his own physical change and that of the earth as well. But the delicate question of rational indifference looms large. A suicide based on a turmoil of passion and interests would certainly wreak havoc on the harmonious outcome that Kirillov expects from the Platonic challenge he broods. In the end, everything seems to turn out as it shouldn't. Kirillov's harmonious dream of a world in which "man should stop giving birth"[29] and God is disposed of, paving the way for the final emancipation from pain, ushers in Kirillov's loss of his language skills and his shooting himself like an animal.

STAVROGIN

Love's assertion that Raskolnikov is a response to the underground man might well apply to Stavrogin as a response to Kirillov, since the rational and indifferent suicide that escapes the latter is apparently attained by the former. The calculated randomness that presides over Stavrogin's acts of cruelty may even be seen as an improved version of the questionable universality that inspired Raskolnikov's murder of the pawnbroker. But the central character of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* may also stand in a way for an improved version of the underground man – to the extent that Stavrogin accomplishes something secretly wished for by the latter. Indeed, boredom as an expression of a total detachment from the vital urges of life can possibly be one of these things. Boredom as such is additionally featured by Love as that which brings Stavrogin closer to the Kojèvean figure of the sage. Despite this resemblance, however, the phenomenon of boredom fails to reach the final equilibrium that the emergence of Kojève's figure of wisdom brings with it since

[28] Ibid., 52.
[29] Ibid., 54.

that equilibrium entails the reconciliation of a series of couplets – reason/will, theory/practice, part/whole – that are wholly unfeasible for something like Stavrogin´s boredom.

ZOSIMA

Like his portrayal of the underground man, Love's portrayal of Zosima from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* also makes the latter into a sort of counterfigure to the four characters we have sketched in the foregoing paragraphs. If these four are defined by Love as *heroes of will* because of their one-sided reliance on their individual will whenever they try to rid themselves of their existential discontent, then Father Zosima's attitude toward life hints at something radically different. Love uses the term *the whole* to refer to this something and pits it against *the individual will* of the other Dostoevskian heroes. This *whole* is for Zosima nothing other than the social community to which one belongs. Any chance of success of the actions that one undertakes stems from such a community. Accordingly, Father Zosima's preaching seeks to make clear that freedom consists not in an erratic disobedience potentially conducive to crime but rather in something that furthers recognition between fellow men at the expense of their individual self-interest. Zosima thus condemns the ultimately Platonic weakness of the plans that man broods over in cloistered isolation. Rather, his teachings aim at eliminating the utopian bias that causes such plans to fail so dramatically. Love brings up, in this context, the notion of "project"[30] as a term that highlights the social rootedness of human actions. Correspondingly, Zosima's project marks an overcoming of the violent outbursts and failures exhibited by other Dostoevskian heroes.

CHRIST, EVERYMAN, AND PERFECTION: VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV AND NIKOLAI FEDOROV

Building on Zosima's project, so to speak, two Russian thinkers seek to mend, through their respective works, the rift between reason and will on the one hand, and theory and practice on the other, as attested by such outbursts. Their argument is that Zosima's vision of the *whole* should encompass everyone, not just a select few. Indeed, if humanity's divinization is to be taken seriously, the ultimate human community must achieve unity by including the many. Vladimir Soloviev's and Nikolai Fedorov's philosophical projects thus reflect the priority they place on the idea of the *whole*. However, they differ in the degree of radicality. In this sense, Soloviev's vision of humanity becoming one with the divine appears moderate when compared to Fedorov's universal task of resurrecting the dead.

VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV'S DIVINE HUMANITY, OR THE ONE IN THE MANY

In his book, Love explains that Vladimir Soloviev's main concern is to reconcile human freedom with God's absoluteness. Soloviev seeks to avoid what he saw as the European abandonment of God on the one hand, and the Islamic emphasis on total human subordination to the divine on the other. To this end, he works to clarify the nature of man's relationship with the absolute. With this goal in mind, Soloviev explores how the absolute manifests in everyday human existence, thereby granting human actions in time a significant preeminence over any philosophical perspective that ignores the

[30] Ibid., 62.

temporal dimension. These actions are, furthermore, part of a positive absolute insofar as they are manifestations of a truth that unfolds in time. Soloviev further contrasts this positive absolute with a negative freedom, which may well be represented by the garrulous hesitations of Dostoevsky's underground man, or the actions undertaken by modern bourgeois individuals. Soloviev's theory of positive freedom (of which his own *Lectures on Divine Humanity* would be the most perfect token) responds to a "golden age" narrative[31] that aims to retrieve a lost perfection by allowing it to unfold in time. Whereas for Plato this retrieval only occurs if man returns to the realm of ideas unburdened by his body, for Soloviev, Christ's incarnation proves to be just the opposite – namely, the embodiment of truth in this world below and the appearance of the absolute in a conditioned, material form. Soloviev thereby links the model of Christ to that of the Master, which he pits, in a "language of dominion,"[32] against the heroes of negation desperately entrenched in their asocial particularities. In Soloviev, Christ becomes the individual in whom the whole and the particular, the absolute and multiplicity, the one and the many, imply each other in flawless reciprocity. A perfect world-citizen, had he not resurrected, Kojève might have objected to Soloviev's Christological synthesis, as Love suggests in his book. Yet this is the same Kojève who continues to embrace the term "uni-totality" long after encountering it in Soloviev's work. It is also worth noting that, according to Love, Soloviev views the worldly realization of the absolute as a collective task in which everyone must be included, rejecting any distinction between the chosen and the unchosen based solely on their individual works. Finally, Sophia, or wisdom, signifies for Soloviev both Christ's example – understood as a crucial milestone in the realization of God's eternal plan – and humanity's freedom to imitate Christ by gradually aligning their temporal will, reason, and being with this divine plan.

NIKOLAI FEDOROV'S COMMON TASK

Where exactly, according to Love, does Nikolai Fedorov's radicality lie when compared with Soloviev's "*imitatio Christi*"?[33] It would not be wrong to answer this question by holding that Soloviev's imitation of Christ, which Love describes as a project in his book, turns in Fedorov's work into a very specific task. While Fedorov attributes the motivation for this task to a "filial Christian piety,"[34] it can also be interpreted as we shall see, as a "diabolical rebellion against God."[35]

Whatever the case, Fedorov lays out this task in a wholly uncompromising way, presenting its realization as an either/or issue in which the salvation of humanity is at stake. If Christ represents the truth in resurrection, then man must follow Christ's call if he truly wishes to hold onto his humanity. Man's common task, therefore, consists of empowering man to resurrect like Christ – a two-tier task that involves, on the one hand, the overcoming of death by those still living and, on the other, the return to life of those already dead.

[31] Ibid., 77.
[32] Ibid., 80.
[33] Ibid., 87.
[34] Ibid., 96.
[35] Ibid.

If accomplished, this task results in the greatest universal empire ever conceived, an empire that would "extend beyond the earth to eternity."[36] As worthy as they were, the Roman and Byzantine empires proved insufficient. Fedorov's common task would address these shortcomings by creating an unmatched Third Rome as the world's eternal city. Man's prior conquest of nature would be a sine qua non for this achievement. Accordingly, man's thought and action must be properly coordinated to achieve that conquest. Just as theory and practice become one in the process of mastering nature, both learned and unlearned men should form a unique community of equals devoted to the same technical chores.

The bottom line for Fedorov is, as stated by Love, the creation of technologies enabling the universal overcoming of death. How Fedorov reconciles this claim for man's unlimited self-preservation with Christ's voluntary death on the cross is a question Love raises in the book. His answer is that Fedorov seeks to transcend this seemingly unspiritual claim by rooting it in a filial love for the ancestors. This love, in turn, sets itself the task of returning them to life, thereby founding a kind of universal family.

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE AND THE RUSSIAN QUEST FOR A DEFINITIVE END

We have already shown how Love connects Kojève's thought with traditions (Heidegger, Rousseau) other than his native Russian one by developing subthreads that originate in the main text and are further explored in the endnotes. The time has come for this reviewer to examine some of the features that Love identifies as characteristic of Kojève's reception of the work of his Russian predecessors.

This account first underscores the importance that Love, in his book, attaches to the notion of finality. Love appears to use this concept as a benchmark for evaluating certain aspects of Kojève's thought. More specifically, this benchmark allows him to compare the content of specific passages from Kojève's 1930s lectures on Hegel with other passages, from both the same period and later ones. The ideas Kojève expresses in these passages seem, in a sense, to represent the culmination of the Russian journey toward finality and the realization of a perfect polity, as outlined above.

In this regard, from the early social views of Dostoevsky's Father Zosima to Kojève's final formulation of the end of history, the Russian texts examined by Love display an increasing coherence in the plausibility of their assertions. Put differently, these texts progressively develop, with greater rationality, the hypothesis that the final and perfect community of the dead – one that Plato turned away from to seek refuge in myth – is meant to be effectively realized in this world.

To no small extent, this theoretical-practical evolution is likely grounded in the democratic inclusion of man's everyday actions within some of the propositions of the characters and authors examined. It is also likely that Soloviev's alignment of being, will, and reason serves as an important landmark in this direction.

Building on this perspective, Love seems to interpret the idea of the end of history, as Kojève reads it in Hegel, as one that necessarily implies the self-annihilation

[36] Ibid., 93.

of humanity.[37] In the same vein, Hegel's statement that "the true is the whole" finds its Kojèvean counterpart in Kojève's conclusion that this whole is death – and, furthermore, that this death is tantamount to a universal, communitarian agreement to eliminate, once and for all, the animalistic and individualistic Hobbesian desire for self-preservation.

Thus, Kojève's radicality is ultimately grounded in his merging and reversal of Soloviev's and Fedorov's ideas in one fell swoop. On the one hand, Kojève suppresses the absolute freedom awaiting Christ after His resurrection, as Soloviev presents it in his Lectures on Divine Humanity, while retaining the human counterpart of that freedom, which belongs exclusively to man insofar as he inhabits an empirical world and can therefore become the sage as understood by Kojève – namely, as nothing but a finite god. On the other hand, Kojève's reception of Fedorov also leads him to bet on the disappearance of death. However, instead of this disappearance occurring through a questionable material resurrection based on an absolute technological mastery over the world, it presupposes man's willingness to purposefully realize his collective death once the proper stage of technological progress is reached. Man's willingness to commit suicide freely at a collective level thus becomes the crux of Kojève's emancipatory lesson. Any idea of finality that avoids this issue is, at best, a short-term expedient or, at worst, an eternal task that robs man of finality forever and condemns him to animal enslavement and endless errancy. Thus, Love's allusions to Kojève's assessment that "the one theological mistake of Christianity [is] resurrection"[38] come as no surprise, since resurrection, from a Kojèvean perspective, would amount to further hedging the instinct of self-preservation against potential risks arising from atheistic proclivities that equate death with perfection. Yet, despite all this, Kojève still wavers.[39] For Love, the fact remains that the "self-cancellation or suicide"[40] narrative, so uncompromisingly presented by Kojève both in the final lectures on Hegel from 1938 to 1939 and in his text on death, written as early as 1933-1934,[41] is significantly watered down by other alternative narratives Kojève puts forward, both in those lectures and in other works that came long after them, whose comparative lack of finality he never disavowed.[42] Rather than addressing "death's enactment"[43] or "mass self-immolation,"[44] these alternative narratives portray man's attainment of divine humanity at the end of history as resulting in an absence of creative action or a sort of "bestialization"[45] or return to the Rousseauian state of nature. Moreover, these narratives make room for a ritualized and endless repetition that prescribes man's behavior as if he were an automaton. Rather than freeing man from his animal instinct, these Kojèvean accounts of finality in the form of repetition and bestialization reinforce his natural slavery. No longer capable of self-awareness, the man of the end of history in these Kojèvean accounts would not even be conscious of the instincts he must overcome to become human. In this sense, he proves

[37] Ibid., 176-77.
[38] Ibid., 277, 186-87, 190.
[39] Ibid., 181.
[40] Ibid., 180-81.
[41] Ibid., 184-85.
[42] Ibid., 289.
[43] Ibid., 171.
[44] Ibid., 176.
[45] Ibid., 207

to be in need of a surrogate animal instinct,[46] which the masters in power are all too eager to supply.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the book *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève* is a highly insightful and informative philosophical essay on the work of Alexandre Kojève. The main guidelines of Jeff Love's analysis are shaped by the realization of the Platonic idea of a perfect polity and the Russian quest for the divinization of man. The way in which the author presents this quest allows the reader to grasp how that community gradually coalesces into Kojève's notion of the end of history. The book further offers an in-depth discussion of the implications of that end, insofar as it entails either (1) the realization of finality in a final community of the dead, (2) the ritualization of man's life in endless repetition, or (3) man's return to Rousseau's state of nature. By denying finality altogether, the last two options prove both the Tantalic nature of the initial quest – the quarry forever eluding the grasp of the chaser[47] – and the Sisyphean prospects awaiting its seeker, ensnared as he is in having to "weave and unweave Penelope's web,"[48] as Arendt would have it. Likewise, these options would only sanction "Heidegger's implacable assertion of finality as an impossible possibility."[49]

[46] Ibid., 199-205. See also Jeff Love, "Between Kant and Hegel: Alexandre Kojève and the Absolute State," in *Alexandre Kojève: A Man of Influence*, ed. Luis J. Pedrazuela (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 53-74.
[47] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Paris: Gallimard-Folio Classique, 2014).
[48] Love, *The Black Circle*, 282.
[49] Ibid., 287.

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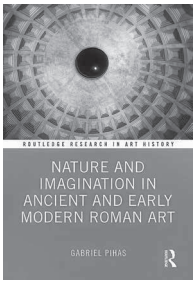

A TOURGUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

[Gabriel Pihas, *Nature and Imagination in Ancient and Early Modern Roman Art*. New York: Routledge, 2024.]

"*Stadtluft macht frei*" is what Germans used to say in the Middle Ages: "City air makes you free." If it were not for the ominous echo cut in steal letters above the entrance to one of the most infamous German death camps in Auschwitz, the phrase could be attractive, alluring even, today as well. Surely it has lost little of its medieval meaning. Just as back then, today we also associate the city with opportunities, infinite possibilities for individual development, with one's life chances. Yet at the nascence of modern Western cities of the Holy Roman Empire, to the German Nation it meant, first and foremost, a liberation, usually of a peasant, from the absolute sovereignty of his feudal lord, a liberation enabled by a specific legal independence of cities from the feudal, hierarchical order of the medieval world. In this sense, a thirteenth-century city dweller is an archetype, in some cases even literally a great-great-grandfather of a modern bourgeoise, an individual free from worries other than those concerning his own little life. And yet, as this window-shopping contemporary flaneur strolls (or rather scrolls) along his favorite paths, a stone in his shoe or a glitch on a webpage might throw him off a bit, and then a certain feeling of unease might creep upon him, a feeling that, if not soothed immediately with yet another distraction, might grow into an overwhelming sense of a radical alienation that just might require professional help.

If you don't know where you are heading, remind yourself where you came from and what has brought you to the position you are in right now. And there is no better aid in such a reflection – if self-reflection can be aided at all – than art. That, at least, is what Gabriel Pihas's book *Nature and Imagination in Ancient and Early Modern Roman Art* seems to suggest. And understanding art, contrary to what some contemporary commentators say, does require competence, and the ignorant could use some professional guidance in this respect. Yet even though published as a book in the field of art history, it set itself goals far beyond its disciplinary boundaries. It aims at diagnosing the condition of modern man and suggests that the reading of artworks has to be supplemented with reflections of a wider, philosophical kind. This is precisely what Pihas's book does as it unfolds a certain philosophical thesis regarding man's history – namely, that he and his culture developed in the West from his ancient conviction of being grounded in cosmological nature toward his modern self-assertion as a creative individual capable of shaping his own world. And then this judgement is veiled in a palimpsestic map of Roman artifacts, a particular case

study in art history. Although this makes a critical reading of the work difficult since the level of analysis ranges from an interpretation of a particular artwork to the most general historicistic assumptions intertwined here in a nexus hard to unravel. Let us try, nonetheless, to look more closely at the work and estimate its merits, of which there are many, beginning with its most general, philosophical presuppositions.

The philosopher whose thought underpins the book is Hans Blumenberg, the author of *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, which is one of few important voices in the twentieth-century debate on a diagnosis of modernity and the historical circumstances that led to its development. A brief and useful synopsis of Blumenberg's stance on the origins of modernity was given by Jerry Z. Muller in a biography of Jacob Taubes, *Professor of Apocalypse*, where he wrote:

> To Blumenberg, the rise in late medieval scholasticism of nominalism, which maintained that God could do anything through his will and that the world was not intrinsically ordered, destroyed belief in God as a reliable source of order. That led to the notion that man was dependent on his own resources, and eventually to the belief that he could shape his world. Metaphysics was abandoned, replaced by an emphasis on the use of reason, knowledge, science, and technique. The Gnostic notion of the created world as evil was now replaced with a conception of the world as neither intrinsically good nor evil, but rather subject to human alteration – a process that Blumenberg defended as human "self-assertion" [*Selbstbehauptung*]. Thus the modern era, with its conception of the world as malleable through science, had "vanquished" the Gnostic conception of the world as fallen; [...]. A key element of the novelty of the modern period was the positive value it placed on curiosity [*Neugier*], encouraging open-ended intellectual and technological development as a source of power, in a manner without precedent in the Greek or Christian traditions.[1]

Pihas's book reconstructs the process of crystallization of the modern age thus understood in the field of art history. As the summary at the beginning of the book says, "This volume uses the art of Rome to help us understand the radical historical break between the fundamental ancient pre-supposition that there is a natural world or cosmos situating human life, and the equally fundamental modern emphasis on human imagination and its creative power."[2] Pihas defines the pivotal event that joins, and at the same time separates, these two approaches in a middle chapter of his book, titled "Interlude," where he writes:

> Hans Blumenberg suggested that the godlike creativity that typifies modernity first became conceivable in the correspondence with developments in the history of theology. When God's creative act was understood in connection

[1] Jerry Z. Muller, *Professor of Apocalypse: The Many Lives of Jacob Taubes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), 464-65.
[2] Pihas, *Nature and Imagination*, i.

> with what God didn't will to make, but could make, our creativity began to matter [...]. The emphasis on creativity [appeared] when God is no longer identified with nature or reflected in nature.[3]

In short, we are being told that with William of Ockham, who opened the door to the light of nominalism, a possibility appeared of different, new approaches toward the reading of nature. As Pihas continues: "Calvin's rejection of nature's meaning for us without scripture, or Bacon's idea of the new need for the 'torture' of nature to make it comprehensible, or Galileo's idealized mathematization of nature – all of these are new ways to address the vacuum of nature's meaning left in the centuries-long cultural wake of nominalism."[4] Keeping in mind this philosophical underpinning, which arranges the book, let us look at how Pihas unfolds before us the whole story and what possible objections one might have to it.

The book begins with an explanation of the profound meaning that nature had for the ancients, that is, the ancient Greeks and Romans, and how the meaning got transmitted onto an early Christian understanding of God. The ancients assumed that nature was eternal, that its manifestations perceived by man in the miracle of existence and the circular regeneration of life on Earth corresponding with the regular motions of the heavenly bodies that make their way on the background of the map of unmoved stars were sufficient proof that every little thing in this world is in its place. This included man and his affairs, which were stretched between two overwhelming powers: material growth and decay on one side, and the unchanging laws of gods on the other. For the ancients, "nature was divine, often referred to as a god,"[5] and for the early Christians, the conception of God was still in complete accord with the ancient view of the cosmos, or nature understood as divine order. Such an order of things was reflected in the art of the ancient and Christian world, although this reflection should, from the historical perspective or the perspective of a historicist, be invested with a serious objection of a political nature. These artistic representations were, as Pihas underlines, also a tool for legitimizing the existent political powers by inscribing them into an artistic representation of the cosmic order. As we read in his book, "We need to unpack the ancient presuppositions about nature that informed ancient art and made it so impressive, while at the same time showing why the early moderns left this relationship with nature behind,"[6] and Pinhas adds, "While we admire, and even long for, the ancient sense of being at home in nature, the political uses to which nature was always put in premodern art should check any nostalgia."[7] A mere analysis of the succession of governments of the ancient world might not display this dialectical mechanism of reflecting the cosmic order on the one hand and legitimizing power on the other as clearly as does a historical comparison of the two different worldviews of a polytheistic Roman and a monotheistic Christian manifested in different Roman buildings: the Pantheon of

[3] Ibid., 110-11.
[4] Ibid., 97.
[5] Ibid., 1.
[6] Ibid., 3.
[7] Ibid.

the second century and two sixteenth-century Christian temples "related to [Giovanni Lorenzo] Bernini,"[8] La Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù and Sant'Andrea al Quirinale.

The visual analysis of the buildings presented in Pihas's book is detailed and well informed, referring readers to the latest discussions and findings regarding their architecture as well as that of other art works one finds there. In addition, the analysis also covers the rhetorical interplay of the two title terms of Pihas's book, nature and imagination, wherein the first can be associated with the visible and the second with the invisible. In the case of the narrative about the Pantheon, "the visible" stands for the concreteness of the edifice, its geometry, which symbolically harmonizes with the ancient view of nature. "The invisible" are those parts of architecture or artwork that got devoured by time and are impossible to discern without professional knowledge and the scientific apparatus of interdisciplinary research, which is, at the same time, an argument for the significance of imagination in science. In the case of Christian churches, the interplay of the visible and the invisible takes place at the stage of the theatre of artistic representation. It deludes and overwhelms the viewer with an abundance of visual, illusionistic solutions and the richness of the artistic, religious program, which reveals before us images that are impossible to see in nature but that are products of an artist's imagination. As Pihas writes, "While the Pantheon is able to show how to orient ourselves to visible divine reality above us, the Gesù in contrast shows how the divine reality becomes something invisible that only exists within us."[9] With this shift of accents, our attention is drawn to the Renaissance affirmation of creativity and with it to the rise of great individuals, artists such as Michelangelo, Caravaggio, and Borromini, the protagonists of the other three chapters of Pihas's book.

Again, in these chapters Pihas offers an inspiring account of the character of the artwork of these three individuals, and here as well these are veiled in various interplays of Pihas's title terms of nature and imagination. The common dominator for all three cases is, however, an intentional move from "the natural" toward "the imaginary." With Michelangelo, we see it in his "ability to use or ignore scientific perspective and anatomic knowledge at his caprice [that] [...] suggested an analytical power capable of turning past what was given in experience."[10] Summarizing Michelangelo's importance, Pihas says, "Whereas previously artists were more thoroughly concerned with their roles as artisans trying to achieve techniques for imitating external reality in such works, here we see a new idea of an artist and a new freedom of imagination accompanied by artistic self-reflection."[11]

In Caravaggio, the two terms lurk behind his idea of sanctified darkness. His "painting suggests that we have to think carefully about what we see in visual arts, because the truth is invisible,"[12] and that, in turn, suggests skepticism regarding the truth not only of visual arts but of our natural impressions as well, for "in Caravaggio there is also

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 33.
[10] Ibid., 100.
[11] Ibid., 117.
[12] Ibid., 133.

a tendency to abstract from nature like what we underlined in Michelangelo"[13] – namely, that his art surpasses our immediate perception of the world around us.

The third figure brought to our attention, Borromini, in Pihas's account stands for a pinnacle of developments toward a modern understanding of artistic freedom. The power of his work is summed up in his architectural illusionism. Pihas writes that Borromini's "work, characterized by fluidity, deformation and infinity suggests a new modern understanding of the human imagination and perspective,"[14] and adds that "his modernity clearly suggests the end of cosmos, and the rise of the imagination to replace it."[15]

One could easily add to this set other acknowledged artists of the Renaissance, such as Leonardo or Raphael, for if a certain license in the usage of linear perspective should be a measure of artistic ingenuity, then the works of these artists also display their craft in this respect. It is enough here to mention Leonardo's *Last Supper*, in which the perspectival scheme of the interior is different from that of the table and the men gathered around it; and *The School of Athens*, in which Raphael used two different horizon lines to visually enlarge the space in which he placed his figures.[16] Without a doubt, however, all the major artists of the Renaissance have the one thing in common: they perceived themselves as setting a new standard for estimating the value of art. For centuries we have been clinging to this conviction of seeing their works at the background of medieval, often poor, craftsmanship and our false impressions regarding the art of the ancient world. Still, it is hard not to agree with Pihas's suggestion that their art is characterized by the overcoming of the natural by means of the imagination. And indeed, artists of the quattrocento have established the modern understanding of artistic freedom as a transgressive act liberating man from the necessity of nature. Thus, the art of the quattrocento laid out the blueprint for modern man as a free being who shook off the chains of necessity imposed on him by the structure of the cosmos, even though this came at the price of his being stranded in the eternal silence of the infinite space of the universe.

This analysis, however, if left on its own, could be somewhat misleading for it suggests, first, that Renaissance artists shared an anti-cosmic view of things and that, second, they almost singlehandedly made the ancient world fall out of joint. While there is no sufficient proof of the first – perhaps with the exception of Leonardo da Vinci – the second is questioned by Pihas himself when he notices that "Imagination and alienation from the world were not modern inventions."[17] With this remark, he takes us for a significant, interdisciplinary detour through interrelations of the political history and artistic representations it influenced, a detour guided, once again, by the thought of Hans Blumenberg. This intellectual excursion allows us to put the works of the Renaissance artists into the broader context of historical, political change.

[13] Ibid., 123.
[14] Ibid., 141.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Rafał Kuczyński, *Obrazy nieskończoności: Perspektywa Erwina Panofskiego i Pawła Florenskiego* (Warsaw: Fundacja Augusta hr. Cieszkowskiego, 2023), 161-62.
[17] Pihas, *Nature and Imagination*, 37.

Generally speaking, ancient art, and the art of the ancient Greek poets in particular, is focused on men as agents acting in the world with no regard for the individual personality of particular actors.[18] As the author notices:

> The tiny community that formed a *polis* was much smaller than the smallest of our cities today. Yet it was in fact similar to an entire nation, with a separate culture and religious tradition, a government, diplomats, embassies and an army. In these smaller associations, there is greater political enfranchisement for citizens and a greater feeling of belonging. Even non-citizens in a *polis* probably felt a greater sense of belonging than we do today as citizens in our huge nations. Our sense of citizenship is a trifle in comparison.[19]

The characteristic of the polis was reflected in its art, which paid much attention to great deeds, great – let us add – from the point of view of the community of the polis. This tendency shifted with the diminution of the role that city-states played in the Hellenistic period. This, again, was reflected in the art of that time, art that began to explore the aesthetic plane of artistic creativity and in this sense started opening its gates to imagination. In short, a change in a political regime influences art. The denigration of political autonomy and with it of the political role of individuals in Hellenistic times shifted political authority to a higher level and artistic interests toward the inner world of man. The art of later epochs, those of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, also had their political specificity, as it displayed an imaginative, eclectic mixture of styles and forms bordering on kitsch, which, as Pihas keenly observes, reminds us of our own, modern tastes. This political detour is probably the most important and most valuable supplementation of the book's analysis in the field of art history. By shedding some light on the dependence of the character of art on the political regime, it enables us to put some limits on our imagined agency of the great artistic personas of the Renaissance and shows that the liberal and liberating character of their work is a reflection of a more general political phenomenon – that is, of a collapse of the medieval political order. What is more, a reflection on the political context of art also helps us to diagnose our current state of affairs. For if the artistic turn toward imagination is so intimately bound up with a loss of a sense of political agency, as the example of classical and Hellenistic art shows, then our time, the modern age, which puts such a great – greater than we've ever seen in history – emphasis on imagination, would be a time of complete civic impotence.

The analysis presented by Pihas seems not only coherent but, by putting the changes in the sphere of visual arts in the context of political order, also all-encompassing, leaving little space for doubts – at least within the historical scope of investigation Pihas assumes. There are, nonetheless, some questions with regards to the book's narrative that the narrowed scope of inquiry makes it possible to avoid yet that are crucial if we were

[18] Ibid., 38.
[19] Ibid., 46.

to draw any linkage between the two epochs of antiquity and modernity according to the line of interpretation of the book.

In Pihas's work we will not find, for example, an answer to the question of how, in the light of the gradual withering of political agency in the ancient world, the idea of the cosmos not only remained in place, but also how it held through to the Middle Ages. After all, Pihas admits that early Christian theology made nature its important element.[20] And with that being said, there arises a question of the relation between the appearance of William of Ockham's nominalism and the profound political change that, according to the book's thesis, accompanied the gradual loosening of the chains of the cosmic order, which bound artists in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. To tackle these issues, let us come back to one passage of Pihas's book that shows how close the author came to touching upon them and use that as the inspiration for a few critical remarks.

Pihas uses the example of the Church of San Carlo to illustrate Borromini's break with the traditional vision of the cosmos, but instead of speaking about art, I would like to stick to a remark regarding the patron of the church made by Pihas in passing. He notices that "San Carlo was made for a Trinitarian order, the so-called barefoot Trinitarians, who helped ransom Christian prisoners of war in the middle east."[21] What escapes the attention of our author in focusing on the artistic value of the temple is – to follow his own rhetorical distinction of "the visible" and "the invisible" – the structure of the temple, the concrete basis of the spectacle of the narrative, and with it both the political circumstances behind the erection of the edifice and the dependance of the artist on his political patron. The example of St. Carlo is suggestive in a number of ways.

First, it is difficult to defend the church's design as an outcome of a theological dispute provoked by William of Ockham, and that is for the simple reason that Ockham himself was excommunicated for his beliefs. Borromini might have been a believer, and perhaps he might have even held a set of beliefs varying from those of the Catholic Church. But it would be quite unlikely for the Church authorities to commission building a church to a supporter of unorthodox views. It is equally doubtful that ideas presented by Ockham, influential as they were in other places, influenced the Renaissance Church authorities in Rome.

Also telling, though in a different way, is the purpose for which the Trinitarian order was established. From Pihas's book we learn that its role was to ransom Christian captives of war in the Middle East.[22] What we tend to omit is that those prisoners of war were knights taking part in crusades, one of which – precisely the fourth crusade from the beginning of the thirteenth century – was a unique one and had consequences for European history that are hard to overestimate.

This military campaign of early Europeans resulted in the conquest and looting of Christian Constantinople by Western Christian crusaders. Without the spoils of that war looted during the decades-long occupation of the city that followed, Western European barbarians would not have acquired not only the marble decorating Saint Mark's Basilica

[20] Ibid., 19.
[21] Ibid., 156.
[22] Ibid.

in Venice but also the works of Aristotle, later interpreted by St. Thomas of Aquino, or Euclid's book of optics, which served Witelo of Silesia as a basis for his *Perspectiva*.[23] Without them they would have remained, as they had been for nearly eight centuries, stupefied by the splendor of ancient Rome, the ruins of which they had been inhabiting, and ignorant of ancient knowledge, looking with amazement at the residue of a culture they did not understand. Regardless, therefor, of the significance of the shift in the theological overview of the late Middle Ages resulting in an establishment of nominalism, we should openly admit that neither this nor, for that matter, any other great "discovery" after the thirteenth century would have been possible without this act of violence of the Western on the Eastern Christians.

The last chapter of Pihas's book is devoted to a reflection on the ancient ruins of Rome. This time using Georg Simmel's remarks to guide us through the rubbles of the past, our author points out that the remains of buildings once inhabited by a culture, now disintegrated, merge for us with the nature surrounding them. As such, they become an object of our study and inspire our imagination as to our own origins, no longer rooted in the natural order of the cosmos but in the man-made nature of a historical process. As Pihas writes, Rome and its ruins "were not relics of a culture, but just another version of what confronted us in nature."[24] And this is the ultimate conclusion with regards to modern man one can draw from Pihas's book: living under the imperial rule of imagination and thus in absolute political passivity, alienated subjects of the empire stroll around like tourists in Rome trying to sooth their existential hunger for sense with delights of an aesthetic feast. As Pihas himself writes, "while we may enjoy this freedom, one is left cold by the spectacle. Rather than making a real connection to the past, such a tourist is left somewhat lonely among Rome's disordered heaps."[25]

Gabriel Pihas's book therefore also has, among other things, a therapeutic value. It attempts to explain us, Westerners – who we are and why we might feel estranged in the world. Whether this explanation is true or to what degree it is true remains open. Still, by putting the history of Rome's art into a broader political context, it might indeed serve as a step in bringing us closer to understanding ourselves. Naturally, this ultimately always depends on our ability to reflect, but surely all informed readers will find the book a valuable read, especially if they happen to have it at hand while in Rome and in their leisure time between one tourist site of the city and another, sipping an espresso in one of Rome's adorable cafes ...

[23] Kuczyński, *Obrazy nieskończoności*, 239-40.
[24] Pihas, *Nature and Imagination*, 160.
[25] Ibid., 162.

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SUMMARY

Brian Marrin

JEPHTHA AND THE APPEAL TO HEAVEN: THE POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF LOCKE'S *SECOND TREATISE OF GOVERNMENT*

This paper examines the political theology of Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, specifically, Locke's understanding of sovereignty and the right to rebellion in light of his repeated references to the biblical judge Jephtha and his appeal to Heaven. While Carl Schmitt rightly noted that Lock failed to provide an adequate or coherent answer to the question of the sovereign decision (or in Locke's phrase, "Who shall be judge?"), Schmitt was wrong to see this as an inevitable incoherence in liberal constitutional theory. Locke's reticence was deliberate, and his intention was not to present a coherent theory of liberal constitutionality but rather to promote an imperfect but pragmatically satisfactory liberal practice aimed at avoiding the twin evils of tyranny and civil war. The minimal political theology of the *Second Treatise* at once admits the limits of any theoretical solution to the problem of politics and serves as a critique of any more robust political theology that might itself become a further cause of political conflict.

Jeremy Bell

RELATIVISM, SKEPTICISM, AND RATIONALISM IN LOCKE'S FIRST LETTER CONCERNING TOLERATION

This article investigates the religious epistemology underpinning Locke's plea for religious toleration in his first *Letter Concerning Toleration*. There is a longstanding debate as to whether one or more of the *Letter*'s arguments for toleration rests on some form of religious skepticism, with a majority of commentators answering in the negative. The contention of this article, based on a Straussian reading of the *Letter*, is that, while there is indeed an undercurrent of religious skepticism in this work, Locke ultimately means to deny not only that we can attain certain knowledge of revealed truth but, more radically, that divine revelation is possible at all. The religious epistemology of the *Letter* is fundamentally rationalist, not skeptical.

Jeff Love

CARL SCHMITT IN THE UNDERGROUND

This article examines a relatively minor work from Carl Schmitt's post-war writings, titled *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play* (1956). The main contention of the article is that Schmitt's text explores the distinction between what is serious and what is playful or between the determination that attends us due to our historical and physical limitations and our attempts to create for ourselves a space of action that is not subject to history – action that is free. This argument emerges by contrasting Schmitt's view of Hamlet with that of Ivan Turgenev and the figure of the underground man created by Fyodor Dostoevsky in his famous text, *Notes from Underground*. The article concludes indecisively by suggesting that Schmitt reveals what may be called a "cosmic" view neither above nor totally within the fray, possessing neither neutrality nor total engagement, a view reflecting perhaps the highest form of play, that which may be attributed to God and which human beings attempt to imitate, both disastrously and wondrously.

Eva Odzuck

"HALF-IRONIC, RESPECTLESS, AND WITHOUT FEAR": ON CARL SCHMITT'S LITERARY STRATEGIES IN HIS *DER LEVIATHAN IN DER STAATSLEHRE DES THOMAS HOBBES* (1938)

This paper explores the question of how to read Schmitt's Hobbes book of 1938. It argues for the thesis that Schmitt borrowed some literary strategies from Hobbes that allow Schmitt to distance himself from the Nazi regime under which he was living. In this

respect, the paper provides further evidence for the thesis that Schmitt's Hobbes book is also a political book. Although Schmitt's intention of defending Hobbes against contemporary misleading totalitarian interpretations cannot be questioned, Schmitt had undoubtedly not only this one reason for publishing his Hobbes book: The Nazi state of 1938 was no longer a state with which the so-called "juridical architect of the Third Reich" could fully identify, and Schmitt may have wished to express his growing distance. The paper argues that even if an interpretation of Hobbes's political philosophy was not the primary intention of Schmitt's Hobbes book, it might nevertheless be helpful to consult Hobbes's *Leviathan* to understand Schmitt's book. In following Schmitt's hints of Hobbes's esotericism and of Hobbes's art of dealing with dangerous subjects, the paper explores not so much the content as the method and the supposed literary strategies of Schmitt's Hobbes book. Although this paper does not aim at a final and complete description of Schmitt's political standpoint, it sheds some light on his political hermeneutics. It thus helps to develop a more complex and complete image of Schmitt as a political thinker.

Szymon Wróbel

NONDIALECTICAL NEGATIVITY

The paper is an attempt to rethink the category of nondialectical negativity. This category goes beyond the Hegelian category of abolition (*Aufhebung*) and, in political terms, beyond politics understood as a struggle for recognition. The philosophers of nondialectical negativity include such prominent figures as Schelling, Adorno, and Žižek. However, two other authors are analyzed in the text. On the one hand, a representative of radical left-wing thought, Andrew Culp, with his idea of a policy of asymmetry that prohibits us from collaborating with the system in any way and forbids us from making concessions and compromises. On the other hand, a representative of radical right-wing thought, Carl Schmitt, with his intriguing figure of the partisan. Comparing the figure of the partisan to the figure of the troublemaker allows the author to consider the future of disguised philosophy, the politics of invisibility, radical hostility, and the destruction of the world as we know it.

Monika Gabriela Bartoszewicz

EPISTEMIC SECURITY AND THE MONOPOLY ON KNOWLEDGE

This paper conceptualizes epistemic security and examines its implications for the monopoly on knowledge in contemporary society. It explores how traditional notions of security have transitioned from tangible military threats to intangible, ideological ones, highlighting the role of epistemic institutions in shaping public discourse. By introducing the concept of epistemic security, the paper offers a novel framework for understanding how the consolidation of media, education, and cultural narratives has led to an "epistemic tyranny," where dominant perspectives control the flow of information. This shift challenges the principles of progress and relativism, as the pursuit of epistemic security demands authoritative truths and suppresses diverse viewpoints. The paper underscores the risks associated with this monopoly on knowledge, including the erosion of critical thinking and the potential for indoctrination. An analysis of epistemic security emphasizes the need for a pluralistic approach to knowledge production that values diverse perspectives and fosters genuine exploration. Ultimately, the paper calls for a reevaluation of the role of epistemic institutions in promoting a balanced and open discourse, warning against the dangers of a homogenized intellectual landscape.

Clifford A. Bates Jr.

OAKESHOTT'S CRITIQUE OF RATIONALISM IN POLITICS

This article examines Michael Oakeshott's critique of rationalism in politics, emphasizing its limitations in contemporary governance and its implications for the classical virtue of prudence. Oakeshott contends that modern rationalist frameworks prioritize abstract reasoning and universal principles, often neglecting the complexities inherent in political life. He advocates for a political philosophy that emphasizes practical wisdom, aligning his views with classical thinkers such as Aristotle and Cicero, who recognized prudence as essential for sound political judgment. Oakeshott draws on the classical concept of prudence, arguing that political decisions must be context dependent and grounded in a nuanced understanding of specific circumstances rather than a rigid adherence to theoretical ideals. Similarly, he highlights Cicero's belief that effective leadership relies on appreciating tradition and moral obligations. Oakeshott critiques the overconfidence of rationalist thought, which assumes that human reason can control complex social processes through abstract principles, potentially leading to authoritarian governance. In contrast, he promotes a vision of politics rooted in practical wisdom that acknowledges the limits of human reason and values insights gained through experience and tradition. This article explores Oakeshott's defense of prudence against rationalism and its enduring relevance in contemporary governance and political identity discussions while defending him against the charges of historicism leveled at him by some political theorists on the American Right.

Russell A. Berman

KONRAD WEISS'S *DER CHRISTLICHE EPIMETHEUS*: A POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF 1933?

Konrad Weiss (1880-1940) was a Catholic poet and writer from southern Germany. In the paper, Russell A. Berman presents him as a forgotten thinker of the German Conservative Revolution. Weiss's thought, rooted in Catholic mysticism, was both anti-Nazi and anti-liberal. In Weiss's work, especially in his essay *Der christliche Epimetheus* from 1933, one finds a specific political theology as well as a philosophy of history. Weiss's idea of the "Christian Epimetheus" later inspired Carl Schmitt and his comments on Karl Löwith's famous book *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (1949).

PATHWAYS OF CRITICAL THEORY: TOMASZ WIŚNIEWSKI IN CONVERSATION WITH RUSSELL A. BERMAN

Russell A. Berman served for many years as an editorial collaborator and later as the editor of the journal *Telos*. In the conversation, Berman shares his insights into the transformations of critical theory in relation to changes in Western culture, society, and politics in recent decades, mostly after the symbolic date of 1968. He places the development of *Telos* in this context. The conversation also touches on the role of the journal in the contemporary reception of the political philosophy of the German Conservative Revolution (Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger) and the European New Right (Alain de Benoist). These interests should be understood in the context of the crisis of liberal democracy and the decline of liberal-left ideological hegemony. Another important issue is the character of the university, especially the decline of the humanities, in the contemporary world. The conversation was held in the period between February and August 2024.

Andrzej Serafin

PLATO AND ELEUSIS

The Eleusinian Mysteries profoundly influenced Plato's philosophy, going beyond mere allusion. The article connects such Platonic concepts as Diotima's ladder of love and the cave allegory to Eleusinian initiation rites. It explores the secrecy surrounding the mysteries with Plato's use of indirect language to convey their essence and emphasizes the importance of Eleusinian testimonies for understanding Plato, suggesting a parallel between Eleusinian ἐποπτεία and Platonic θεωρία. Furthermore, the article examines the role of sexuality in both traditions, including the possibility of ritual hierogamy, and links it to Plato's metaphysics. It discusses the stages of Eleusinian initiation with their counterparts in Plato's dialogues and highlights the ineffable nature of the Eleusinian visionary experience and its connection to Platonic metaphysics, arguing that understanding the Eleusinian context is crucial for grasping the full depth of Plato's philosophy, his esotericism, in particular the theory of principles.

Luis J. Pedrazuela

ON THE WAY TO FINALITY: JEFF LOVE AND ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE'S RUSSIAN ROOTS

In *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève*, Jeff Love successfully portrays Alexandre Kojève as a pinnacle of the Russian philosophical tradition, embodying the pursuit of Plato's ideals. Love's intellectual biography explores how Kojève's philosophy interweaves lesser-explored interpretive layers – such as Rousseauian and propagandistic elements – that have often been overlooked in previous scholarship. The book is especially groundbreaking in connecting these dimensions to a philosophical journey shaped by three key Russian influences on Kojève: Dostoevsky, Fedorov, and Soloviev. Kojève's thought emerges from this distinct Russian kernel, confronting us with a finality that transcends any Tantalic, Sisyphean, or even Platonic/Kojèvean consoling withdrawal, presenting total annihilation as the ultimate realization of the essence of humanity.

Rafał Kuczyński

A TOURGUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

The review presents a synopsis of Gabriel Pihas's book *Nature And Imagination in Ancient and Early Modern Roman Art*, as well as its main thesis and a philosophical underpinning in Hans Blumenberg's thought and presents its critique. Emphasizing, on the one hand, the erudition of the book in the field of art history and, on the other, underlining the depth of the author's aesthetic analysis, the essay confronts Blumenberg's idea with regards to the origins of modernity, which is supposed to rise from a theological shift towards nominalism in the late Middle Ages and resulted in, as Pihas argues, the shift of focus in art from nature to imagination.

The philosophical quarterly *Kronos* was established in 2007 by scholars connected with the University of Warsaw and the University of Białystok. Metaphysics, the philosophy of politics, the philosophy of literature and religion, history of psychoanalysis comprise the thematic scope of the journal. The editors of the quarterly strive to familiarize the Polish reader with new translations and commentaries of classic works (Plato, Joachim of Fiore, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, Heidegger, and many others), as well as the work of contemporary philosophers.

The annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English) was established in 2012 as a companion edition to the quarterly, to supplement it, yet without repeating the content of the Polish edition. The papers presented in the annual might be of interest to the readers from outside Poland, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the dynamic thought of contemporary Polish authors, as well as entirely new topics, rarely discussed by English-speaking authors. One of the issues published so far contained passages from previously unknown lectures by Leo Strauss on Aristotle; another issue was dedicated to the Russian phenomenologist Gustav Shpet.

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