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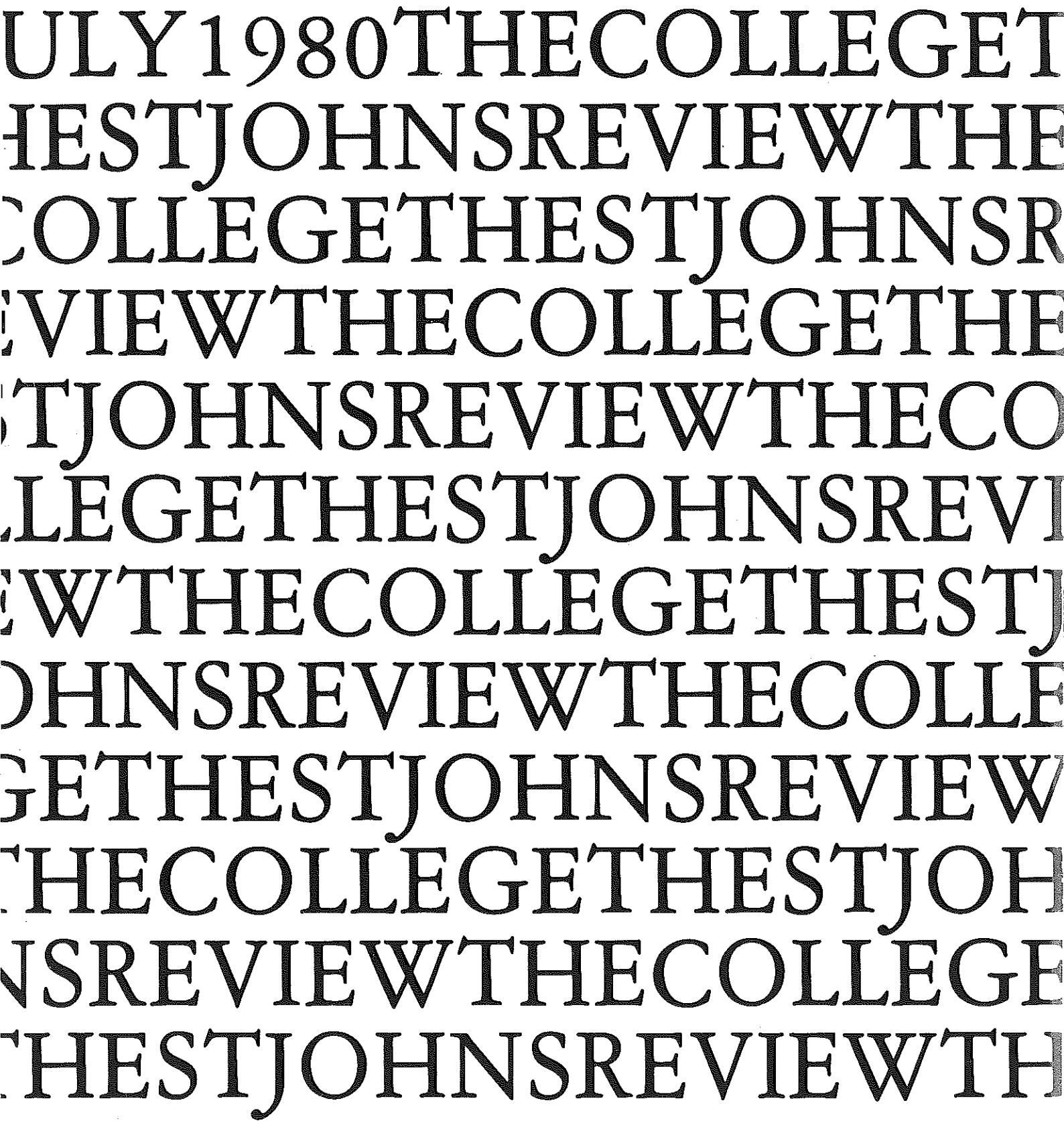
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Kepler and the Mode of Vision

Curtis Wilson

How do we see?

Opening our eyes, looking outward from the eye sockets in our heads, we perceive—unless perhaps we are being subjected to an experiment by a psychologist, or are about to faint away—we usually perceive *objects* in a *world:* chairs, the floor, walls, windows, trees, houses, automobiles, dogs, cats, birds, people; each object situated at any moment in some place in an environment that spreads out from here, that is, from wherever we happen at the moment to be. Visual perception, almost always, is of persisting, stable, space-occupying things or objects, things not only extended and shaped in length and width but modelled in depth, and located with respect to certain background surfaces, like the floor or walls of the room, or the terrain outside, or the surface of the bay. The solid objects look solid, the square objects look square, the horizontal surfaces look horizontal, and a person who approaches me from 100 feet away does not grow to ten times his previous size. The visual world with its stable, meaningful objects remains patiently there for my inspection, in all its meaningful known-ness and unknown-ness.

It is all so familiar. And yet the performance of seeing, all of you surely know, is a complex affair. It depends on certain organs or instruments and conditions. In order for anyone to see, there must be light to see by; the eyes must be open, and must focus and point properly; certain sensitive cells of the retina of the eye must react to light in certain ways, nerve fibrils must transmit impulses to certain nerve ganglia, and these must transmit impulses on to what has been called the enchanted loom, the brain. Let anyone of these conditions not be fulfilled, and seeing will not occur. Yet, seeing does not "feel like" a complex, physical process. Rather, it "feels as if" things are simply there when we open our eyes. The fact that, on the basis of physiological processes occurring in my head, I should see a world *out there,* a world that I believe I share with you, though at any moment I acknowledge—and I think you acknowledge—that we are seeing it under different perspectives: this, when I start to reflect on it, seems little short of miracle.

Please do not expect me to explain away that miracle. The world that I perceive before me, into which I enter perforce, and where I meet you on a basis of essential equality—that perceived world I take to be a primary datum. Its existence seems to me to be presupposed, in one way or another, in whatever I may say, on any subject whatsoever, even when, seeking to philosophize, I pretend or imagine that it is not so. My language and hence my thought are deeply rooted in the human experience of the humanly perceived world. My seeing and my knowing seem to be from *within* that world. True enough, I can be persuaded that the humanly perceived world is not *the* world simply. It differs from a cat's world or a rabbit's world, painted only in shades of gray; it differs from the world of an arthropod, a bee, say, with its compound, movement-sensitive eyes. The human eye, we are told, responds only to a narrow band in the spectrum of radiation frequencies. Does this mean that our seeing and hence our knowing are fundamentally perspectival and partial? Is there some act of prestidigitation, whereby I can gain a perspective on my seeing and my knowing as though from outside my world?

Such questions were raised in antiquity. One is reminded, for instance, of Protagoras' assertion that "each thing is as it appears to him who perceives it." Protagoras is identifying perception with what *is.* He is attempting to surmount the paradox presented by earlier cosmologists, for example the atomists, who on the one hand insisted on a sharp disjunction between appearance and reality, between what appears and what is, while on the other

An earlier version of this essay was read by Curtis Wilson in September 1974 at the Annapolis campus, the traditional Dean's opening lecture that year.

claiming sensation or perception as the basis of their theories. Protagoras proposes, in contrast, that there are no abiding elements underlying the world, but that the world consists of motions. Such motions, encountering one another, produce both the thing perceived and the perception. Neither the perception nor the thing perceived exists of itself, but only each for and with the other. Where nothing is perceived, nothing exists, and conversely, whatever is perceived, exists. Protagoras concludes, "my perception is true for me, since its object at any moment is what is there for me, and I am judge of what is for me, that it is, and of what is not, that it is not." Protagoras is asserting that it is impossible to err. The implication, unfortunately, is that the notion of truth is empty, no statement being controvertible. Protagoras attempts to encapsulate his doctrine in the famous formula, "Man is the measure of all things." But it seems to be human beings in the plural he is referring to, and they disagree. Moreover, it is not clear why other creatures, say cats or crustaceans, should not be the measure of all things. How maintain the Protagorean thesis against one who denies it, since he, too, is a 'measure of all things'?

Issues of this kind were being talked about and argued over at the time modern science came to be. Skepticism with regard to the possibility of true knowledge arose out of the religious conflicts of the 16th century; out of the discovery and exploration of the New World, which revealed the existence of plants, animals, and peoples unknown to Aristotle; out of certain challenges to traditional medicine and astronomy posed by Paracelsus and Copernicus. The men most notably responsible for setting modern science on its way, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, were each of them aiming to make a new beginning, to lay new foundations for human knowledge. The attempt at a new beginning becomes most radical and far-reaching in Descartes.

It is with the theory of visual perception as it relates to the emergence of Cartesian thought that I am here concerned. My account will begin with the development of Kepler's theory of the eye as an optical instrument, including his discovery in 1603 of the formation of the retinal image. I shall go into some detail as to *how* this discovery came about, as an example of learning and discovery. Then I shall turn to the Cartesian interpretation of the Keplerian result. For Descartes, Kepler's theory of the optics of the eye becomes an inspiration and vindication of Cartesian physics and philosophy. In the final section, I shall undertake a brief critique of the Cartesian interpretation.

Prior to the publication of Kepler's theory, from the 13th through the 16th centuries, the generally accepted theory of vision in the European universities was that due to an Arab optician of the 11th century, Ibn al-Haytham—the Europeans referred to him as Alhazen. Without describing this theory in much detail, let me say, first, that, following Galen, the Greek physician, Alhazen supposed the sensitive organ of the eye to be the crystalline humor, what we now call the lens. This crystalline humor was supposed to be right in the center of the eye, a notion not challenged till the second half of the 16th century. The ciliary muscles and ligaments, connecting the lens to the coatings of the eye, were thought by Galen to be nerves, and this was a reason for supposing the crystalline humor to be the sensitive element. Secondly, Alhazen assumed that not all the light rays entering the eye were effectual in producing vision, but only those rays which started from the surface of the object, crossed the surface of the eye perpendicularly, and came to an apex in the center of the crystalline humor, thus forming a pyramid. If more rays were to take part in the production of vision, Alhazen thought, the result would be indistinctness and confusion. He had no notion of the bringing to a focus of a bundle or *'pencil'* of rays within the eye, nor did anyone before Kepler; it was Kepler who introduced these terms *pencil* and *focus* into optics. Thirdly, as to what the soul senses, Alhazen essentially followed the Aristotelian account. The soul senses the sensible form of the thing seen, without its matter. This is not a copy theory; no images are involved; it is an identity theory. To perceive the sensible form of a thing is to perceive the object as it is. The soul is passive; it *receives* the sensible form. What is received in the eye must travel along the optic nerve to the brain, according to Alhazen, in order for sensation to be completed. But already in the eye, the motion of light has somehow brought about a sensation, that is, the reception of the sensible form.

How did Kepler come to break with this optical tradition of the universities? Certain anatomical discoveries played a role. In the latter half of the 16th century, it was discovered that the crystalline humor was far forward in the eye, and that the cutting of the ciliary processes does not prevent vision. But at a crucial point, I believe, Kepler was dependent here on a tradition that was not an academic one, the tradition of *perspectiva pingendi.* In this term, *perspectiva* means not what *we* mean by "Perspective," but rather the same as optics, the science of vision. Optics as studied in the universities went under the name "perspectiva"; thus the standard university textbook of optics for 300 years up to Kepler's time was Johannes Pecham's *Perspectiva communis,* where the adjective "communis" or "common" apparently meant merely that the text was the standard one. *Perspectiva pingendi,* in contrast, was the optics of painting, the science that forms the basis of the art of drawing *in* perspective, to use the term in the sense that it has now come to have. *Perspectiva pingendi* was sometimes referred to as a "secret art," with its rules passed orally from one painter or draftsman to another in the 15th century. But Kepler was able to read about it in a book by Albrecht Dürer published in 1538, and entitled *Instruction in Mensuration.* I shall be pursuing this connection shortly.

The starting point of the train of thought that led Kepler into an intensive study of optics was an astronomical anomaly. In April of 1598, Tycho Brahe, the famous ob-

servational astronomer, wrote to the professor of mathematics at Tübingen, to report his observation of a solar eclipse earlier that year. What was especially remarkable was the apparent size of the moon when eclipsing the sun.

> Truly [Tycho wrote], it must be recognized that the moon when it is on the ecliptic and when it is new [this means it is going to eclipse the sun] does not appear to be the size which it is at other times at full moon, even though it is then at the same distance from the earth; but it is, as it were, constricted by about one part in five, from certain causes to be disclosed elsewhere.

The causes *were* to be disclosed elsewhere, but not by Tycho, who was totally ignorant of what they were. The only thing he did conclude for sure was that there could never be a total eclipse of the sun, in which the sun was completely covered by the moon, and in this he was wrong.

Kepler read of the anomaly in a letter from Maestlin, his former teacher at Tübingen, in July. He was at this time 27 years old, and employed as a school teacher in the Duchy of Styria in Lower Austria. The report of a twenty percent shrinkage of the moon during solar eclipses perplexed and intrigued him. He imagined various hypotheses to explain the appearance, for instance that the moon had a transparent atmosphere. He also studied medieval books on the *perspectiva* of the schools, seeking an optical explanation. On July 10, 1600, there occurred another eclipse of the sun, and Kepler observed and measured it with special apparatus set up in the marketplace of Graz, in Styria, By the end of the month he had correctly resolved the Tychonic paradox in terms of optics. As he reported a little later to Maestlin:

> . . . I have been fully occupied in calculating and observing the solar eclipse. While I was involved in preparing the special instrument, setting up the boards under the sky, some fellow took the opportunity to observe another shadow and it produced not an eclipse of the sun but of my purse, costing me 30 Gulden. A costly eclipse, by God! But from it I have deduced the explanation why the moon shows so small a diameter on the ecliptic at new moon. And so in what was left of July, I have written a "Paralipomena" to the Second Book of the *Optics* of Witelo.

Witelo's *Optics* had been written about A.D. 1270, in northern Italy, and was based largely on the *Optics* of Alhazen. *Paralipomena* means "Things Omitted." When Kepler's book on optics finally appeared, in 1604, it had swollen from a brief explanation of Tycho's paradox into a 450 page treatise, the foundation of modern optics, the science not of vision but of light. But it still carried the old title, *Things Omitted by Witelo.*

Now what was Tycho's paradox, really, and how did Kepler resolve it? You must first understand that in Tycho's time, eclipses were being observed by means of the *camera obscura,* a dark room with a single, small hole in

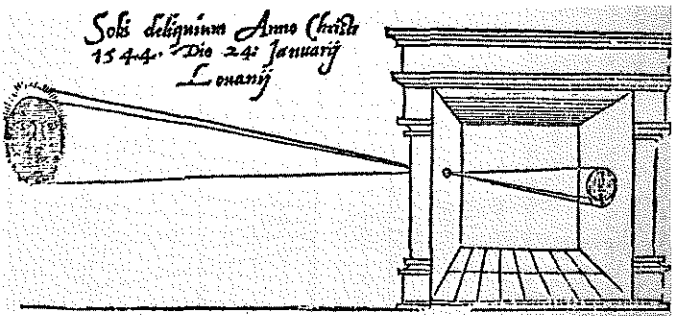

Figure 1

the wall, through which the rays of the sun are admitted (Figure 1). The idea of using the camera for quantitative astronomy goes back at least to the 13th century, but its common use for the measuring of eclipses dates from the 1540's. The figure is from a book on astronomical measurements published in 1545. It shows a double cone of imagined light rays passing through the tiny aperture in the wall, and it clearly depicts the inversion of the solar crescent on the wall. Let me incidentally call your attention to the fact that the depiction is in focused or linear perspective, that is, the lines that we take to be receding perpendicularly from the plane of the drawing are so oriented as to intersect at a point, called the vanishing point.

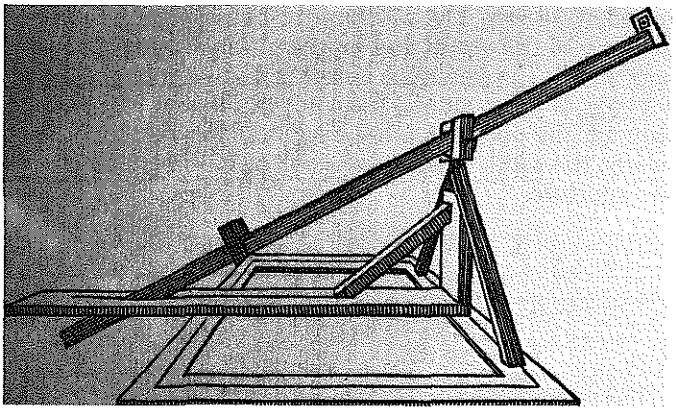

Figure 2

Kepler's eclipse measuring instrument in 1600 was not an obscure room, but an obscure tent (Figure 2). It consisted like the camera of a small aperture and a screen for receiving the image. The bar carrying the screens could be adjusted so that the receiving screen would be perpendicular to the rays of the sun. When an observation was in progress, the whole apparatus, including Kepler himself, not shown here, was covered by a black cloth.

Now Tycho's shrunken moon is actually a shrunken shadow. To understand the shrinking, we have to understand how a luminous object forms an image behind an aperture that is not a point, but has a finite size. In the *camera obscura,* it won't do to use a *very* tiny aperture, because then the image is feeble, and its boundaries be-

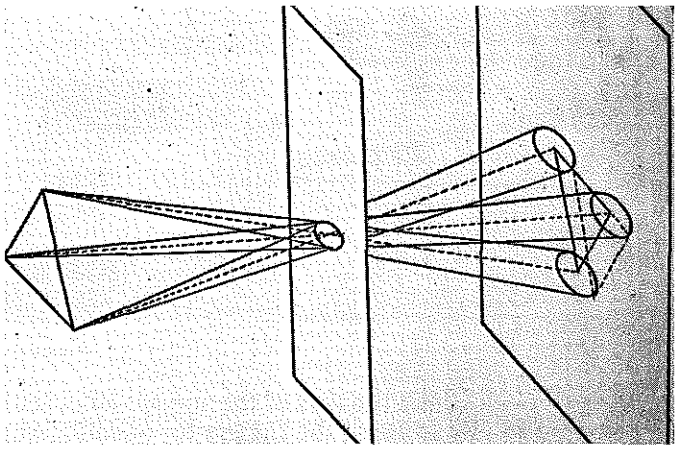

Figure 3

come indistinct. But let the aperture be the size of a pea, as Kepler did, and the size of the image will be affected in the way shown by Figure 3. On the left imagine a luminous triangle. The rays of light emerging from any given point of the triangle, and passing through the round aperture in the middle, form a cone. On the right you can see that the illuminated portion of the screen will not be triangular, but will be of such a shape as one obtains from a triangle by augmenting it on all sides by a border of uniform width; that is, it will be a three-sided figure with rounded corners. The width of the border depends on the distance of the object and on the distance and size of the aperture. If the luminous object is distant enough so that the rays of light coming from any point of it and passing through the aperture are very nearly parallel, then, very nearly, the width of the border will be half the diameter of the aperture.

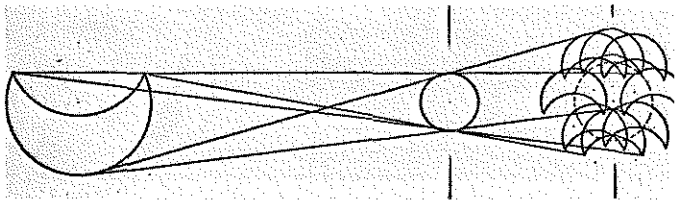

Figure 4

Actually, there are two ways of conceiving the formation of the image. One can think of the whole luminous object as being projected through each point of the aperture, as in Figure 4, to yield innumerable overlapping images on the screen. This was the standard medieval way of analyzing the rays coming from an object: that is, to think of them as forming a pyramid with base on the object, apex in the eye, or in the case here, in the aperture of the camera. The other way of analyzing the image formation, the one Kepler used, is shown in Figure 5. Here one considers all the rays emerging from each point of the object. To the cone of rays emerging from a given point and passing through a round aperture, Kepler gave the name *pencil,* which in his day meant painter's brush or pencil. The medieval analysis takes the *object* as its starting point; Kepler's analysis takes the point source of light rays as its starting point. Although the pencils and the pyramids encompass exactly the same rays, the analysis in terms of pencils is probably the more helpful in letting us see what the shape of the image will be. In the case of the luminous crescent of the partially eclipsed sun, for instance, it will be a crescent with rounded horns. The quantitative analysis of Tycho's paradoxical phenomenon is now easy; see Figure 6. The crescent image of the sun has been augmented on all sides by a border of width equal to the radius of the aperture, while the shadow of the moon has been diminished by a border of the same width.

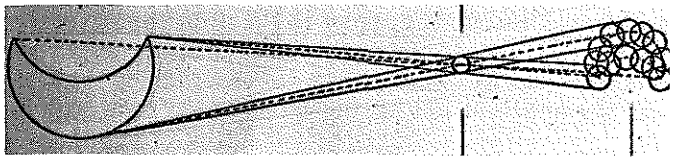

Figure 5

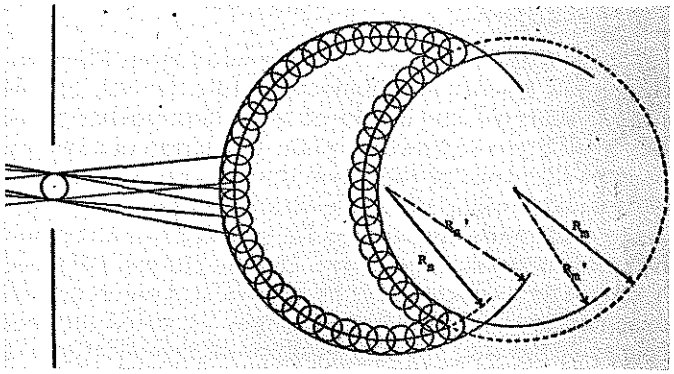

Figure 6

This Keplerian solution to the Tychonic paradox happens to have been very important in the history of 17th century astronomy, but it is so straight-forward that I do not anticipate your being moved to rapture over it. It simply makes a rigorous application of the rectilinear propagation of light to the *camera obscura.* Had this never been done before? It had, (by Alhazen), but the correct solution was unknown in Europe before Kepler. The medieval treatises discussed a special form of the problem, namely, why it is that, behind an *angular* aperture, when the screen is sufficiently distant, the image cast by the sun is *round.* The most common solution among the medieval opticians was to say that light has a tendency to round itself out, that it contains an active power which brings this about. Light, it was said, was the bearer of all creative and causal action, and thus had this power.

Kepler read these medieval discussions. He was even attracted to the neoplatonic theory of light that they contained. He has left us a very explicit account of the way in

Figure 7

which he came to reject the notion that light could round itself out, in violation of rectilinear propagation.

> A certain light (he writes in the *Paralipomena*) drove me out of the shadows of Pecham several years ago. For, since I could not comprehend the obscure sense of the words from the diagram on the page, I had recourse to a personal observation in three dimensions. I placed a book on high to take the place of the shining body. Between it and the floor I set a tablet having a many-cornered aperture. Next, a thread was sent down from one corner of the book through the aperture and onto the floor; it fell on the floor in such a way that it grazed the edges of the aperture; I traced the path produced and by this method created a figure on the floor similar to the aperture . . .[He goes on to describe the tracing of the aperture from each salient point of the book]. And so it became possible for solving the problem to bring in circularity, not of the rays of light, but of the sun itself; not because the circle is the most perfect figure, but because it is the figure of the shining body.

So it is a thread that leads Kepler out of his perplexity, and to the vindication of rectilinear propagation of light, and of the invariant size of the moon. It may seem preposterous to ask where the idea of using the thread came from, but Stephen Straker, a recent student of Kepler's optics, has made an interesting guess. It has to do with *perspectiva pingendi.*

What is *perspectiva pingendi,* focused or linear perspective, Renaissance perspective, as it is variously called? The rules of linear or focused perspective seem to have been worked out, at least in part, in ancient times, apparently in connection with the painting of scenery for dramas. It was the Greeks who first entered upon the path of trying to produce, on a flat surface, the illusion of three-dimensional figures and scenes; in the painting of other ancient peoples before they come under Greek influence, there is almost no evidence of an interest in such illusion. The difference seems to be connected with the Greek interest in *fiction,* epic and drama freed from ritualistic constraints. So on countless Greek vases and mixing bowls, one finds painted scenes in which something wicked and interesting is going on. The photograph of Figure 7 shows a scene from the ambush of Dolon in the *Iliad.*

The mastery of techniques for producing the three-dimensional illusion was progressive. Foreshortening, consistent handling of light and shade, the increasing mistiness with distance—the various tricks of illusionist painting were mastered over a period of some centuries. Ancient authors who write of the history of painting, like Pliny and Quintilian, record it as a series of triumphs in the production of progressively more persuasive illusions. In the final stages of the Greek progress, the paintings were painted not on vases, which tend to be preserved, but on walls which tend to crumble. However, the accident of the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79 has perserved for us some of those paintings in the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Such signatures as one finds on the paintings are Greek. A large part of the art lay in learning to rely on the imagination of the beholder, which is very obliging, and

Figure 8

assures us that the young woman in Figure 8 is a creature of grace and beauty; we can never know whether it is good luck or bad that she can never turn around. In Figure 9 we have an imaginary, sacred landscape, in which spatial recession is suggested by an adroit handling of light and linear perspective. Also present is what Leonardo will call

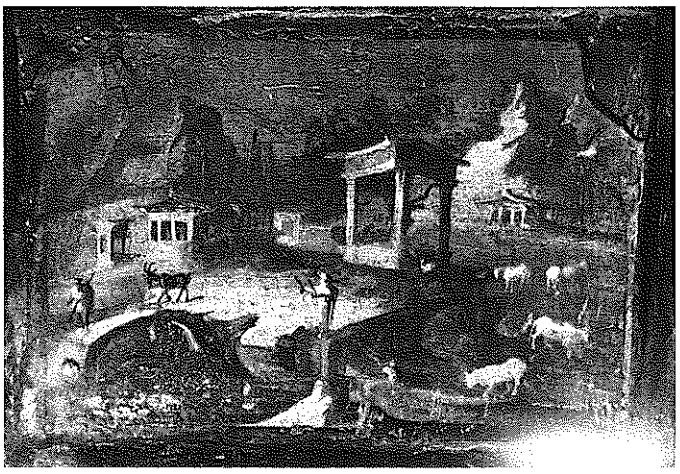

Figure 9

aerial perspective, the increasing indistinctness as the scene recedes into the distance. But linear perspective emerges most clearly in wall decorations from about the middle of the first century B.C., that represent theatre sets, apparently a common form of wall decoration for homes. In Figure 10 the lines of the colonnaded court, seen above the facade wall, recede to a single vanishing point, as they should because of their parallelism.

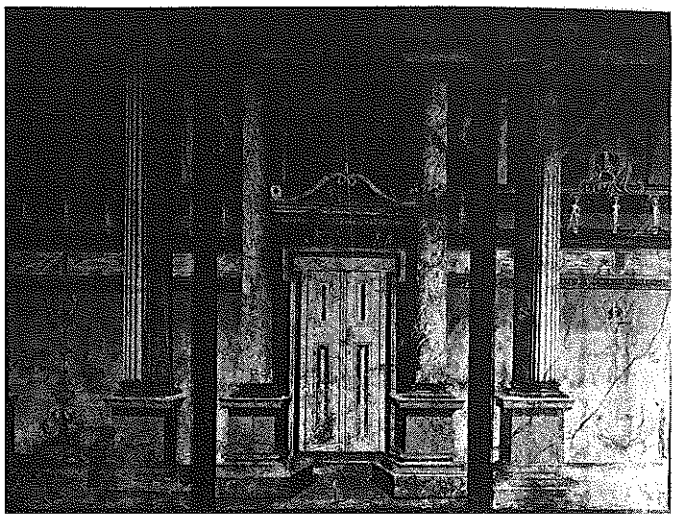

Figure 10

That a mathematical theory of linear perspective had been worked out in antiquity is suggested by certain passages in the book on architecture written by Vitruvius about 25 B.C. He describes "scenography" as the sketching of the front and of the retreating sides of buildings and the correspondence of all lines to a fixed center, the 'vanishing point' of the later theory of linear perspective. "It is necessary," he says, "that, a fixed centre being established, the lines correspond by natural law to the sight of the eyes and the extension of the rays, so that certain images may render the appearance of buildings in the painting of stages, and things which are drawn upon certain surfaces may seem in one case to be receding, and in another to be projecting."

During medieval times the interest in visual illusion faded, to be revived in the late 13th and 14th centuries by the artists that Dante praises, Cimabue and Giotto. But it was not till the early 15th century that a mathematical theory of perspective reappeared. It was the work of Brunelleschi, the architect of the great dome of the cathedral in Florence, and a reader of Vitruvius. Brunelleschi's procedure started from the architectural ground-plan and elevation; lines were drawn from every salient point of these plans to the position of the eye as projected onto the same plane; the intersection of these connecting lines with the picture plane gave the dimensions to use in the perspective construction. Brunelleschi's procedure came to be called the *costruzione legittima*. Other, less time-consuming procedures for producing a similar result were later introduced. The first treatise on painter's perspective was written by Leon Battista Alberti in 1435, and Alberti makes much of the *sottilissimo velo*, shown in Figure 11 in a somewhat uncomfortable representation by Dürer. It is a grid of threads through which the object to be drawn is looked at from a fixed point. It has sometimes been asserted that a *curvilinear* system of perspective would be more correct than the linear perspective used in

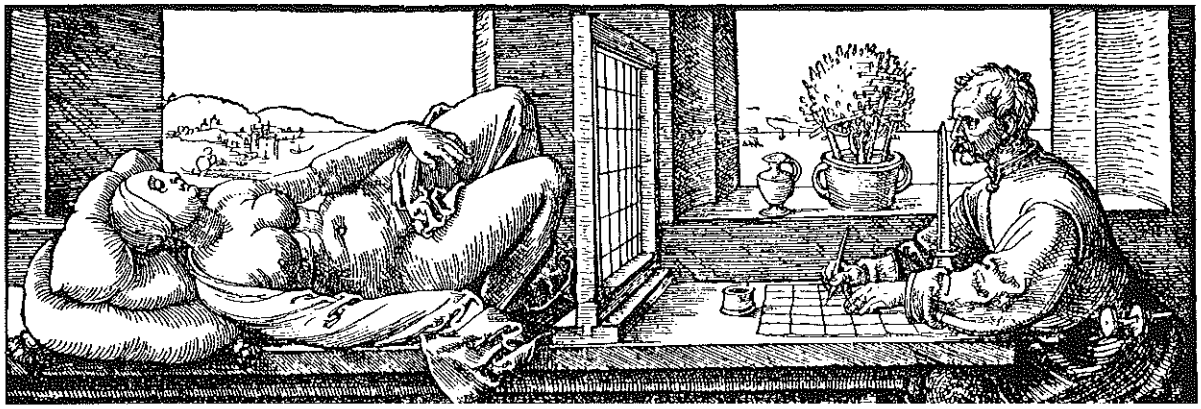

Figure 11

the Renaissance. Panofsky, the late historian of art, endorsed this notion, claiming that Renaissance perspective was a mere convention, comparable to the conventions of versification in poetry. This is surely wrong. Linear perspective is based on certain constraining assumptions, namely that only one eye is used and that the head is kept immobile. But given these assumptions, it does what the Renaissance artists thought it did; it sends to the eye the same pattern of lines and points as the object itself would. It has nothing to do with the shape of the retina or with neurophysiology or psychology; it is simply a matter of rectilinear light rays and projective geometry.

The rectilinear light ray is *materialized* in the procedure represented in the picture by Dürer in Figure 12. A perspective picture of a lute is being constructed. A needle or nail having a large eye has been fastened into the right-hand wall. A heavy thread is led through the needle, a weight being attached to the lower end of the thread. Between the needle and the lute, a frame is set up which has a little door hinged to it that is free to move in and out of the plane of the frame. Crossing the rectangular space enclosed by the frame are two other threads which the picture does not clearly show; they are free to be moved across the plane of the frame; they intersect at right angles and so define a point of the plane. The free end of weighted thread is led through the plane of the frame and held on a point of the lute by the man on the left. The threads crossing in the frame are moved till their intersection coincides with the point at which the weighted thread cuts through the plane. The weighted thread is then taken away, the little door bearing the paper is shut, and a mark is made on the paper where the movable threads intersect. The process must be repeated for other points of the object—as many as the draftsman feels are necessary for its proper portrayal. The finished picture will show the lute as it would be seen by a single eye situated at the position of the needle in the right-hand wall. It was a standard problem for Renaissance artists to avoid the undesirably sharp foreshortening that results when the beholder's eye is only an arm's length from the plane of the picture. Dürer's apparatus solves this problem mechanically.

It is Stephen Straker's conjecture that Kepler's thread was the direct offspring of Dürer's thread. Whether this is so or not, Kepler's choice of the *pencil* of light as the element of his analysis of the *camera obscura* surely stems from *perspectiva pingendi*, the projective geometry of light rays, rather than the *perspectiva communis* of the schools, according to which the light rays had the capacity to round themselves out. Later on Kepler himself, as we learn from a letter of 1620 from the English ambassador Henry Wotton to Francis Bacon, used a *camera obscura*—in this case a black tent with an aperture for admitting light—to obtain projections of landscape scenes from the

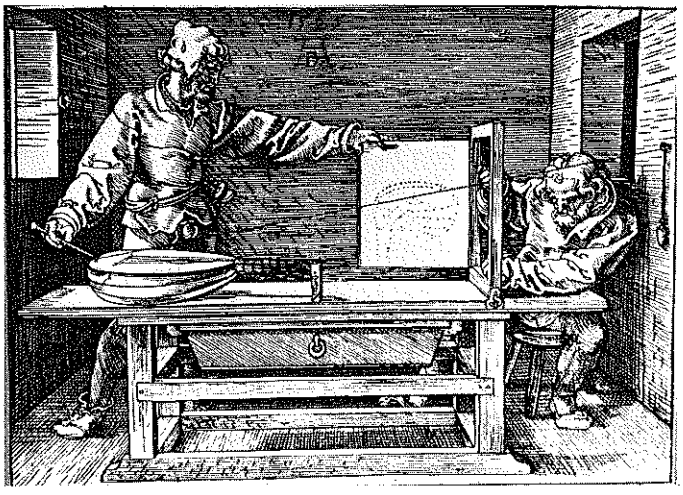

Figure 12

outside; ensconcing himself within the tent, Kepler proceeded to copy the landscapes in detail, producing drawings "not as a painter but as a mathematician," to Wotton's great wonder and admiration. The evident principle was rectilinear propagation.

Rectilinear propagation had resolved Tycho's paradox and accounted for the operation of the *camera obscura*. But Kepler did not stop here. His *Paralipomena* is a big book. In the fifth chapter he went on to consider the operation of the eye.

The eye evidently resembles a *camera obscura*: the substances within are transparent, and the external coverings exclude light except where the pupil or aperture is. But the eye could *not* be a *camera obscura,* because as Kepler had learned, the larger the relative size of the aperture, the fuzzier the image, and the pupil of the eye was large enough to produce a total confusion of overlapping images at the back of the eye.

Kepler turned to the accounts of the anatomists. All but one held to the standard view, according to which the crystalline humor was the sensitive element. A certain Felix Plater, however, had learned that what were supposed to be the nerves to the crystalline humor could be cut without loss of vision, and further that the crystalline humor was far forward in the eye. To him the eye looked like a *camera obscura* with a magnifying glass in front. Such instruments had been constructed in the late 16th century. It was left to Kepler to explain how a lens forms an image. Convex lenses had been in use as burning and magnifying glasses for centuries; eye-glasses had been in use since the 13th century. But Kepler was the first to account for their operation in terms of geometrical optics, the paths of light rays. He recognized that there could be a one-to-one correspondence between luminous points outside the eye, and illuminated points on the retina, provided that the cornea and crystalline humor were understood to act as lenses which refract the diverging pencils of light from each bright point outside, and bring each of them to convergence to illuminate a single point on the retina. With a globe of glass containing water, he constructed a model of the eye to show how it worked. He it was who first formulated the simple quantitative rules governing the distances and sizes of images formed by lenses. He was the first to be able to give an account of nearsightedness and farsightedness, the function of eyeglasses in correcting these defects, and why, despite the finite size of the aperture, a sharp image can be formed. And he always describes the geometrical optics of the eye in terms that remind us of painting: the image he calls a *pictura;* he speaks of its production as a process of *painting* the world outside on the retina of the eye; and for the conical bundles of light rays that do the painting, he introduces the term *pencil,* meaning painter's brush.

What about the upside-down-ness and left-for-right reversal of the retinal image? Kepler regards these as simply necessitated by the behavior of light. How, *given* the retinal image, vision then occurs, he does not offer to say:

> I leave it to be disputed by natural philosophers (he says) how this picture is put together by the visual spirits that reside in the retina and nerve. . . . The impression of this image on the visual spirits is not optical but physical and wonderful (*admirabilis*).

Kepler is saying that what happens in the retina and optic nerve and brain surpasses the powers of the mathematical optician; not being reducible to mathematics, it seems to be, in Kepler's view, ultimately inexplicable, analogous to the mystery of creation.

> Just as the eye was made to see colors (he writes), and the ear to hear sounds, so the human mind was made to understand, not whatever you please, but quantity. . . . It is the characteristic of the human understanding which seems to be such from the law of creation, that nothing can be known completely except quantities. And so it happens that the conclusions of mathematics are most certain and indubitable.

Kepler's view of the world was profoundly affected by the theory of *perspectiva pingendi.* The theorists of *perspectiva pingendi* had resurrected the famous formula of Protagoras, "man is the measure of all things." But they meant by it not the denial of the possibility of knowledge, but in a special way, the contrary. Seeing is perspectival, no doubt, but the perspective can be understood. Perspective measures space; space is known through quantities; quantities measure the permanent order of nature. At the center of every perspective system is man himself, who becomes the judge and standard for all comparisons. It is he, for instance, who apprehends and judges the beauty of things, as consisting in harmonious proportions. (This is almost a quotation from Alberti).

Kepler shared these ideas. He viewed the whole cosmos as a divinely created, three-dimensional work of art, an image of the Divine Trinity, the structure of which we can determine from the perspectives we have of it. Man, created in the image of God, is the contemplative creature, the measuring creature, as Kepler repeatedly calls him. He is placed on the midmost planet, so that by taking account of his changing position he can carry out triangulations, like a surveyer, and determine the distances of the primary cosmic bodies and their harmonious arrangement. Travel, Kepler explains, is broadening. We view the cosmos always by means of a continually changing perspective, but by calculating for our own displacement, we can use that very perspective to determine the cosmic dimensions and harmonious order. And so doing, Kepler says, the soul which is like a point, becoming contemplative, expands as it were into a circle. The sphere is reserved as the image for God himself.

I turn now to Descartes. In a letter of 1638 to an acquaintance, Descartes acknowledged Kepler as his "first master in optics." Descartes was not in the habit of admitting intellectual indebtedness; I do not know of another case where he did so. But for Descartes, the Keplerian theory of the eye as an optical instrument was both an inspiration for and vindication of Cartesian physics and philosophy. With Descartes, optics displaced astronomy as the key science for the understanding of the world.

The Keplerian theory of the eye as an optical instrument presents itself to Descartes as banishing mystery from the eye. Following Kepler, it becomes possible to construct a model of the eye, complete in just about every detail, down to the image at the rear that one may catch

on a translucent piece of parchment. Of course, we do not see the inverted, reversed, perspectival images on our own retinas. For that, there would be needed an eye behind the eye, and there is no such eye. As to what happens in the optic nerve and brain, in order that vision may be completed, Kepler leaves this mystery as deep as he found it.

The Keplerian theory of image formation means, for Descartes, that the traditional Aristotelian and scholastic theory of visual perception is wrong. Sensation is not the reception of the sensible form of a thing without its matter, because, in the first place, visual sensation is perspectival. At the very beginning of the first book he completed for publication, a book entitled *The World*, Descartes wrote:

> It is commonly believed that the ideas we have in our thoughts entirely resemble the objects from which they proceed... but I observe, on the contrary, several experiences that ought to make us doubt it.

One of the experiences Descartes has in mind here is that of looking at pictures:

> ...you can see that engravings, being made of nothing but a little ink placed here and there on the paper, represent to us forests, towns, men, and even battles and storms, even though, among an infinity of diverse qualities which they make us conceive in these objects, only in shape is there actually any resemblance. And even this resemblance is a very imperfect one, seeing that, on a completely flat surface, they represent to us bodies which are of different heights and distances, and even that following the rules of perspective, circles are often better represented by ovals rather than by other circles, and squares by diamonds rather than by other squares; and so for all other shapes. So that often, in order to be more perfect as images and to represent an object better, they must not resemble it.

But Descartes' critique of the traditional account of perception goes deeper. According to Aristotle and the schoolmen, things were very much what they appeared to be. The objects perceived were themselves colored; heat and cold were what in ordinary experience we apprehend them as being; the qualities of objects were the specifications of the things that made each one of them to be what it was. But how can such perception occur? The traditional theory fails to explain how such resemblance or identity is physically achieved. The proponents of this theory cannot show us how sensations "can be formed by these objects, received by the external sense organs, and transmitted by the nerves to the brain."

Now if the traditional assumption of resemblance between sensations and their objects is questionable or without warrant, then the traditional attempt to *found the sciences* by a step-wise advance from sense perception is also questionable or without warrant. In that case, how are the sciences to be founded?

At the beginning of his book *The World*, Descartes proposes to construct a fable of a world, "feigned at pleasure." Matter in this feigned new world, Descartes proposes, should be something of which we cannot even *pretend* ignorance. This requirement is met by *extension*, for "the idea of extension is so comprised in all other things which our imagination is able to form, that it is necessary for you to conceive it, if you imagine anything whatsoever." Having seized upon this first principle, Descartes proceeds to frame in terms of it a fabulous account of the world and of man. All is to be accounted for in terms of matter, that is, figured extension, shaped portions of space, in motion. Some features of this system can be deduced from the first principle, others must be constructed. The fabulous world that results is scientific in the sense that it involves only what can be clearly conceived; it thus embodies the rigor of mathematics.

In this fable of a world, Descartes is able to provide a clear conception of the way sensations are formed by their objects, received by the external sense organs, and transmitted to the brain. First,

> All the external senses... serve in a purely passive way, precisely in the manner in which wax receives shape from a seal. We have to think of the external shape of the sentient body as being really altered by the object precisely in the manner in which the shape of the surface of the wax is altered by the seal.

This description applies not only to touch but also to sight, in which light, conceived as a pressure transmitted through a medium, plays the same role as a blind man's stick. Since with our two eyes we apprehend a single thing, with our two ears a single sound, with our two hands a single body, when we are touching one, Descartes concludes that there must be a center in which the incoming stimuli are coordinated; this he identifies with the single organ in the upper brain which he knew to be single and central in position, the pineal gland. The whole process of vision Descartes now describes as follows:

> If we see some animal approach us, the light reflected from its body depicts two images of it, one in each of our eyes. The two images, by way of the optic nerves, form two others on the interior surface of the brain which faces its cavities. From these, by way of the spirits (or subtle fluids) which fill these cavities, the images then radiate towards the small gland which the spirits encircle, and do so in such fashion that the movement which constitutes each point of one of the images tends towards the same point of the gland as does the movement constituting that point in the other image which represents the same part of this animal; and in this way, the two brain-images form but one on the gland, which acting immediately on the soul, causes it to see the shape of the animal.

The Keplerian optics of the eye is thus interpreted as a mechanism for transmitting pressure, and this same

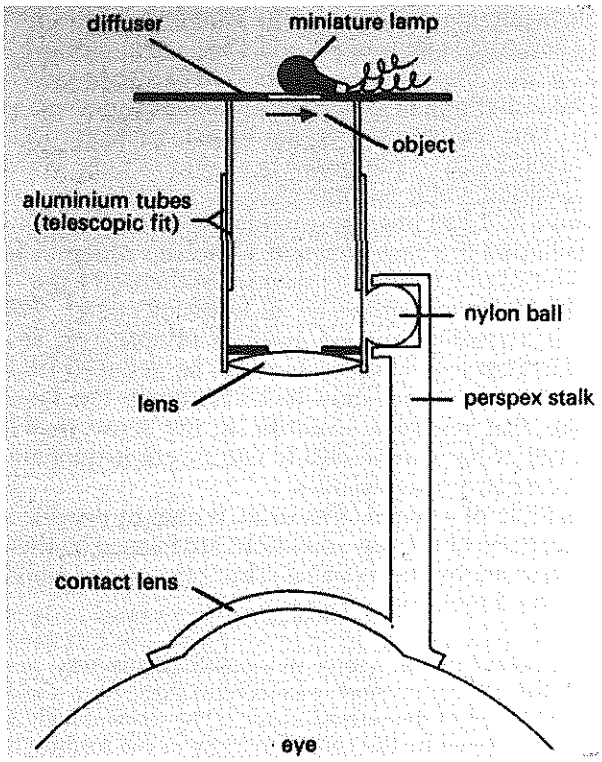

Figure 13

mechanism is imagined as transmitting the patterned pressures onward from the retinas through the nerves to the brain, with final composition of a single image on the pineal gland, or *sensus communis* or imagination as Descartes calls it. The entire process, up to the final apprehension by the soul of the image on the imagination, is to be considered as consisting simply in the alteration of the spatial disposition of the parts of the body, not less, says Descartes, than the movements of a clock or other automaton.

Readers of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and *Meditation* are familiar with the course of reflection whereby he undertakes to justify, and to lay unshakeable foundations for, this fabulous physics and physiology. According to this physics and physiology, we, that is our Souls, have immediate knowledge only of our ideas, including in this term, as Descartes does, sensations. Between our sensations, on the one hand, and that which provides the occasions for these sensations, namely the patterned pressures on the pineal gland, there opens an abyss. On one side is a qualityless world of matter in motion; on the other, worldless qualities in a consciousness that is out of the world, is extramundane. Between world and self, Descartes attempts to construct a metaphysical bridge, taking for starting point his certainty that the isolated, extramundane self, even when it doubts everything it can, at least exists as the source of the doubt. He calls it a *thinking thing*. The central arch of the construction is theological; it finally enables Descartes to conclude that what can be clearly and distinctly conceived, provided it fits all the facts, is true. I shall not pursue this argument here, my concern being rather with our perception of the visual world.

Nor shall I deal further with the detailed mechanisms of perception in Descartes' fabulous physics. Action by pressure is not regarded today either as the mode of action of light, or as that of the impulses in the nervous system. Among neurophysiologists today there is considerable doubt that anything is to be gained by supposing that the neural processes copy or are isomorphic with the contents of consciousness, are for example triangular in some way when one sees a triangle. Nevertheless, we still hear from neurophysiologists such statements as the following one by Lashley:

> All phenomena of behavior and of mind are ultimately describable in the concepts of the mathematical and physical sciences.

The problem about how we are *in* or *related to* the world, so insistently posed by the Cartesian theory, here recurs. Descartes' great achievement, it would appear, was to make the world safe for mathematical physics; but this achievement has left us outside, puzzled and questioning as to what we are.

Once more, in this final section as in the beginning, I must ask you not to expect me either to do miracles or to explain them away. What I can attempt is to point in directions in which non-Cartesian perspectives open up. Let me begin by citing a certain number of results of recent studies of human visual perception.

(1) To begin with, it is worth noting that the eye is in constant motion. It has a tremor with a frequency of between 30 and 80 cycles per second, and with an amplitude such as to shift a focused pencil of light from one retinal cell to the adjacent one. There are also wider flicks of up to a third of a degree, coming at irregular intervals of up to five seconds, with slow drifts in between the flicks. The apparatus shown in Figure 13 is attached to a contact lens, and because it moves with the eye, it produces a stabilized retinal image. The effect of this is, first, within a few seconds, distorted vision, and shortly afterward, the complete breakdown of vision, in the sense that the viewer can no longer see anything at all, although a clear image is being focused on his retina. Vision is thus an active process, and fails altogether when it ceases to be so.

(2) Next, let me point out that the clues to depth are multiple, more, in fact, than can be reviewed in brief compass. There is, to begin with, linear perspective, as in Figure 14. Note also here a size-distance relation, which reminds us how drastically the perceptual system transforms what is presented to it. As the little man walks into depth he appears to increase in size, although the three images in fact take up the same size on the plane surface. This has to do with what is called perceptual constancy, which I shall discuss in a moment.

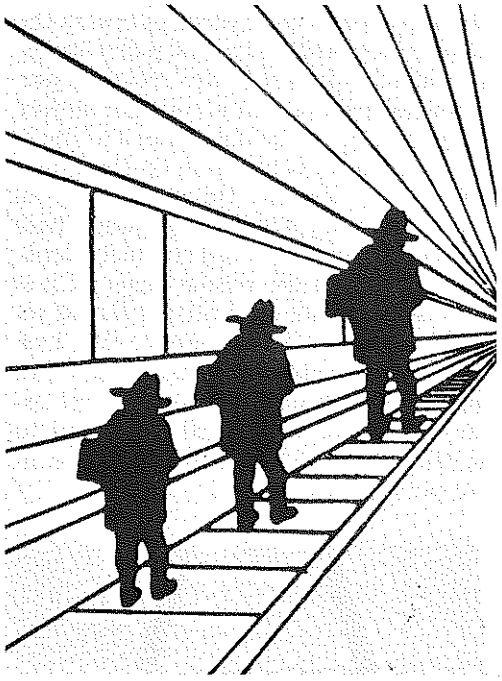

Figure 14

Gradients of texture immediately produce in us the sense of continuous surfaces stretching backward (see Figure 15). Such surfaces generally provide the background against which we locate objects.

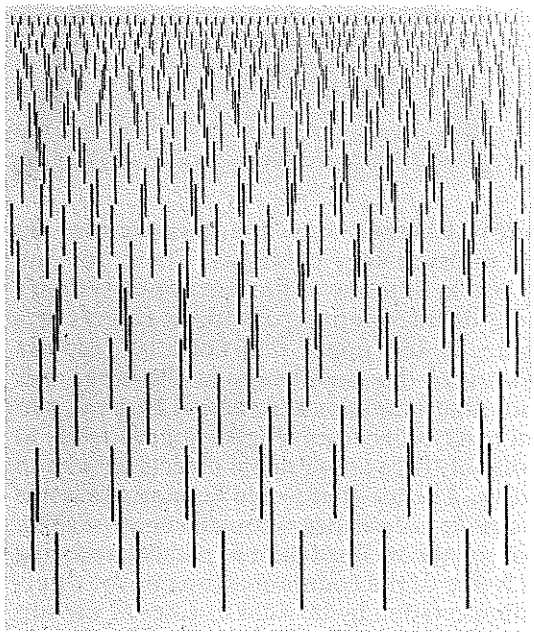

Figure 15

Then there is lighting. Light usually comes from one side, so the surfaces facing in different directions are differently illuminated. In late antiquity, four-tone mosaic floors like the one shown in Figure 16 seem to have been popular, despite the treacherous appearance of being other than flat.

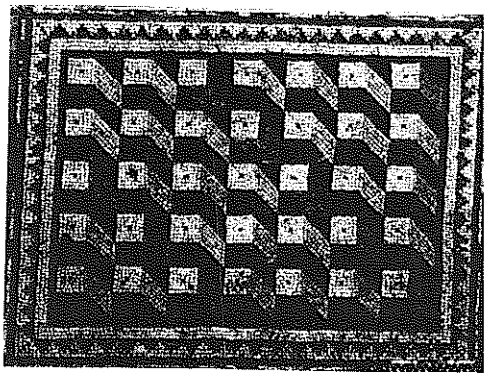

Figure 16

There is motion perspective, the differences in apparent relative velocity of different parts of the visual field as one moves one's head. The diagram in Figure 17 is for the more drastic case of an airplane pilot approaching the landing field.

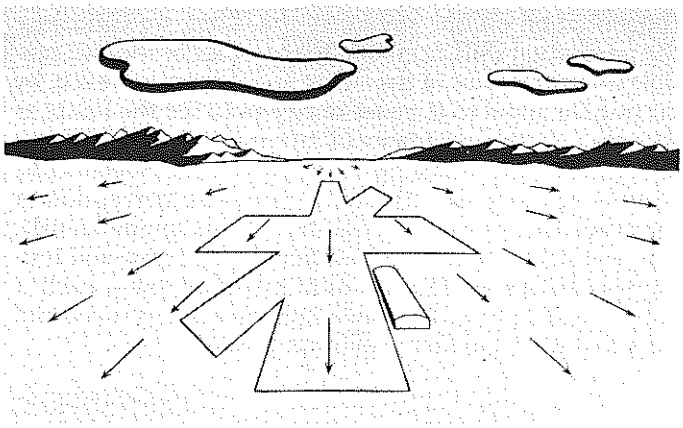

Figure 17

There are also *binocular* clues, impossible to illustrate in a single picture. There is the convergence of the two eyes, for example, and the accommodation of the lens in each. By far the most important is binocular disparity, a fact which only came to be recognized after Charles Wheatstone's invention of the stereoscope in the 1830's. The retinal images received by the two eyes are not simply superposable, but are notably different; and this difference by itself can produce the visual perception of depth.

(3) Scenes may be ambiguous. In particular, pictures being stationary and flat cannot provide motion perspective or the binocular clues to depth, and since the different three-dimensional shapes that can give the same projection on a plane are unlimited in number, it is evident that two-dimensional shapes can be ambiguous. The surprising thing is that we are so seldom misled or made aware of the ambiguity; the perceptual system quickly adopts the interpretation that satisfies the available clues. Shown, however, in illustration 18 is a figure called the Necker cube, which forces its ambiguity on our attention. No clue is offered as to which is the back face and which the front; both squares are of the same size. By an act of

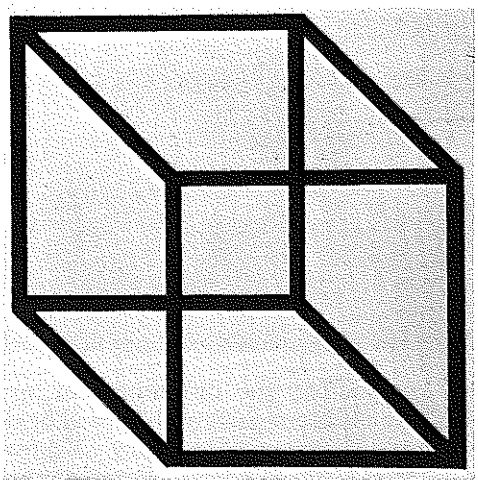

Figure 18

concentration on one square or the other, we can cause the perceptual shift from one to the other of the two possible interpretations of the figure as cube; we can even, by putting the mind to it, cause ourselves to see the figure as flat, though the spontaneous interpretation is a three-dimensional one. But suppose we gaze at the Necker cube steadily, without any attempt to have one perception or the other: then the perceptual shift occurs spontaneously. It is as if perception were a matter of suggesting and testing hypotheses; of the two most satisfying ones, each is entertained in turn; but since neither is more successful than the other, neither is allowed to stay.

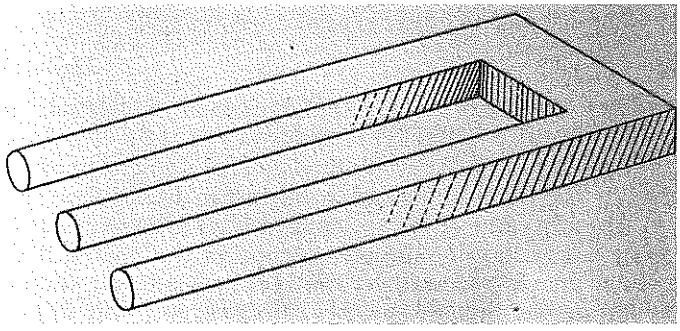

Figure 19

The ambiguities of two-dimensional representatives have been used by Escher and others to depict wonderful and impossible places and objects. Figure 19 shows an impossible object. Perception shifts back and forth, making sense of each part of the object, and trying but failing to make sense of the whole as an actual object.

(4) Perceptual processes exhibit a characteristic called Perceptual Constancy, and this is another indication that perception is ceaselessly and actively oriented toward the interpretation of impressions in terms of objects. A piece of coal in bright sunlight sends to our eyes maybe 100 times more light than a sheet of typing paper in the shade; yet we interpret the former as a *black* piece of coal in the sunlight, and the latter as a *white* piece of paper in the shade. The colored light with which the retina is presented is analyzed in perception into a constant *surface* color belonging to the object, on the one hand, and the illumination to which the object is exposed, on the other, the latter being drastically variable. Besides color constancy, there is shape constancy and size constancy. Size constancy, for instance, means that when an object doubles its distance from us, so that the retinal image of it is halved in size, we perceive it not as shrinking but as retaining its objective dimensions. To experience this, look at your two hands, one held at arms' length and the other at half the distance. They will probably look almost exactly the same size. But if the near hand is brought to overlap the far one, then they will look different in size, in the way the laws of perspective require.

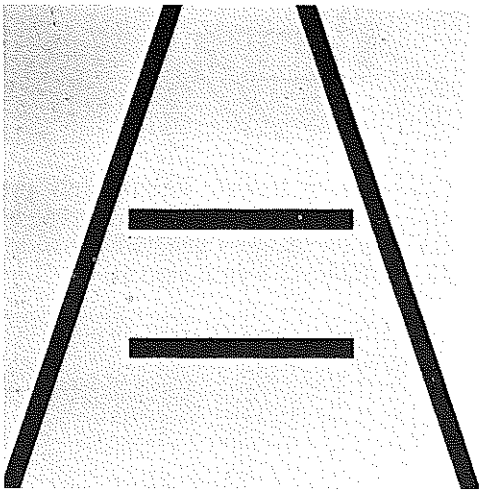

Figure 20

(5) Certain well-known distortion illusions turn up ever and again in psychology textbooks. These, too, appear to be explicable in terms of the perceptual system's orientation towards interpreting patterns as objects in a world. In Figure 20 the upper horizontal bar appears longer, though it is of the same length as the lower one. The explanation that now seems likeliest is that the perceptual system is set to measure lengths appropriately to the normal world of three-dimensional objects as seen in linear perspective. The bar that would be more distant is scaled up on size in accordance with constancy scaling. That we do not see the inclined lines as parallel, receding railroad tracks is due to the countermanding of the three-dimensional interpretation by textural features of the surface on which the figure appears.

The same kind of explanation can be made for the famous arrow illusion, in which two identical lengths appear different because of added fins (see Figure 21). If the two lines with fins here pictured are constructed of wire, painted with luminous paint, and looked at in the dark, the left-hand one appears as an inside, receding corner of

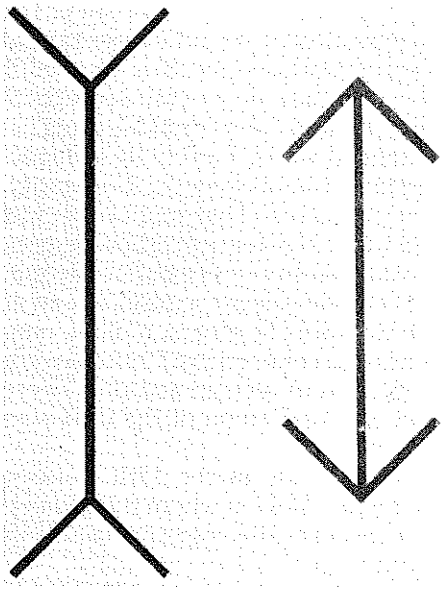

Figure 21

a rectangular room, the right-hand one as the outside projecting corner of a rectangular block or building, with sharp foreshortening. Even when, because of surface texture, three-dimensional depth is not perceived, it seems that constancy scaling goes to work on the basis of the clues that would normally indicate depth, to produce the illusion.

(6) Finally, consider the famous Distorted Room constructed by Adelbert Ames some 25 years ago (Figure 22). The far wall slopes back to the left at an angle of 45°, and the floor also slopes downward to the left, but linear perspective is used to make this oddly shaped room give, from a viewing point in the center of the front wall, the same retinal image as a normal rectangular room. The person in the far left-hand corner looks too small because the image is smaller than would be expected for the apparent distance of that part of the room. Evidently our perceptual system has so accommodated itself to rectangular rooms that we accept it as obvious that it is the objects—here twin sisters—that are of odd sizes, rather than that the room is of an odd shape. The perceptual system has, as it were, made a bet, the wrong one, but then, the experimenter has rigged the odds by choosing such an extremely odd shape for the room. Familiarity with the room gained by touching its walls with a long stick, or a strong emotional relation to the persons seen in the room, will reduce the distorting effect of the room on other objects until it is finally seen for what it is—a distorted room in fact.

From all the foregoing, I conclude: Our perceptual system seems to be—behaves as if it were—an instrument acting purposively with a view to identifying, placing, classifying, and judging objects in a world. What the senses initially receive are but the slenderest and most fleeting of clues, varied and varying patterns of energy. Objects, on the other hand, have indefinitely many features beyond the immediately sensed ones. They have pasts and futures; they have hidden aspects that manifest themselves under special conditions; they change and interact with one another. How is it possible, on the basis of the fleeting clues, to perceive the objects? Our perceptual system, faced with multiple, fleeting clues, in effect makes a guess, launches into belief. Taking into account its previous beliefs, it *hypothesizes* that an object of such-and-such a kind is the invariant something of which the fleeting clues are perspectives. In some moments, some few of our perceptual processes may become conscious processes; for the most part, it is only the results that we are aware of.

And where are we, and what are we, in relation to this world that our perceptual processes lead us to posit? Is it not our primary experience that we find ourselves *in* the world, turned *toward* the world, in direct encounter with an Other that is over against us? Our observing is not neutral, from behind centimeters of bullet-proof polaroid. We are beset by what we see; we are affected, caught, seized by what confronts us. Wind, heat waves, rain, and sleet obtrude themselves upon us. Things appear attractive and repulsive.

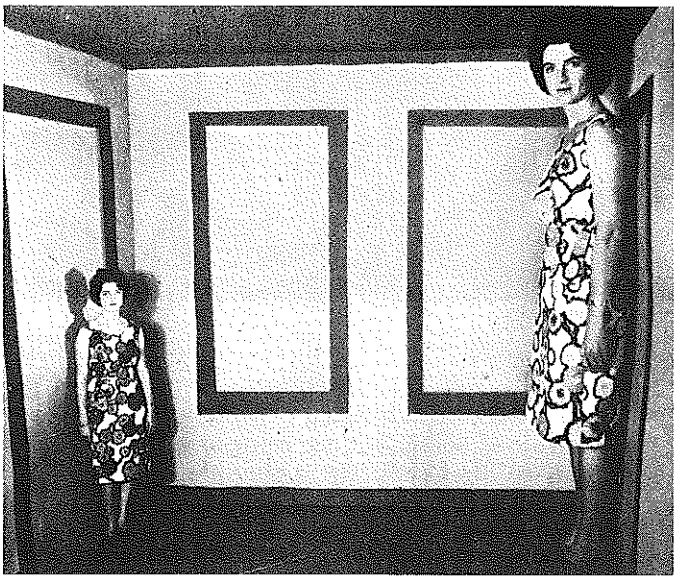

Figure 22

What is presented has inherent distance, depth. The object is apprehended as *over there* in its suchness and thusness. The perceived object reveals itself insofar as it presents a surface. But while surfaces reveal, they also hide. Beyond what is directly revealed, in any experience, there remains that which is hidden, the substance of things.

Depth and distance are not merely visual. We are mobile—indeed, we believe ourselves to be self-moved. We can be purposeful, adopting goals, moving up or down or along paths, going from a Here to a There and from a

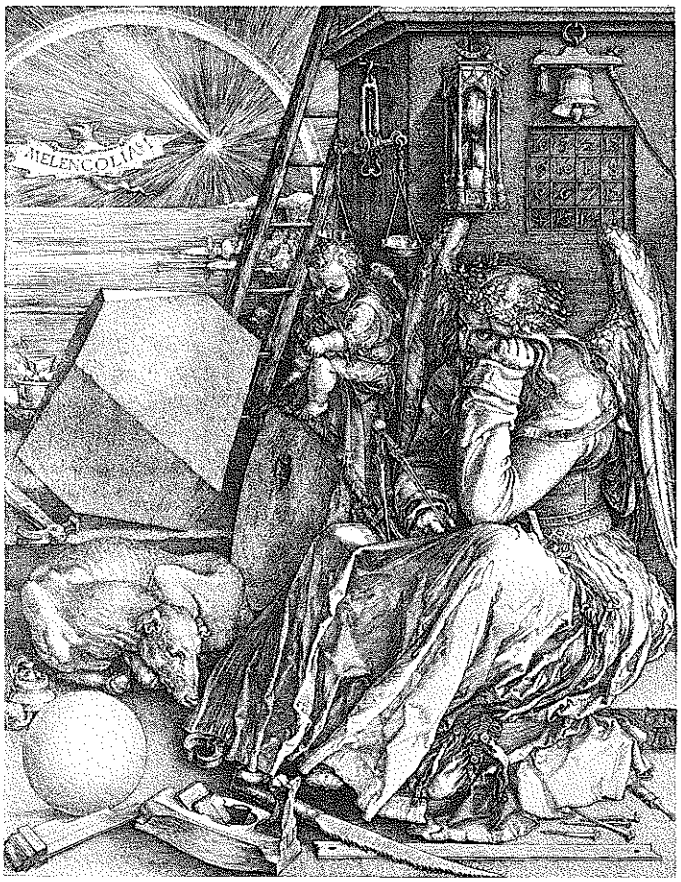

Figure 23

Now to a Then, with changing perspectives. This is our primary mode of being. But our being is then a *becoming* in relation to an Other, the Other that is the world stretching out in depth before us, in its manifold familiarity and strangeness. We seek the unity or unities underlying the varied, perspectival perceivings, the invariant *somethings* of which we would conceive the world to be made. We are ever potentially learners; each of us, in Kepler's metaphor, a point seeking to expand into a circle—some of us no doubt more ardently than others.

Can the circle become a sphere? Kepler, you will recall, denies it. Descartes would push on, geometrizing as he goes. In the geometrized and mechanized world that he imagines, everything that happens, or almost everything, is to be accounted for in terms of displacements, *pushes*. Later, with Newton and his successors, we get *pulls* as well as pushes. But whether we take the Cartesian or the Newtonian or even a more recent quantum mechanical version of the geometrized world, we become puzzled if we try to place ourselves in it; how do we connect with it? Descartes supposed that the soul—the "thinking thing"—could act upon the extended world, namely by influencing the direction of motion without changing its quantity, which he believed to be conserved. That supposition was shown to be impossible when Newton and others demonstrated that the conserved quantity is *vectorial* or *directed*. So natural science in its advance always appears to aim at an account from which we would be absent, a silent, nonhuman world of deterministic connections. Conscious life could only be explained away, in such an account. There is something odd about the *totalization* of the Cartesian geometrical view of the world.

Long before Descartes, already in the 13th century, Henry of Ghent characterizes those in whom the geometrical imagination dominates over the cognitive faculty as suffering from an ailment:

> Whatever they think, is a quantity, or is located in quantity as is the case with the point. Therefore such men are melancholy, and become excellent mathematicians but very bad metaphysicians, for they cannot extend their thought beyond location and space which are the foundations of mathematics.

This very melancholy is pictured in Dürer's famous engraving of 1513 or 1514, the *Melencolia I* (Figure 23). Here we see a winged, presumably celestial being, staring fixedly, evidently in despair. The scene is lit with an eerie light from the moon, a comet, and a lunar rainbow. Strewn about in bewildering disorder are the tools of geometrical and architectural construction. She, the celestial being, is afflicted, we surmise, with a sense of spiritual confinement, of insurmountable barriers separating her from a higher realm of thought.

Dürer's conception of that highest realm is presented in another engraving which he made at the same time as the *Melencolia*, and distributed with it as its appropriate counterpart: *St. Jerome in his Cell* (Figure 24). Here Jerome, comfortably seated in his warm, sunlit cell, which he shares with his contented animals, is absorbed in his theological work. Even the skull looks friendly. Jerome's incorporation into the strictly mathematical projection of our perspectival system, though it reveals his contentment, in no way reveals the secret of it, which may remain for some of us inaccessible.

I would acknowledge the *perspectivity* of human know-

ing—using the term *perspective* here in an extended and metaphorical sense. Accordingly, I would not disregard the fact that natural science is formed by human beings. Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature, it is part of the interplay between nature and ourselves; it describes nature as exposed to our method of questioning.

Is this a skeptical conclusion? I think not. For all we know, the perspectivity revealed by the fact that we opine, and that opinion is not knowledge, may be the correct perspective. In any case, our perspectival viewing reveals a world into which we, along with others, are launched as essentially equal citizens. We recognize others, equally with ourselves, as potential measures of the truth. The claims of others call us out of our particularity into discourse, into the search for Right Opinion. This is a category unknown to skeptics, a human category revealing both our poverty and our power.

For the account of Kepler's *Paralipomena* I have depended very heavily on S. M. Straker's analysis in his unpublished work, *Kepler's Optics: A Study in the Development of Seventeenth-Century Natural Philosophy* (Indiana University Ph.D. Dissertation, 1971). Other works to which I am much indebted are: E. Cassirer, "The Concept of Group and the Theory of Perception," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* V, 1944, 1-35; Hiram Caton, *The Origin of Subjectivity, An Essay on Descartes*; James J. Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World*; E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*; R. L. Gregory, *Eye and Brain*; William H. Ittelson, *The Ames Demonstrations in Perception*; Erwin Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*; Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of the Senses* and *Phenomenological Psychology*; John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*; and J. S. Wilentz, *The Senses of Man*.

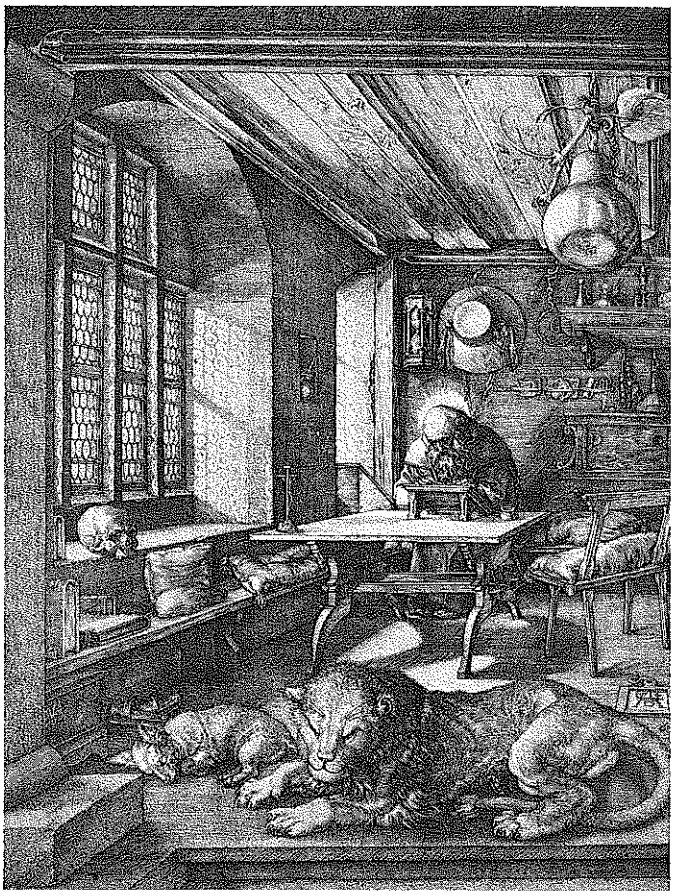

Figure 24

Notes on Figures 1-24.

1. Gemma Frisius, *De radio astronomico*, 312, as reproduced in Stephen Straker, *Kepler's Optics: A Study in the Development of Seventeenth-Century Natural Philosophy*, Indiana University Ph.D. Dissertation, 1971, 319.
2. Kepler, *Ad Vitellionem Paralipomena*, Frankfurt, 1604, 338.
3. Straker, *Kepler's Optics*, 19.
4. Straker, *Kepler's Optics*, 24.
5. Straker, *Kepler's Optics*, 23.
6. Straker, *Kepler's Optics*, 26.
7. British Museum, London.
8. Museo Nazionale, Naples.
9. Museo Nazionale, Naples.
10. Museo Nazionale, Naples.
11. Dürer in E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, New York, 1960, 306.
12. Dürer, *Underweysung der Messung*, in Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 251.
13. Ditchburn Experiment, R. L. Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, 2d ed., World University Library, New York, 1973, 46.
14. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 280.
15. Gradient of texture, James J. Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World*, Boston, 1950, 86.
16. Mosaic floor, Antioch, 2d century A.D., in Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 41.
17. Motion Perspective, Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World*, 121.
18. Necker cube (source unknown).
19. Impossible object, Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, 235.
20. Scaling illusion, Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, 137.
21. Arrow illusion, Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, 136.
22. Ames' Distorted Room, Gregory, *Eye and Brain*, 178.
23. Dürer, *Melencolia I*, in Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*, 2d ed., Princeton, 1945, II, 209.
24. Dürer, *St. Jerome in his Cell*, in Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*, II, 208.

Affirmative Action and the Rights of Man

Fred Baumann

To the memory of my late friend, Victor Baras

According to its spokesmen, among the present administration's proudest accomplishments is raising the issue of human rights to the fore in its foreign policy. Leaving aside the host of questions about the execution of that policy, the administration is right to be proud.

Human rights are universal because they claim to apply to all men as men. Moreover, it is a striking fact of contemporary politics that this claim to universality is accepted, at least in the abstract, even by the worst tyrants of the day. Human rights are, however, the particular product of our own tradition, part of the inherited custom and natural vocabulary of liberal democracies. To raise the standard of human rights is to define debate in terms congenial to ourselves, and to do so, for once, in a way that meets no direct opposition.

Vigorous efforts, however, are underway in the world to redefine the contents of human rights in order to make them more comfortable for the despotisms that pay them lip service. Even Mrs. Gandhi, who never quite arrived at full-fledged despotism, in a striking formulation, once justified her policy of compulsory sterilization with the assertion of the "human right" of the nation to survive. Third World nations have in recent years been pursuing a policy in UNESCO of establishing support for government control of the press, in the name of the right to information. So-called "second and third generation" human rights have been discovered such as the right to equality of income, or even, simply, peace. This redefinition of the content of human rights has not been the exclusive preoccupation of undemocratic, unliberal regimes. The American Bar Association (with initial funding from the Ford Foundation) has now set up a committee on human rights that sees its purpose as spreading knowledge of, and acceptance for, the "international" standard of human rights in America.

Human rights serve as a means for liberal democracies to hold the conduct of all nations to their own traditional standards. They also can be, and increasingly are, a vehicle for transforming the principles and self-understanding of the liberal democracies themselves. In their adoption of the concepts of human rights and in the understanding of the content of these concepts, which follows logically from these terms of reference, the liberal democracies differ fundamentally from other kinds of regimes, traditional or modern. For the United States, the seminal documents of our polity, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights to the Constitution, root themselves in concepts of human rights. The famous Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 is the foundation not only of French but of all continental European liberalism and even social democracy. It is also the titular referent for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is now the text that United Nations debates and resolutions on human rights undertake to gloss. Although human rights

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claim, and are claimed by, all, we are their special familiars. If they are changed fundamentally, then so are we.

The redefinition of human rights in America to meet the "international" standard is, however, by no means simply an accommodation to the countermeasures of unliberal nations defending themselves against the painful imposition of liberal standards. In at least one crucial respect—affirmative action—we have, completely on our own initiative, undertaken to redefine human rights in a radical way. (For present purposes, affirmative action only means preferential treatment on the basis of race, religion, ethnic group, or gender, in selection for places. It does not here mean "quotas" or "goals" or "underutilization studies" or "special recruitment efforts," all of which play a role in its ungainly structure).

This redefinition of human rights did not come about suddenly, but in timid, gradual steps that long concealed its fundamental character. Consequently, the whole subject of affirmative action, not least its name, chokes in euphemism, jargon, and exoteric language. Some of this evasive language arose through misunderstanding and careless thought. Some of it, I believe, was purposefully devised to mislead.

To define affirmative action as preferential treatment is unlikely to shock anymore. But it is worth remembering that just five years ago it would have been highly controversial. Five years ago, the supporters of affirmative action (especially those in government), denied that affirmative action involved preference. Either they got angry at those who said it did, or just pitied their naivete.

The case of Alan Bakke, decided in 1978, marked a turning point in the argument. A white, Bakke sued the University of California Medical School at Davis, claiming racial discrimination. The case involved the clearest sort of preferential treatment, since black applicants were treated separately as a group and judged by lower standards than white applicants. Despite the previously general denial that affirmative action involved preference, most defenders of affirmative action took the line that a decision favorable to Bakke would mean the end of affirmative action, including those forms where preference was not, or less clearly, involved. As a result of the discussion surrounding the Bakke case, the fiction that affirmative action did not actually involve preference was wholly exposed and consequently, for the most part, quietly dropped.

In the Bakke case, and the Weber case that followed it in the next year, the Supreme Court was faced with a fundamental constitutional question, which, given the Constitution and the Bill of Rights' dependence on assumptions about human rights, was also a fundamental question of human rights: can preferential treatment by skin color be brought in harmony with the right to equal treatment by the laws? The specific constitutional arguments of due process and equal treatment have been rehearsed in hundreds of amicus briefs and scores of articles. To cast some light on the more general perspective of human rights, let us take the admittedly artificial step of consulting a non-American document, The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which is, again, the grandfather of the present "international" standard of human rights.

Article 1 of the Declaration says that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights." Article 2 holds that "the aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man." These rights, it says, are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. Since everyone's rights must be protected, they must be protected to the same degree. Consequently law, we learn from Article 6, "must be the same for all whether it protects or punishes. All citizens being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible to all public dignities, places, and employments, according to their capacities, and without other distinction than that of their virtues and their talents."[1]

Equality before the law remains the core of the traditional democratic position on the rights of citizens. It was the fundamental argument of the American civil rights movement, from Frederick Douglass to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (and in many cases thereafter as well). The principle of equality before the law not only gave the movement an unshakeable confidence in the justice of its cause, it also paralyzed the will and conscience of its opponents, themselves liberal democrats with a "But." Equality before the law seems to rule out all forms of race, sex, ethnic, or religious preference in selection, no matter the excuse. And the principle of equality before the law remains, for principled liberal opponents of affirmative action, an arsenal of telling theoretical and practical arguments in polemic. These arguments tell not because they are self-evidently true. Many nations and teachings would find artificial and even bizarre the intellectual context from which they emerge. These arguments tell because they appear self-evidently true, because most of the proponents of preference agree, or think they agree, with them in principle.

Obviously, in depending on theories of natural right, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, like the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, depends on assumptions one need not share. Perhaps there are no such things as "natural and imprescriptible rights." Consequently, perhaps civil society has some other character than a mechanism designed by men to assure them of the maximum feasible exercise of these natural rights. Perhaps the state is merely the formal expression of the particular state of the class struggle reached at present, or perhaps it is the formal expression of a nation's eternal racial character. If so, we know that the "bourgeois rights" defined by the two Declarations will find themselves swiftly relativized and superceded by the supreme right of class or race, as represented customarily by the even more supreme right of the party leadership. That is, if the end of the class struggle requires class dictatorship, and within that class, dictatorship by the party, or if the end of Aryan dominance requires absolute allegiance to the will of the

Leader, then equality before the law will yield. And to the extent that it continues to exist, it will be justified as furthering the class struggle or the race's strength, not as expressing those natural and imprescriptible rights of the individual that the regime teaches are a naive and malignant myth.

The Civil War may be said to have settled in principle that the words of the Declaration of Independence about the creation in equality of all men, meant what they said. America was, its history determined, to be the first nation founded and created by agreement on an abstract principle, a principle that America's existence made increasingly less abstract: states exist to allow men to fulfill their natures, and more specifically to exercise their natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The outcome of the Civil War settled the issue in principle; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made that principle a practical reality. With its passage, America became the nation where citizenship transcended nationality most purely. While ties of family, language, common ancestry, and culture remained strong (if not quite so strong as in other multi-national countries such as, for instance, Canada), still, from 1964 on, America asked everyone to put aside the advantages of group membership and, in the public realm, to take their chances on fair treatment from the great and anonymous society.

The demand of equal opportunity involves a great gamble for society because it involves a great gamble for each of its citizens. The demand that people generally live up to their legal and moral responsibilities only becomes feasible if there is strong faith in the reality of equal opportunity. The risks inherent in equal opportunity inspire anxiety precisely about its reality. (For along with a powerful interest in equality, there goes at least as powerful an interest to cheat).

Viewed from this perspective, it is hardly paradoxical that in the fifteen years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act there has been a revival in affirmative action of group consciousness and group competition. Superficially, it might seem that the American project was simply too ambitious, too frightening, and that affirmative action therefore merely represents a retreat to easier, less just days. The renewed search for legally based group advantage, however, emerged from the thinking of those who imagined themselves most wholly devoted to the principle of equality of opportunity.

In name and purpose, affirmative action was not meant to reaffirm group membership in defiance of the attempt to neutralize it in the public realm. It was understood originally as something vague but extra—a helpful shove to a too-timid liberalism. One of the chief formulators of early affirmative action policies, when he was employed by the Labor Department in the Nixon administration, Lawrence Silberman, described nine years later the anxious desire he had originally shared with his colleagues to find some way to make concrete the abstract equality of opportunity guaranteed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and at the same time to avoid the practices of racial preference the Act had rightly prohibited. Silberman and his colleagues had developed "goals" which were meant to be fundamentally different from discriminatory "quotas." These goals, their inventors had asserted, did not legislate preference, but only encouraged attentiveness to the existence of well-qualified minority members. Nine years later, Silberman concluded, "goals" were indistinguishable from "quotas." He and his colleagues had failed.[2]

Eventually, almost all had to admit that affirmative action, understood as "goals", meant at least some kind of preference, if not exactly "quotas." One could not draw up most favored *ethnoi* lists, and urge their selection, without making ethnicity a criterion of selection. However genteelly one did it, one lent the authority of the law to discrimination based on ancestry or gender. Interestingly, only a few, like Silberman, drew back in remorse. Most pressed on, seeking to justify preference if it worked in a direction opposite to older forms of preference. Mr. Justice Blackmun, in his dissent in *Bakke,* spoke candidly, if with disregard for legal principle shocking in a Justice of the Supreme Court:

> I yield to no one in my earnest hope that the time will come when an 'affirmative action' program is unnecessary and is, in truth, only a relic of the past. . . . At some time, however, beyond any period of what some would claim is only transitional inequality, the United States must and will reach a stage of maturity where action along this line is no longer necessary. Then persons will be regarded as persons, and discrimination of the type we address today will be an ugly feature of history that is instructive but that is behind us.[3]

It is not surprising that there was something tentative and uneasy in the formulations of those who came to praise affirmative action as a distasteful but medicinal poison. Not all of Blackmun's utopian posturing and nostalgia for the future could wholly blind him and those who shared his views to the injustice they were doing, according to their own principles, in the present. As a result, the task of justifying affirmative action reached a new stage. The embarrassment of pursuing equal opportunity by discriminatory means suggested the argument that the discriminatory results of these discriminatory means were only apparently discriminatory. Begun without excessive deliberation and meant to be something "extra," affirmative action now began to place a heavy burden on the dialectical skills of its advocates. It was a burden they would in turn pass on to the liberal tradition out of which they came.

How could someone who is *Taking Rights Seriously,* (to cite the title of Ronald Dworkin's popular book), take rights seriously and at the same time show that race and sex could legitimately be added to "virtue and talent" as criteria for admission to "public dignities, places, and employments?" A number of arguments were adopted that merely begged the question. A typical example was the notion that by establishing a minimum for "qualifica-

tion," (so that above that minimum no gradations of merit could apply), one could thereby avoid the moral issue arising out of race or gender preference, since officially one would not be allowed to know that the better candidate had been denied the position.

A number of other arguments were raised that, however various, in the end all rely on the claim of utility. For instance, it was alleged that the state had a compelling interest in overcoming the *de facto* separation of the races, or the underrepresentation of women; or that minority members needed role models from their own groups in places of respect and authority; or that there is urgent need for professional services in the inner city that only minority professionals can reasonably be expected to supply. These arguments coexist fairly comfortably with Blackmun's hope in the merely transitory character of affirmative action, but rely on the claim of utility, not just on hope.

Arguments of utility must be addressed at two levels. First, they must be correct on their own terms. Not only must the advocated policy actually produce the intended results, but those results must actually be beneficial, given the general standard of social utility the advocate adopts. But second, every regime, by its fundamental laws and traditions, erects a standard of what is right and seemly. If the means suggested to achieve the social utility the advocate suggests violate that standard, then it must be shown that this violation is less important than the good that is being done. This can of course be done in two ways: first, by emphasizing the comparative urgency and benefit of the advocated policy; second, by denigrating the worth of the regime's inherent standards of what is right and seemly.

A strong case has been made that the arguments for the utility of affirmative action do not even meet the first set of tests. Some of the most powerful and striking counterarguments have been made by scholars like Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams who themselves happen to be black. In a paper presented to the United States Civil Rights Commission and later published in a revised form in *The Public Interest*, Professor Sowell demonstrated that in universities—chief among the targets of affirmative action enforcement in the early nineteen-seventies—great advances towards equality, in terms of salary and representation, occurred among faculty between the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the advent of affirmative action around 1971, whereupon, for whatever reason, they ceased.[4] The evidence of these writers suggests that the factual premise of affirmative action, that equality of representation and living standard could not come about given mere legal equality of opportunity, may not have been correct. Critics (and recently, even advocates) of affirmative action point out that in many areas the chief beneficiaries of affirmative action have not been the group whose plight inspired affirmative action and seemed to justify it—the blacks—but women, in particular middle class women. For critics like Professor Sowell, the price in cynicism, revived racial hostility, and apparent confirmation of paternalist racial stereotypes typified by the thought that blacks cannot make it on their own and must be given something, is far too much to pay for the few marginal rewards that affirmative action offers its "beneficiaries."

I share the critics' views on this point. Given the fact that affirmative action, by moving beyond the abstract standard of the 14th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act, involves an ever more active governmental intervention in, and interpretation of, concrete equality of opportunity, and given the fact that the groups that are to be the beneficiaries of affirmative action are still, as groups, relatively weak in American politics, one would think that the long and even middle term dangers of preference would outweigh its short term charms to those primarily concerned with the interests of those groups. For what can be given by an act of policy by the strong to the weak can also be taken away. And if no generally accepted moral or constitutional principle remains to prevent it, even more than was given can also be taken away.

Let us grant, for argument's sake, however, that affirmative action really does create new benefits for its beneficiaries. Does it meet the second test of not violating the fundamental principles of the American regime? At first sight, given the identification of the American regime with principles of the Rights of Man, it would seem to do so. Article 1 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen says that "social distinctions can only be based on public utility."[5] But in fact, we must first ask what the standard of a human rights regime is for judging utility. One could imagine a regime, for example, that sought by its laws and traditions to encourage a warlike character in its citizens. Such a state might find that public utility coincided with the constant repression of a servile, helot class or race. That regime would not find public utility represented by affirmative action for the helot class.

The betterment of previously oppressed and victimized groups seems self-evidently to promote public utility in the United States. Therefore, affirmative action would seem not to conflict with our fundamental principles. But while our sense of the self-evident justice and practical benefits of the claimed results of affirmative action clearly does betoken affirmative action's origins in a characteristically liberal, characteristically American outlook, it does not settle the question whether the means whereby those results are achieved do not conflict with our most fundamental principles. When the Declaration of Independence speaks of natural and inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or when Article 2 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man says that the aim of all political associations is to preserve the natural and imprescriptible rights of man, they state those fundamental principles. They are the preservation of rights, and among them, of course, the right to equal treatment by the laws. Unless it can be shown that the race and gender preference involved in affirmative action does not violate these

fundamental natural rights, then, no matter how attractive the benefits of equality and harmony it promises, it stands in conflict with the most basic principles of the regime. The claims of utility, understood as material advancement and greater social equality, cannot by themselves carry the day. Their advocates must show either 1) that the necessary means do not, despite appearances to the contrary, violate the right to equal treatment by the law; or 2) that the violation is outweighted by the benefits; or 3) that the violation is itself a good thing, or at least a matter of indifference.

Let us take the easiest argument first. If one admits, like Justice Blackmun, both that the natural rights standard is a good and important one and that affirmative action does violate it, how good must affirmative action be to justify the violation? The words "natural and inalienable" and "natural and imprescriptible" of the two Declarations suggest the obvious answer: there is no immediate good that justifies the alienation from citizens of inalienable rights. Or, at best, there is only one. If the regime that is the living embodiment of those rights is mortally threatened and can be preserved as the preserver of those rights only by a unique violation of them, then perhaps such a violation would be justified. Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* during the Civil War could perhaps be justified as violating the Constitution in order to save it. Clearly, no such case can be made for racial quotas.

But may it not be the case that rights, while fine and socially useful things, are not really "natural and imprescriptible," and that, therefore, a much weaker standard of measurement may be adopted for affirmative action? Here we must recall the theoretical origins of rights. Only then will it become clearer why the right of equality before the law is peculiarly important to liberal regimes, in contrast to the traditional states of the *ancien regime* which found neither natural rights nor equality before the law to be self-evident or even very sensible.

Living amid the rich intellectual complexity of traditional states, where religious, feudal, and national strands of argument and allegiance intermingled, the great theorists of modern natural rights, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, brought a remarkable abstractness of perspective to the subject. They looked beyond the welter of passionate and conflicting allegiances of their times to a natural state where men were and states were not. These apolitical, natural men are dominated by their most fundamental desires. To these desires correspond their natural rights. The right to life is for Hobbes and Locke natural and imprescriptible because, as a rule, the desire to survive is the strongest and most basic desire. But if man wants life, then consequently he must want the means to assure himself of survival. Therefore, liberty, the liberty to assure oneself of the means to live, is also a natural right. But while these natural rights are limited by no governing state in nature, their actual fulfillment is severely limited by nature itself. These desirous men, therefore, come together to construct civil society, as a mechanism that is to assure each of them much of what they want in and by nature. The right to equal treatment and equal opportunity is thus derived from the natural liberty to provide for oneself. It assures men they have not been singled out for special deprivation in exchanging their natural rights for their political, civil equivalents.

If the right to equal treatment, although derivative, is grounded in natural and inalienable rights, and is in fact the chief guarantor of the acceptability of a society's founding principles and of its claim to be just, then it is plain that a law that violates equality before the law does enormous damage to that society's legitimacy. If in contrast the rights that citizens enjoy are not correspondent to natural and inalienable rights that express the most fundamental desires of men as men, then civil rights themselves lose all compulsory power on us and either have to be allowed to decay or have to be refounded on a new basis that either reinterprets nature or abandons it altogether. If the right to equal treatment under law is not grounded in natural and inalienable rights, the very ends that affirmative action seeks to achieve as a matter of self-evident public utility, could and would be called into question. For, as argued above, those ends depend upon a standard for utility that is part and parcel of the natural rights tradition.

At the heart of the claim of utility is a failure to take itself seriously enough. This is evident when affirmative action is defended as an urgently needed corrective for a basically racist society. Whoever argues this, and many do, simply cannot really mean what he says. For in order to mean it, he must actually believe that the consent for equal treatment for minorities like blacks is so solid that it will not be imperilled even by laws that mandate preferential treatment for those minorities, and thus arouse resentment from the others. If he genuinely feared, as I do, that the consent to across-the-board equal treatment (much less affirmative action) is by its very nature fragile, he could hardly be oblivious to the possible consequences of laws that violate equal treatment by the law in the name of equality of opportunity, and thus inevitably damage the very name of civil rights and equality of opportunity. His actions bespeak a blind confidence in the tractability of the majority before laws that disadvantage them; his words accuse them of the very opposite, of racism.

In view of the weakness and self-contradiction of the simple appeal to utility, it is not surprising that the case for affirmative action has sought to show that the preference in which it engages is actually only apparent, and that it can be reconciled with the right to equal treatment by the law. A simple version of the reconciliation begins by noting that the law can be the same for all only metaphorically. An agricultural law affects farmers and non-farmers differently, and affects small farmers differently from large. By analogy, could not apparent differences of treatment by race still perhaps not violate equality? Might not racial preference be in accord with equality of treatment under law?

There is a vital difference between laws whose results apply differently to farmers and consumers, and laws that apply differently to races or genders. Professions and occupations, as the words suggest, are chosen; race and sex are unchosen. When we recall the Declaration's familiar description of liberty as the power to do anything that does not injure others, so that "accordingly the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those that secure to the other members of society the enjoyment of these same rights,"[6] the difference between the two cases becomes clearer. A law that regulates farmers excludes no one, at the outset, legally, from birth, from trying to be a farmer. By contrast, a law that regulates selection to schools by race fundamentally limits an individual's opportunities legally and from the outset. It creates places for which it is impossible for some to compete. That is, it violates the natural right to pursue happiness. For the right to pursue happiness must be just that, the right to pursue. It cannot be the right to attain, for the right of one to attain must be the denial to another of the right to pursue. Where an agricultural law establishes rules for a competition that the law prevents none from entering, a law entailing racial preference establishes rules that prevent some from competing and thus from exercising their natural right to pursue, to act.

Once men are conceived as active, energetic beings, who accept the necessary limits of civil society in order to pursue their activities more securely, and once, therefore, rights are conceived as recognition of their inevitably active, desirous nature, it becomes very difficult to mount a satisfactory challenge to accomplishments, virtues and talents as the only standards for selection. For it will appear a fundamental injustice to check some and not others in the pursuit of their activities, unless they thereby are preventing others from acting. (We must keep in mind here that acting means competing for a place, not enjoying it).

Because of the impossibility, within the framework of our inherited thinking about natural rights, of arguing for selection on the basis of race and gender instead of ability and talent, recently some have striven to reinterpret natural rights doctrine radically to allow the use of racial criteria in selection. In *Taking Rights Seriously,* Ronald Dworkin devotes a chapter to the case of Marco DeFunis, the forerunner of Bakke. Dworkin desires to refute the traditional liberal position, argued in the DeFunis case in the classic brief *amicus curiae* by the late Alexander Bickel of Yale and his colleague from the University of Chicago, Philip Kurland, on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.[7] Bickel and Kurland argue that discrimination against a white because he is white is legally indistinguishable from discrimination against a black because he is black. DeFunis, who was excluded from consideration for a number of admissions places in the University of Washington Law School, was therefore denied the equal treatment by the law as much as if a black had been denied consideration for some places because he was black.

In reply, Dworkin separates equality of treatment into two parts: "equal treatment" and "treatment as an equal."[8] Kurland and Bickel think DeFunis deserved "equal treatment." Actually, he only deserved "treatment as an equal," since "treatment as an equal" turns out to be our deepest natural right.

What then are "equal treatment" and "treatment as an equal?" Their names are similar, but they are sharply opposed in content. Equal treatment means just that, equal treatment. Treatment as an equal, however, means "the right to be treated with the same concern and respect as anyone else." This right does not extend to not being excluded on grounds of race.

Dworkin's immediate explanation sounds familiar. In an article in *The New York Review of Books,* "Why Bakke Has No Case," he denies that the use of the racial standard is in principle different from the standard of intelligence, or, in the case of a basketball player, skill.[9] None are chosen qualities and whoever is excluded by their criteria may not be being excluded by prejudice "but because of a rational calculation about the socially most beneficial use of limited resources for racial classification."[10] Only if racial classification expresses contempt for the excluded group as a group is it illicit.

Here Dworkin seems merely to suggest another version of the utilitarian argument we have already ruled out. We are once again before the question of the standard of utility. If, on one view of the social good, it is permissible to discriminate in favor of blacks, may not another view of the social good make it possible to discriminate against them? How would one choose between these conflicting views of the social good? Neither would appear to be rooted in the natural and inalienable rights of man.

Aware that utilitarian arguments could be turned against him, Dworkin seeks to ground his view of the innocence of "reverse discrimination" on something stronger than utility, and concedes by the way too that without this grounding the criterion of contempt also falters. At this point the right to treatment as an equal, to equal respect and concern, comes into its own. For Dworkin has discerned in John Rawls and adopted from him the "deep theory" that the fundamental natural human right is equality,[11] in the sense of a right to equal "concern and respect in the design and administration of the political institutions that govern" men. For Dworkin, equality is not, as in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, a derivative because postcontractual right, a civic right designed to guarantee the contract and justly to distribute the legal capacity to enjoy individual natural rights. In its new meaning it has become the most fundamental, primary, and natural right of all. Consequently, social policies that bring about greater equality, though they may seem to violate the traditional meaning of equal treatment, in fact exemplify its deeper, its natural, content.[12] "Benign" or "reverse" discrimination, which promotes "treatment as an equal" in its result and exemplifies it in its action, can therefore justify itself in terms of this deeper content. Those who would dis-

criminate against a disadvantaged minority like blacks may well raise utilitarian arguments in favor of their policies. They cannot, however, support them with the ideal argument of furthering equality. Reverse discrimination, in contrast, rests on the firm foundation of egalitarian natural right.

In his review of *Taking Rights Seriously*,[13] Thomas Pangle strikes at the root of Dworkin's project when he notes the absurdity of Dworkin's claim to have discovered "natural" rights "through a reflective process that never steps beyond the conventional horizon of contemporary culture," since that amounts to an unexamined assumption that those particular conventions of our culture faithfully represent nature from which all conventions spring. Pangle is right in questioning what is natural, i.e. true to nature, about Dworkin's theory of rights. In Dworkin's own view "the assumption of natural rights is not a metaphysically ambitious one. . . ." It requires no more than the hypothesis that "the best political program, within the sense of that model, is one that takes protection of certain individual choices as fundamental. . . ."[14] But to demonstrate why *any* individual choices are fundamental and, beyond that, why *particular* choices should be looked on as fundamental, requires enormous "metaphysical ambition" if it is to end in something more than a scheme of the author's wishes. Moreover, one may wonder about the implications of those wishes, since Pangle also rightly suggests that Dworkin's defense of reverse discrimination could equally be used to justify a compulsory program of levelling eugenics, since both policies would seem to be justified by the deep principle of promoting equality.

It seems to me that, in reinterpreting the natural rights tradition to make the conflict between race preference and natural rights seem to be only seeming, Dworkin has fundamentally departed from that tradition in two ways, one regarding form, the other content.

The natural rights Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau talked about had to do with the most fundamental drives of men. Because it was folly to oppose these drives, politics had to accommodate themselves to natural rights. Despite all the problems Hobbes faced in dealing with obligation, he still thought that the Leviathan was the best possible political arrangement for passionate, unruly, fearful men who, above all, desired to live and stay alive. Rousseau insisted on the natural right of liberty and its recognition by states, because he denied that man can possibly consent to slavery since thereby he yields control over his very existence to others. Right or wrong, the natural rights teachings of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau have power as an account of the world because they rest on assertions about what men are really like and what they really want.

Does Dworkin mean, therefore, when he speaks of a fundamental natural right to equal respect and concern, that, if there is one thing to know about human beings, if there is one irresistible force that drives them, it is their desire to be treated with the same concern and respect as everyone else? Of course not. Yet what then does he mean by calling the wish to be treated with equal respect and concern a "natural" right?

Dworkin defines a right as an interest that men are entitled to protect if they wish. Rights are "not the product of any legislation, or convention or hypothetical contract,"[15] and their status as "natural" comes from an assumption the philosopher makes in order to unite and explain "our political convictions."[16] It is just "one basic programmatic decision." As far as I can tell, Dworkin thinks that a natural right is an opinion, found on examination to coincide with our other political opinions, that a claim to protect a certain interest is simply valid and may not be relativized. It would seem then that Dworkin happens to entertain the opinion of the unquestionable validity of equality. A Carl Schmitt, however, might, with equal attention to his own political convictions, assert as a unifying and explicating assumption, the unquestionable validity of inequality. In the guise of natural right, Dworkin has reintroduced the very kind of ungrounded claim, based on political opinion, that natural rights thought had tried in the first place to evict in favor of an account of what men are really like. Hobbes contended, in his polemic on "Darkness from Vain Philosophy" that the Grecian schools were unprofitable because of just such ungrounded claims:

> The natural philosophy of those schools was rather a dream than science and set forth in senseless and insignificant language. . . . Their moral philosophy is but a description of their own passions. For the rule of manners, without civil government, is the law of nature; and in it, the law civil that determines what is *honest* and *dishonest*, what is *just* and *unjust*, and generally what is *good* and *evil*. Whereas they make the rules of *good* and *bad* by their own *liking* and *disliking*; by which means, in so great diversity of taste, there is nothing generally agreed on, but everyone does, as far as he dares, whatsoever seems good in his own eyes, to the subversion of commonwealth.[17]

There is no teaching of right that does not at least imply an understanding of what men are really like. Let me assume that Dworkin is right in asserting that our most fundamental right is obtaining "equal concern and respect in the design and administration of the political institutions that govern" us. What does the assumption of a right to "equal concern and respect" tell us about ourselves and about the "political convictions" that lead us to make that assumption?

We know something of Hobbes's and Locke's natural men. Struggling in labor or in battle with their surroundings, taught by hard experience to set voluntary limits on their actions and on their capacities to compel others and nature to their individual ends, they come cautiously, mistrustfully, to civil society, because the exercise of their faculties is life itself to them. Liberty, as much as is compatible with the preservation of life, is understood as natural, irrepressible, and primary. Equality, in contrast, lives in the service of liberty because equality guarantees

that liberty to pursue one's happiness and enjoy one's rights will be preserved. What kind of men reverse the order and place equality before liberty?

In contrast to the rights of Hobbes and Locke, which have to do with what men do or want to do, with living, getting, pursuing, the fundamental right to equality, in Dworkin's formulation, is strikingly passive. In contrast to Hobbes and Locke, and especially Rousseau, for whom natural man existed without government, in Dworkin's quasi-state of nature, government already exists since there men enjoy respect and consideration from government and its institutions. What this government does, we know: it administers. But what do Dworkin's natural men do? Like their cousins, Rawls's unpersoned wraiths, who can only be trusted to choose for themselves when they do not know who they are, they seem curiously insubstantial. These men do not seem to want to *do* anything in particular, except possibly to make sure their neighbors are getting no more or less consideration than they. Who are these good children, these model citizens?

After the worker's revolt in East Berlin in 1953 had been crushed, Bertolt Brecht, who had returned there from corrupt and capitalist America to live as a free man, made a famous quip. Since the people had lost the confidence of their government, he remarked, the government should dissolve the people and select a new one. Dworkin's men, it seems to me, are just the people that government would have selected. They are pure political subjects, asking for no more than to be properly arranged, ordered, and regulated. They are the pipedream of the social engineer and the tyrant's delight, bloodless, identical, undemanding, distinguished only serially, in the most administratively convenient way.

> Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after.
> And the poetry he invented was easy to understand.

Procrustes, too, was like the tyrant Auden describes: devoted to the aesthetic ideal of symmetry. And here are the men of their dreams.

If I am interpreting Dworkin's implicit anthropology correctly, we have learned something about "our political convictions." Equality of opportunity—Dworkin's "equal treatment" and what the Declaration means by the standard of virtues and talents in selection—is the concept of equality from the viewpoint of the citizen, the active, living individual. Equality of respect and consideration—Dworkin's "equality of treatment" and what others have called the equality of result—is the concept of equality from the viewpoint of the ruler. From the citizen's viewpoint, politics fundamentally means deliberating, persuading, and voting. From the viewpoint of the ruler, which Dworkin shares, politics fundamentally means administering, ordering, and manipulating. From that perspective, mere equality of opportunity is too messy, for it lets the chips fall where they may. Government is called upon to arrange the chips symmetrically, in the most aesthetically pleasing way.

It would be a mistake to think that the exercises of theorists like Dworkin or Rawls have no correspondence to developments in the political world. The gulf between ruler and ruled, governor and citizen, is becoming wider on this issue, precisely along Dworkinian lines. Affirmative action is a deeply unpopular policy, at least according to public opinion polls. According to one Gallup poll, eighty-three percent of all Americans object to preferential treatment. Strikingly, a majority of the very group that are the beneficiaries of affirmative action agree with their fellow citizens.[18] At the same time, there is an unmistakeable and unmistakeably growing tone of hostility towards political democracy among officials responsible for developing and administering affirmative action. It is as though we were coming to the final alternative sketched above. If the violation of natural rights principles cannot successfully be justified by the benefits that violation brings, and if the attempt to explain away the conflict also fails, (or rather succeeds only by radically transforming and denaturing the natural rights tradition which it seeks to reconcile to racial preference), then only the third alternative remains, which is to denigrate or dismiss the tradition itself.

A straw in the wind blew by when Dr. Mary Berry, then Undersecretary for Education at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, gave a speech upon her return from a trip to Communist China in 1977. (The Department of course is deeply involved in supervising affirmative action programs). In her remarks, Dr. Berry expressed enthusiasm about almost every aspect of Chinese life, including the practice of employing grade school children at productive manufacturing. She also praised the regime's frank and rational administration of its system of ideological and class discrimination in education, which excludes the children of former "bourgeois" in favor of the children of "untainted" class elements. The most charitable, and probably correct, interpretation of her enthusiasm is, I believe, that she came to admire in totalitarian China the social engineer's freedom to get on with the work, unhampered by "near-hysteria and confusion," that is, by public opinion,[19] which has hampered those who must implement affirmative action policies in the United States today.

In sum, the attempt to fashion a theoretical defense, within the liberal tradition of natural rights, for affirmative action, which was viewed as only a minor refinement on traditional human rights liberalism, has led, step by step, from the refinement of liberalism to its abandonment, to the abandonment of everything but the mere name of natural rights, and is now apparently leading to the eventual abandonment, first of liberty and then even of politics itself, in favor of administration. There is something deeply disturbing in observing the gradual awakening into self-knowledge and self-confidence of this anti-political politics.

The rejection of the liberal human rights tradition may

seem to be a matter of merely academic interest to those who are not liberals. But liberalism has a special importance for Americans.

I spoke of the peculiar abstractness of Locke and Hobbes as they articulated the state of nature. It is an abstractness that has been criticized since Rousseau. Undoubtedly there is something fictional, (more fictional perhaps even than the historical status of the state of nature), about the liberal idea, stated in Hobbes and Locke, of what men are by nature and how they come, without race, culture, or prior history to create in equal partnership a free and civil society. But if it is a fiction, it is one of very special significance to us, for it tells our story, and has thus, astonishingly, ceased to be, in crucial ways, a fiction.

America is the liberal state *par excellence*. Precisely through our historical struggle with the question of race, we came close to vindicating our claim to be a state based on the rights of man as man, and not on the history of a particular people. Of course that does not mean that we do not form a people, but rather that, paradoxically, our peoplehood is grounded on liberal ideals, embodied in the Declaration of Independence, and thus on the denial of the primacy of peoplehood. Our history, as Tocqueville knew before Louis Hartz, is the history of liberalism, and our greatest historical test has been living up to liberalism in the hardest case. Unlike the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which in some sense is still a partisan document in France, all Americans can take pride in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Assimilation into the American people is relatively easy, not because there is no such thing as an American people, but because liberalism's willful ignorance of men's origins, their family, nation, and religion, has allowed assimilation to mean essentially no more (and no less) than becoming a citizen, one with rights who believes in rights along with the citizen's responsibilities they imply. This willful ignorance, which Justice Harlan called the colorblindness of the Constitution, lies at the heart of America's peoplehood, its nationality.

At one point, in his discussion of reverse discrimination, Dworkin astutely observes that the phrase I just cited—the colorblindness of the Constitution—means "just the opposite of what it says: it means that the Constitution is so sensitive to color that it makes any institutional racial classification invalid as a matter of law."[20] Here Professor Dworkin is perfectly right, and he thereby draws attention to the extraordinary daring involved in trying to create and preserve a country where one is limited only by one's own capacities in what one attains, and not by accident of birth. His remark also illuminates the necessity of the severity of those restrictions, especially equality before the law, that alone can make such a rash undertaking feasible. A liberal people, based on the rights of man as man, is a paradox, because it makes particularity out of universality (not, as with countless historical peoples, universality out of particularity). That our paradox is a paradox of two centuries more or less successful duration, makes it only the more, not the less astonishing. For it is ultimately only by recognizing the fundamental precariousness of our situation, by recognizing how fragile must be the consent to transcend family, race, and heritage, that that precariousness can be prevented from forcing itself on our attention by the breakdown of that consent.

Affirmative action sprang from a contemporary liberalism confident enough of its foundations to forget them and even radically to undermine them for the sake of a temporary and minor structural improvement. By now affirmative action has revealed itself as straightforward race and sex preference and thus a fundamental threat to liberal principles of the rights of man as man. Paradoxically, it is because our paradox, our enduring paradox, no longer seems a paradox, because the transformation of the liberal idea into a liberal people, a liberal nation, has been so successful, that that transformation now threatens to be reversed, as we fall apart into the ancient, pre-American and pre-modern quarrels of sect and race for political dominance and possession of the power to promote our own and harm others.

A few years before affirmative action began to gestate in the Nixon administration's Department of Labor, I heard the president of Cornell University give his annual Commencement address. As I recall the speech, he sketched out for us his view of the structure of politics. I remember he told us there were always three groups: the majority, the minority, and the managers. He was a manager, he said. This memory, with all its unhappy resonances and prefigurations, both particular and general, may serve as a prophetic emblem for the America in which affirmative action will have taken full hold. Citizenship will have been even further devalued; instead only coalitions or racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and social-condition groups (like the handicapped) will matter. For they will contend, not as now, for marginal advantage within a framework still generally guaranteeing equal treatment by the laws, but precisely for the political control of that framework. This will naturally be a desperate struggle, because failure could mean loss of both liberty and equality, even subjection and deprivation. Meanwhile, serenely arbitrating the grim battle, much like Botticelli's Venus regulating the dance-battle of the Graces in the Primavera, will be the Managers. For them, that struggle will be an administrative, or rather, more fundamentally, an aesthetic problem, a matter of arrangement and manipulation. For they will easily be able to give all they consider is really being asked of them, they will give "equal concern and respect" to each group, each force, precisely for what it is, a force, a part of the Big Picture.

1. *Constitutions and Other Select Documents Illustrative of the History of France, 1787–1907*, ed. Frank M. Anderson, New York, 1908, 59–60.
2. Lawrence Silberman, "The Road to Racial Quotas," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 11, 1977, 14. "I now realize that the distinction between goals and timetables on the one hand and the unconstitutional quotas on the other, was not valid. Our use of numerical standards in pursuit of

equal opportunity has led ineluctably to the very quotas, guaranteeing equal results, that we initially wished to avoid."
3. *Regents of the University of California, Petitioner, v. Allan Bakke,* Opinion of Justice Blackmun, June 28, 1978, 1–2.
4. Thomas Sowell, " 'Affirmative Action' Reconsidered," *The Public Interest,* Winter 1976, 47–65. See especially 54, 57, and 63–64.
5. *Constitutions,* 59.
6. *Constitutions,* 59.
7. Alexander M. Bickel and Philip B. Kurland, *Brief of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith Amicus Curiae,* In the Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1973, #73-235, 19. "The Court is, nevertheless, asked here to hold that the exclusion of a non-black applicant from the law school of the State of Washington, solely because of his race, is a valid racial classification. We respectfully submit, that the rule of equality mandated by this Court in *Sweatt v. Painter* compels the reversal of the judgment of the Supreme Court of Washington in this case."
8. Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously,* Harvard University Press, 1977, 227.
9. Ronald Dworkin, "Why Bakke Has No Case," *New York Review of Books,* November 10, 1977, 13–14.
10. "Why Bakke Has No Case," 14.
11. *Taking Rights Seriously,* 180–181.
12. *Taking Rights Seriously,* 231–239, especially see 239.
13. Thomas Pangle, *The Public Interest,* Winter, 1977–78, 157–160.
14. *Taking Rights Seriously,* 176–7.
15. *Taking Rights Seriously,* 176.
16. *Taking Rights Seriously,* 177.
17. Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan,* Parts I and II. Bobbs-Merrill, 1958, 6–7.
18. *Measure,* (the bulletin of University Centers for Rational Alternatives), number 42, April, 1977, 1. The reference is to *The New York Times,* May 1, 1977. 64% of non-whites objected to preferential treatment in the poll.
19. *Measure,* number 46, April/May 1978, 4–5, article by the author. On November 17, 1977, Dr. Mary Berry gave a lecture in Chicago called "The Chinese Experience in Education: What America Stands to Learn." In discussing the Chinese use of quotas, she said: "In this last respect, the Chinese are moving rationally and realistically in a field that has led to confusion and near-hysteria here."
20. *Taking Rights Seriously,* 229.

John Paul II and the World of Tomorrow

Jean Laloy

Readers of the encyclical letter, *Redemptor Hominis,* of John Paul II[1] divide into at least two groups: those that delight in his teachings on social justice and the rights of man and those who find his affirmations (but perhaps not his warnings) in doctrine and moral matters of more importance. But it is the relation between the two sides of John Paul II's teaching, between the teachings on social justice and on doctrine, which counts. Taken as a whole the letter strives to encompass the two aspects of John Paul II's teaching and to define their relationship.

This letter is not only an encyclical, it is also circular in its mode of composition. It begins with the reforms instituted in the Church since Vatican II. It sounds the mystery of God who has become man and returns to man in the world of today to end with the Church—a community of the friends of God whose presence makes itself felt beyond its visible borders.

Set in the context of the other papal speeches and remarks of the last six months, this tightly written, sometimes difficult letter shows the Pope trying to answer the question everyone asks him. What do you have to say to us that we have not heard already? We have heard that it is better to be good than evil; to help rather than kill one another. But who really believes that? What about you?

Before addressing myself to what is to be done, the Pope answers, let me tell you what is. "Man cannot live without love" (*RH* II, 10). God whom your heart seeks has come to you. Turn toward him and you will know what to do. I testify that he is here among us.

I leave it to those more competent than myself to dis-

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cuss the theology of the letter. Any discussion would have to underline the letter's constant insistence on its fidelity to the thought of Paul VI and, with somewhat less emphasis, to that of John XXIII and to the two constitutions of Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*—on the Church in the world—and especially to the second, on the Church *Lumen Gentium*. It would also have to show the letter's central emphasis on the mystery of a God who makes himself man in order to save all men and who remains among men in order to associate all men from this moment in his divine work. Everything in the letter is clearly stated, without murkiness. Free from the jargon of contemporary ideologies, the language tells of God's transcendence and the transience of the things of the earth. It frequently appeals to, or warns, theologians (III, 9), married couples, priests, catechists (III, 21), those of a critical turn of mind or those who dream of an ideal past, (I, 6) and some others. "Classical theology"? "Worn-out clichés"? "Nothing new"? These are the judgements of an editorial in *Le Monde* (March 16, 1979). The writer was perhaps too much in a hurry.

Seen against the background of the everyday life of men today, the great truths, enunciated in the papal letter we are studying, show the originality hidden in the affirmation (which is after all not as banal as it appears) of the actual existence of a God, creator and saviour, who is a friend of man.

* * *

What does the Pope from Cracow say about this world? Does he curse communism? Does he reject the exploitation of liberalism? Does he advise each individual to fulfill honorably the duties of his station in life without prejudice to his moral obligations to his neighbor? That is not the way he talks.

"I would like most of all," the Pope said on March 11, 1979, "to join the mission of the Church with the service of man in his unfathomable mysteriousness—to join them in the same way in which I see and feel the relationships between the mystery of the redemption in Jesus Christ and human dignity. Here is the central task of my ecclesiastical ministry."[2] The Pope has taken the trouble to point out that we are here at the heart of the letter.

"Way" is the somewhat surprising word John Paul II uses to designate the relation between the Church and man—four billion men. It appears twenty times in the third part of the letter: "Christ on everybody's way," "Every way of the Church leads to man," "Man is the way of the Church." There are several meanings hidden in this image taken from the gospels.

The way is the way of Salvation, the movement which leads man, individually or collectively, towards the truth, first as an object of faith, and one day as an object of vision. In this meaning, "Jesus is the way of the Church" and everyone moves on it toward him. This is the way when it leads to an end. But the way can also be a means, the necessary point of passage for redemption. In this sense, "the way of the Church is man." This means the church is responsible for all men—"every single man." The Church cannot ignore anything that happens to man; her mission in space and time is limitless. But what does "mission" mean? It means, "the way that unchangeably passes through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption." Not only does the Church proclaim these mysteries, it lives them out. The more these mysteries take root in the lives of men ("individual...Family...society...nations...peoples...humanity"), the deeper the life of man becomes, the more it opens up, the more it is transformed and the more those mysteries take on meaning and reveal previously hidden powers. As a result the Church is answerable for all men, she is touched by their history (to say nothing of what happens to them individually). She is capable also, indirectly and almost as an incidental by-product, of aiding men to find proper orientation for their actions in the world. She will pay attention to the "opportunities" that beckon, to the gathering "threats"—in short to "everything that appears contrary to the effort to make human life always more human."

These words amount to a description of the possibility of progress, not a progress without mistakes, falls, or even collapse, but, nevertheless, an invisible or spiritual progress, a deepening and interiorization of life. Another progress, temporal progress, the "construction of the world" spoken of in *Gaudium et Spes*, might come from this spiritual progress. But in contrast to Vatican II which appeared at times inclined to describe contemporary man with optimism, "as on the way to a fuller development of his personality and an ever increasing assertion of his rights,"[3] John Paul II, fifteen years later, above all remarks on the ambiguities of "progress." Contemporary man is terrified of the consequences of his activity. "Today's man appears always threatened by what he makes—by the works of his hands and even more by his intelligence and the directions taken by his will" (III, 15).

Now that man has the means to destroy the whole human race, he can annihilate the natural environment in which he lives. Above all he can follow "the tendency to use all material, technical, and productive progress to dominate others" (III, 15) and thereby smother moral progress. By insisting on this matter the letter affirms the ambiguity of the movement of history—an idea that appeared in the parable of the wheat and the cockle, that St. Augustine developed in *The City of God*. Forgotten or perverted in modern times and flatly denied by modern ideologies, this idea has been rediscovered and deepened, notably in France, by several currents of philosophical and theological thought since the beginning of the century.[4] This idea of progress as a movement in two directions, toward evil as well as good, of progress as a tension between two unattainable but real poles, springs unmistakeably from the experience of our century. This idea basically challenges all fanatical political systems: there is no perfect city! The other side of a city where no one

hungers is a society where men are glutted. A society that achieves perfect equality turns into a world in which no one moves. And so on.

Do we have to settle for an overfed city? Is man's history no more than a blind struggle for more or less elevated but always limited goals? The answer is that progress is possible but that it occurs for all intents and purposes above the level of history and most often without human awareness. Temporal progress does not move straight ahead. At best it zig-zags. The horizontal movement ahead runs into a vertical movement descending from above it: purpose. Historical space is measured in two or three dimensions.

The Pope uses this idea of "progress or threat," of progress that becomes a threat, of a threat that can lead to progress, in two ways.

He first turns to the dramatic result of the progress that accentuates the inequality between rich and poor nations. Citing the parable of Lazarus and the wicked rich man (*Luke* 16, 19–31) and even more the scene of the Last Judgement (*Matthew* 25, 31–46) "For when I was hungry you gave me nothing to eat...," John Paul II takes up with energy the topics he developed in Mexico. Even though fundamental "structures and mechanisms are under accusation," there are possible solutions. His sketch of such solutions stresses compromise, the necessity of bringing economic "competition" and "redistribution" of riches, and "planning" and "freedom" into harmony (III, 16). He speaks out against the money swallowed up in the arms-trade.

For two reasons I do not agree with Father Cosmao, the successor of Father Lebret, who sees the turning point of the letter in this part. First, the Pope in his letter as well as in his speeches looks forward to a slow progress, marked by interruptions and all sorts of starts forward and backward. Secondly, I do not think John Paul II shares either Father Cosmao's view that "Man makes himself on earth ...and in making himself...moves toward God"[5] or his notion of the "collective autocreation of man." Both of these ideas of Father Cosmao neglect the ambiguities of progress, the fact of evil in history. As a result they run the real risk of leading to myths different from the perspectives shown in the letter. There is a difference between the "autocreation of man" and the Pope's clear unwillingness to settle for the present situation.

Conversely, the Pope greets the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man as real progress but progress that is far from achieving all its desired effects. For at the same time that we have made progress in achieving human rights, the "great totalitarianisms" have spread, the "letter" of the Rights has been accepted at the expense of their "spirit," "powers are imposed by a limited group on all other members of a society," the "fundamental right" of "religious liberty" is denied. Because of these abuses there is danger of war, for in the final analysis peace rests on respect for the inviolable Rights of Man—*opus justitiae pax*—while "war springs from the violation of these rights and brings in its wake even greater violations" (III 16, 17). Here there is the unmistakeable ring of the experiences of the Archbishop of Cracow. Not a word about Marxism or communism but the call for respect for man, for the fundamental rights, for the elementary rights for the sake of peace between citizens, between nations, and between religions. Without respect for those rights, peace is impossible. "The principle of the rights of man touches profoundly on the area of social injustice and provides a basic standard for testing for its presence in political institutions."

* * *

What does John Paul II mean by the "new Advent" at the beginning of his letter? He means that the passing world, however rich and varied, however many new and unheard of things emerge in it, depends on something other than itself. As soon as this dependence is recognized, even simply sensed, or more modestly still, not denied, then the "dignity of man" has a foundation. The more the Church concentrates on the mystery of its beginnings and its final goal, the more it serves men even in their temporal existence—the more it opens up "ways" that lead not to the abyss, to nothingness, but somewhere.

The "new Advent" means the end of the time of ideologies. It opens up the possibility of a new time, a time that will also have its light and darkness but combined differently. This coming age will probably learn something from contemporary disasters. The twentieth century was supposed to have given individual liberty, social justice and the light of reason their definitive foundation. To some extent it has. There is more of this in our societies than ever before. But there is more of something else also that has sprung up at the same time like the cockles in the wheat field. Faced or even burdened with the weight of this other fact, men today turn away from the repetitious monotony of political speeches. They search high and low for something else. According to John Paul II, the Church, in the fullest sense of the word, must become more and more itself in order to help men see.

"The Church crosses beyond the borders of temporalty and at the same time looks with anxiety to everything within the dimensions of this temporalty that affects the life of man, the life of the spirit of man...: the search for truth, the insatiable craving for the good, the hunger for freedom, the yearning for the beautiful, the voice of conscience..." (IV, 18).

In the letter the three themes of the speech at Puebla reappear: first, the service of the *truth* which in its turn allows the *unity* of man and provides the foundation for his *self-respect*. Otherwise, the world drifts aimlessly in the manner of Vladimir Soloview's dictum, "Since we are all descended from monkeys, let us love each other."

The letter would teach something else. "Since we come from elsewhere and are going elsewhere, let us try better to understand what we can do." Such words answer to the expectation of a new period when temporal action, desa-

cralized and without pretensions to absoluteness, will nevertheless retain its own coherence—a coherence at the same time important and unimportant. Very important because of its reference to absolute values which every man sees we cannot do without, unimportant because condemned to fleetingness. Temporal action never succeeds fully, never realizes more than an approximation of justice, peace, equality, liberty. It never realizes justice itself nor peace itself nor anything whole or wholly reliable.

In this perspective it is surprising that the Pope nowhere touches on the necessity of limiting the "absolute sovereignty" of states in order to make a little progress toward ending violence, even if it does not lead to peace itself. But the Pope could not speak about everything. The chapter on the rights of man implies limitations on sovereignty.

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A comparison of John Paul's letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, with Paul VI's first letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, published August 11, 1964, shows their similarities and differences. The spirit is the same in both letters. Paul VI speaks of openness and dialogue, John Paul II of presence and "caring." But Paul VI's letter is calmer and gentler, John Paul II's is more abrupt and full of fire. Both letters address the world in an entirely new way. The Church is no longer to rule or command in the traditional manner. In both the Church is simply there, radiating less by its instructions than in its presence, which allows the light to shine through.

This new relationship between the Church and the world makes greater demands on each. Purer and more transparent, the Church is also more vulnerable, less protected. More open and less self-important, the world is also more aware and less confident. There is nothing easy in the relationship between the two.

Because of the letter's original approach to the world, I do not share the worries of Paul Thibaud who, writing in *Esprit*, fears lest the letter—despite the merits he acknowledges—define "a spiritual authority above politics" and lead to "ecclesiastical interventionism."[6] Responsible, of course, for facing the future, John Paul II, in my judgement, wants first of all and above all to let a light that does not come from him shine through. To take his stand where the vertical and horizontal intersect—that is his conception of the mission of the Church and its service of man. As a result of this conception, he limits himself, in relation to the world, to indicating directions in the area of rights and inequality and of the struggle against poverty. He does not dictate. He notes points of reference. He indicates some of the ways.

Because of his past, however, he belongs to that class of men who have known modern prometheanism and its frustration, who know you have to look elsewhere. He has no need to reason and to cast about in search of direction now that he has unique and universal responsibilities. The way is there, open, self-evident. But the masses of men do not see it yet. So he says what he is there to say.

And his words are heard. There are already answers, even from Poland. For example, Adam Michnik, in name of the lay left:*

> Religious freedom is the most visible sign of the actual exercise of civil liberties. For the state's attack on religious freedom is always a sign of the totalitarization of intellectual life. There are no exceptions to this rule, because totalitarian power alone cannot accept St. Peter's exhortation to the apostles: *We must obey God rather than men* (Acts 5, 29). In the language of the lay left these words mean that man's human nature endows him with rights that no power has the authority to annul.[7]

Here Michnik echoes Bukharin who said in a conversation with Boris Nikolaevsky in Paris in March, 1936, that the "ten commandments of Moses" provide the foundation for all humanism.[8] He also echoes Benjamin Constant, who wrote in 1815:

> L'universalité des citoyens est le souverain. . . Il ne s'ensuit pas que l'universalité des citoyens, ou ceux qui, par elle, sont investis de la souveraineté, puissent disposer souverainement de la liberté des individus. . . L'assentiment de la majorité ne suffit nullement dans tous les cas pour legitimer ses actes: il en existe que rien ne peut sanctionner. . .

There are indications that something very different from what many French Catholics had made out is occurring in the world. Among these indications is John Paul II's letter which distinguishes between "the mission of the Church and the service of man" in order to show the inspiration that unites them, without confusing them in practice.

Translated by Brother Robert Smith

*The phrase *"la gauche laïque"* means the left that is not dogmatically atheistic.—tr.

1. *Redemptor Hominis*, text in *La Documentation catholique*, 7, April 1979, 301-323.
2. *La Documentation catholique*, 7, April 1, 326.
3. Ecumenical Council Vatican II, *L'Église dans le monde*, Paris 1966, ch. IV, section 41, 1, 111.
4. Especially Jacques Maritain, *Pour une philosophie de l'histoire*, Paris 1959. Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme, les aspects sociaux du dogme*, Paris 1941. Henri Marrou, *Théologie de l'histoire*, Paris 1968.
5. V. Cosmao, *Rédempteur de l'homme, Lettre encyclique de Jean-Paul II, un guide de lecture*, Paris 1979, 21.
6. P. Thibaud, "Venu de la dissidence," *Esprit*, April 1979, 3-10.
7. A. Michnik, *L'Église et la gauche, le dialogue polonais*, Paris 1979, 170.
8. *Boukharine et l'opposition à Staline, Sotsialistitcheskii Vestnik*, 4, New York 1965, 93-94.

"Plato's Theory of Ideas"

Eva Brann

My subject, as proposed, is "Plato's Theory of Ideas". Whether that subject actually interests you, or you think that it ought to interest you, you will, I imagine, regard it as a respectable topic. And yet I have to tell you that every term in the project is wrong-headed. Let me therefore begin by explaining why that is.

First, Plato's Theory of Ideas is not a subject at all. I mean that it is not a compact mental material to be presented on an intellectual platter. Plato himself refrained from making it the direct theme of any of the twenty-five or more dialogues which he wrote. Instead, the ideas appear in the context of conversation, incidentally and in scattered places. He gives the reason directly in a letter:

> There is no treatise of mine about these things, nor ever will be. For it cannot be talked about like other subjects of learning, but out of much communion about this matter, and from living together, suddenly, like a light kindled from a leaping fire, it gets into the soul, and from there on nourishes itself. [*Seventh Letter* 341 c]

It follows that my lecture, like all the similar scholars' efforts, is an outsider's attempt to short-circuit a required initiation, an attempt which betrays my lack of genuine participation in the truth I am conveying as a molded matter. There is, however, also much in Plato's works which invites such an exposition of his doctrine: much explicit and provocative argumentation and many promises of an explicitly communicable way to insight.

I have another reason for thus boldly ploughing in. Two summers ago there died that man, that teacher in this school, who, as it seemed to many of us, best knew the way into the Platonic dialogues. His name is Jacob Klein. While he was alive, I, for one, resting secure in the fact of his existence, postponed a bald confrontation of my own with this ultimate philosophical matter, the "Platonic ideas." But now, I thought, the time had come to be bold in acting on the advice Socrates gives to his friends in the course of the last conversation of his life. When he is asked where they will find someone to charm away their fears that philosophy is impossible once he is dead, he tells them that not only among the Greeks, but also among the barbarians—that, of course, includes us—there are many good people who can do this for them. But then he adds:

> And also you must search for them among yourselves, for probably you will not easily find people more able than *you* are to do this. [*Phaedo* 78 a]

We speak of "*Plato's* Theory", and let me now say something about that. Its chief sources are, to be sure, the works of Plato, and he is its ultimate master.[1] Yet within his works, the *Dialogues*, it is not Plato but his teacher Socrates who originates and maintains the theory. Plato presents Socrates as having a life-long hold on it, though he speaks of it under continuously changing aspects. There is a so-called "late" dialogue, the *Parmenides*, in which the elderly author imagines a boyish Socrates—a wonderful turnabout—and in which Socrates' claim to authorship of the ideas is elicited by the father of philosophy, Parmenides, himself (130 b). There is another dialogue, also written late in Plato's life, the *Sophist*, in which an old Socrates, just a few weeks away from death, listens silently while a stranger brings the theory to its height with the solution of its deepest difficulty. And finally there is a "middle" dialogue, the *Phaedo*, in which Socrates, in the last conversation of his life, addresses the theory more directly than anywhere else. Plato, at least, wished the world to think of "*Socrates'* Theory of Ideas".

But then, more accurately, he would not have had us think of a "theory" at all. By *a* theory we usually mean a conceptual construction designed in principle to yield satisfying explanations for every problem brought before it. A theory ought to be falsifiable, which means it should be capable of being made to reveal its incompleteness or in-

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consistency by strenuous formal reasoning, so that, if need be, it may be discredited and discarded. Therefore it is its author's responsibility to present it in the most impregnable form possible. Scholars do find such difficulties aplenty in the Theory of Ideas. But here is a curious circumstance: they are all anticipated in their boldest form in that very dialogue, the *Parmenides*, which represents a boyish Socrates as first proposing the Ideas.[2] Can you think of another philosophical theory which is presented from the very outset in terms of a series of devastating difficulties, never to be explicitly resolved?

The point is, the Ideas are not a theory.[3] Socrates calls his bringing in of the Ideas a "supposing" (*Phaedo* 100 b); the Greek word for a supposition is a *hypothesis*. A hypothesis is, literally, an underpinning, a prop. It comes to him and he comes on it at every departure and at every turning. It is a condition he acknowledges so that he can carry on as he must; it is not a conclusion presented for verification but a beginning which then becomes as well the end of inquiry. It is at first the condition that gives him heart for a search by making it possible for him to launch a question that has in it an arrow making for an answer. One might say that it allows him to turn the unknown into a suspect to be interrogated (*Meno* 86 b). Thereafter, however, the Idea-hypotheses—for the hypothesis is not the proposition that there are Ideas, but each Idea is itself a hypothesis—are to be used as stepping stones to their own conversion into something not merely supposed but truly beheld, "seen" (*Republic* 511 b). Such suppositions are surely not fruitfully accosted by formal hammer-and-tongs argument, though they are, of course, amenable to careful and critical inspection.[4]

I keep calling these Socratic suppositions Ideas. The word idea is a transcription of a term Socrates himself uses, *idéa*. Nonetheless it is an infelicitous term. For ask yourselves what we usually mean by an idea, for instance when we say: "That's her idea of a good lecture." Clearly we mean an opinion or a mental image or a concept, something "in our minds," often in opposition to "the real thing." This modern notion of an idea, the result of an earth-shaking intellectual upset, is that of a mental representation, something before or in the organ of ideas, the mind. The use of the term would cast my exposition into a false, albeit familiar, frame, and I would only make things worse were I to insist that Socrates' Ideas are "real", and worse yet, "really exist."

Socrates' own chief word is *eidos*. Like the word *idea* it is built on the simple past stem of the word to see, which signifies the act of seeing once done and completed. Scholars have collected the many meanings of *eidos* which flow continuously from the broadly ordinary to the narrowly technical: shape, figure, face, form, characteristic, quality, class, kind. But, of course, when we dwell on the multiplicity of Greek usages, we are standing the matter on its head, for they are all revealing differentiations from the dead-center of meaning. *Eidos* means sight, aspect, *looks*, in that eerily active sense in which a thing that has looks or is a sight *presents* itself to our sight and our looking. "Looks", then, and not idea or form, is the most faithful rendering of *eidos*.[5] But it sounds too curious, and so I shall tonight speak simply of *eidos*. The plural is *eide*. *Eidos*, then, is the word Socrates chooses for his hypothesis. For that choice he might, for this once, be called a "Greek thinker", since he cherishes and yet overturns the wisdom of his language which associates seeing and knowing: "I know" in Greek is built on the stem of "I saw." *Eidos* is a choice full of witty depth, for Socrates' *eidos* is *invisible*, and that is surely the first of all those notorious Socratic paradoxes.

So let me convert the falsely familiar title "Plato's Theory of Ideas" to "Socrates' hypotheses: the *eide*". I shall pursue the Socratic *eidos* under seven headings, for it shows as many aspects as there are beginnings to Socrates' inquiry. Indeed, that is what makes his hypotheses compelling: that such diverse roads lead to the *eidos*.[6]

I. Excellence and Commonness
II. Speech and Dialectic
III. Questions and Answers
IV. Opinion and Knowledge
V. Being and Appearance
VI. Same and Other
VII. Original and Image

I. *Excellence and Commonness*

"Philosophy" means literally the love of wisdom. Therefore it begins in desire (*Republic* 475 b, *Symposium* 204 a), in desirous love, in erotic passion, the most acute of all passions. That is what we might call the *young* beginning of philosophy.[7] It is that love which arises when another human being appears "all-beautiful in aspect," in *eidos*, as the Greek phrase goes (*Charmides* 154 d). We might simply say that this love arises when someone suddenly becomes *visible* for us. For beauty, Socrates says, has the part of shining out eminently and being most lovable, and of coming to us through sense, through the most acute of senses, the sense of sight. Beauty *is* brilliance, attractive visibility. Beauty is sightliness *par excellence*, and a sight is that which, without going out of itself, draws us from a distance. But such a sensual sight, such a bodily *idea* (*Phaedrus* 251 a), which draws us from afar, affects us with an exciting and utterly confounding sense that it is a mere penetrable veil, a mere representation of some divinity beyond. That is why we speak of such love as adoration. It draws us not *to* itself but *through* itself—the enchantedly attentive fascination with sensual looks goes over into something on the other side of that surface. Desire drawn through distance is called love, and if what beckons is on the further side of surface sight, it is called philosophy. For, Socrates says, there is a road—whose first station is the beckoning irritation aroused by one beautiful body—which leads us to develop an eye first for all kinds of beauty and finally to sight its self-sameness everywhere in the

world and in the soul (*Symposium* 210 a). And that sight, the very source of visibility, is beyond sense, and is the *eidos* itself.

There is another beginning in what is extraordinary and captivating, a little duller in its visible aspect, though its luster is life-long (*Phaedrus* 250 d). It is the outstanding, the excellent. All of us are at some time overcome by admiration for the fullness of being of certain people and their deeds, or even by an animal or a tool (*Republic* 353 b, 601 d). Such potency of being, such authentic goodness, is called in Greek *arete*, which means effective excellence, potent capability (*Laches* 192 b). It is more than ordinary usefulness or humanity or sincerity. It is rather a kind of superlativeness—it's name is related to *aristos*, the best. It is competitive, "agonistic," as the Greeks say, and uncommon, although we speak rightly and yet paradoxically of a "standard" of excellence; we recognize the rare as the exemplary. Excellence and how to engender it is a topic of pervasive fascination. It interests the good, the crafty, the curious, parents, citizens, the corrupt—perhaps them most peculiarly (*Meno*), them and the young.

But again, as in the case of beauty incarnate, every outstanding human being, every fine deed, appears as a mere instance, a mere exemplification of excellence. It is spurious for being a mere instance and not the thing itself, deficient in being abstracted from the complete complex of virtues, deformed by being bound to a particular setting. We all know that even the best-founded hero-worship eventually loses its edge and luster as the admirer gains perspective. But the longing to see excellence and be excellent is for that ever-bright, undeformable shape which looms behind each tainted earthly example.

The beautiful and the best, the fine and the good—through these is the enthusiastic first access to the *eidos*.

But there is also a more sober beginning, one by whose implications Socrates himself was a little put off in his first youth, because of their meanness (*Parmenides* 130 c). Besides the high and shining *eidos* of what is beautiful and excellent, there is also a common *eidos*, or better, everything, from a small bee to a grand virtue, displays or "has" an *eidos*. (*Meno* 72). *Everything* we see, everything that appears in any way at all, looks (or sounds or smells) *like* something—excellences, elements, animals, tools, perhaps even mud. Everything wears the aspect of being *of a sort*. Unless it has the looks of something, we cannot see it, for it has no coherent shape to draw us; we cannot point to it or name it. To see is always to *re*-cognize; just imagine trying to focus on something—I shouldn't even say "something"—which is truly unique and looks like nothing. Whatever wears a look at all wears that look in common with other things. One look presides over numerous things and that is why we can "identify", that is to say, make out the sameness, of things, of people, elements, animals, tools. It is not in their multifariousness and difference that we lay hold of things but "by their being bees" or beds or excellences (*Meno* 72 b). Socrates is far more interested in this common look than in what we call individuality, that inarticulable deviation from the common which he never thinks of as a source of particular fineness. He pursues the common *eidos* because it is *more* revealing than the world's idiosyncracies.

For we do not learn of this *eidos* by looking at individual things; on the contrary, we can look at them only because they display this *eidos*, this look. For example, Socrates would agree that equal objects—say, scratched lines of equal length—are needed to call up in us the thought of equality (*Phaedo* 75 a). But they do that only because they take part in that *eidos* which makes them look equal to us, even though they are but uncertainly, passingly, approximately equal, and from them we could never *gather* the sharply precise idea of equality, anymore than we can identify goodness by watching human actions from now till doomsday. That look of things which not one of them has fully or purely but which is common to all, that is a wonder to Socrates.

Both outstanding and common sights, then, point to an invisible *eidos* beyond.

II. *Speech and Dialectic*

We have a passing strange power of reaching the things that share a look, all of them, at once. We can say the word, their name. When the eye sees a sight, the tongue can utter a sound which is the sensual appearance of a word, of speech (*Third Letter* 342 b). One word reaches, picks out, *intends* what is the same in many things. One word presides over many things (*Republic* 596 a). A word is *not* a symbol for Socrates, for it does not stand for something by reason of some sort of *fit* between it and the thing; rather it reaches toward something utterly other than itself: it intends, it has meaning. Socrates thinks that what words mean is precisely that common *eidos*. Furthermore, in fixing on speech he discovers what the panoramic familiarity of daily sensory sights leaves obscure: that the visible world, particularly the natural world, appears to be compounded of more and more encompassing visible "sorts," rising finally into totally invisible kindred groups. The Greek word for a visible sort is, of course, *eidos* and for a kindred group, *genos*. The Latin word for *eidos* is *species*. Socrates discovers the organization of the world into species and genus,[8] and that things can be placed, defined, by thinking about the meaning of names and connecting them properly in speech. All the world seems to be at the roots akin (*Meno* 81 d), and that kinship is articulable in complexes of words.

Such connected speech is what the Greeks call *logos*. It is, first of all, inner effort, movement, attention, intention; indeed, it is the same as thinking (*Sophist* 263 e). It is always an activity of discerning and picking out on the one hand, and comprehending and collecting on the other; in fact that is what the verb *legein* means: to select and collect. Socrates thinks that such speech can reveal the interconnections of the world, but only if it "looks to" (e.g., *Republic* 472 b, 532 a) the interweaving of the invisible

eide. Meaningful and true speech is speech in accordance with the *eidos* (*Phaedrus* 249 b); names reach for the *eide* singly and sentences for their interconnections. Socrates calls such reaching speech *dialectic*, "sorting through" (266 c).

But he uses that word in another, wider, sense also. Dialectic is serious, and, if necessary, uncompromising conversation with oneself or with another, argument. (I might say that if the enthusiasm of love is young philosophy, argumentative dialectic might be called the youngest philosophy because bright children make lovely dialecticians.) Now dialectic does not only reveal the articulated unity of the world. It can also shake our easy acceptance of its oneness. Speech can rake up the obtuse self-contradictoriness of things. Such self-opposition comes out when speech is used in a very original way, in "telling," as the old term goes, in counting. Take this index finger. It is larger than the thumb but smaller than the middle finger. It is both small and large. It has both looks at once. They coincide in the thing and yet we can tell them apart and count them as each one, and two together in the thing. Whoever takes the deliverances of words seriously will find this provoking—provoking of thought (*Republic* 523). Socrates can account for this revelation only by supposing that the *eidos* greatness and the *eidos* smallness, which are each one and forever separate *beyond* the finger, can be fused *in* the finger. Even if the finger is confounding, the *eide* are pure and intelligible. The *eidos* saves the *telling* power of speech.

III. *Questions and Answers*

Socrates asks questions, of himself and of others, and he urges them continually: try to say the answer. His questions are not quite the usual kind, namely requests for information or provocations of acknowledgement. Nonetheless people see charm or dignity enough in them to try to respond. Socrates' kind of question is preeminently framed to elicit speech. He asks after that in things which can respond, which is answerable, *responsible*. The Greek term for what is answerable in that way is *aitía*, the responsible reason. Socrates thinks that such a responsible reason—we sometimes say "cause"—cannot be some external linkage of events. It is a trivializing answer to the question "Why is Socrates sitting in prison?" to say that he is flexing his joints in a certain way in a certain place. Although he is too modest to say so, he knows he is there because of his peculiar kind of courage. Similarly, if the question is "What makes this face beautiful?", the answer he insists on is that it is beautiful not by a certain incidental shape or color, but "by beauty." He calls such answers unsophisticated but safe (*Phaedo* 100 d).

They are indeed so simple-minded as to seem at first futile—they are answers for those whose ambition is not to go onward but inward. For their safety is in keeping us to the question, in directing us through its words to a word. To accept that things are beautiful by beauty means that the cause is not to be reduced or evaporated in inquiry but kept in sight and pursued; that granted, the answer can then be safely elaborated (*Phaedo* 105 b). For it poses a new and deeper question: What is beauty—or excellence or knowledge?

I should say here that Socrates does not go about idly asking what scholars like to call the "What is X? question." His questions are not one function with variable objects, but each is asked differently in each conversation, for each is set differently into Socrates' life and each reaches toward a unique aspect of the complex of being. We all know that the answer to the question what something is can take many forms. Socrates sometimes begins by showing people that they quite literally don't know what they are talking about and can't mean what they are saying—a charming but dangerous business for the young (*Apology* 33 c, *Republic* 539 b, *Philebus* 15 a). Sometimes he proposes a startlingly revealing, seemingly paradoxical, and dubiously convertible identification, for instance that excellence is knowledge. And once in a while he does what Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 987 b) persuaded people to think of Socrates as doing first and preeminently: he looks for a definition by genus and species and differentiae. There is no one method for interpreting all the dialogues, as Mr. Klein used to say.[9] And yet it is equally the case that Socrates *is* always after the same end, on a trail of speech on which the one-word answer is a trail blaze. The trail, however, approaches its goal without meeting it, asymptotically. This goal is the *eidos* named in the simple-minded but safe answer to a Socratic question. Ultimately, to be sure, the *eidos* toward which the word points cannot be attained through speech but only by itself and through itself (*Cratylos* 439 b), for it is not speech which determines the *eidos* but the *eidos* which calls forth speech (*Parmenides* 135 c). *Logos* is utterly diverse from *eidos* since its very nature is to be merely *about* being; it might be said to climb along the eidetic structure, articulating, so to speak, the lattice of an impenetrably crystalline complex.

But meanwhile the question which is steadfastly answered as it itself directs, focuses the soul on the *eidos* as responsible cause.

IV. *Opinion and Knowledge*

Socrates comes to grips with the strangest of human scandals: that we are able to talk without speaking and to believe without acting. Human life is peculiarly capable of glorious heights and excruciating failures, and it is these heights and depths we most avidly chatter about and have powerfully ineffective beliefs about. Indeed, public talk about them is obligatory. It is an incantation to keep the spirit of excellence from fading. It consists of certain partial lopsided truths whose deficiency is obscured by their familiarity. Socrates calls such speechless talk, such logos-like utterance without present thought, belief or *opinion*. (Dóxa. Our favorite phrase signal that an opinion is coming is: "I feel that. . . ".) He thinks further that it is be-

cause we do not know what we mean when we talk of excellence, that we fail to be excellent.

By "knowing" he does not mean being familiar with certain arguments and definitions or having some sort of competence or canniness in getting what one wants (*Hippias minor* 365 d). He means that our souls are alight with, are filled with, what truly is. He means a knowledge so live and rich that it goes immediately over into action without leaving room for the mediation of a wavering or perverse will. Socrates' first interest in knowledge is therefore practical, but I should say here that that knowledge vivid enough to pass immediately into deed will also be an end in itself, a realm in which to dwell beyond all action, and that this is yet another one of the great Socratic paradoxes (*Phaedo* 66 b, *Phaedrus* 247, *Republic* 517 b).

To be cured of being caught in mere opinion we must know how this state is possible. Socrates finds only one explanation plausible. What we have beliefs and opinions about cannot be the same as what we think seriously about (*Republic* 477). The name of our object may be the same, but we cannot have the same thing in mind when we just talk and when we truly speak. We are using our powers so differently when we have opinions and when we think that they amount to different powers and must have different objects. That is not really so odd an idea: We seem to switch mental gears when we pass from pontificating to thinking, and the matter we have gone into deeply is no longer what it was when we "knew" it superficially, just as the friend well known is often a wholly different person from the friend of first acquaintance. The superficial glance is reflected by a mirror-like surface of seeming that masks the depths which thinking seeks and in which it becomes absorbed.

That first aspect of the world that is the object of opinion, the world whose very nature it is to seem and then to vanish before closer inspection, Socrates calls *becoming*, because it is always coming to be and never quite what it is. It is the world which is before our eyes. Our first fascination *is* with the shifting, inexact, contradictory things before our eyes, or with the obtrusive opinions of our fellows. These are our unavoidable beginnings (*Phaedo* 74 a). But as we penetrate the visible surface and search into those opinions, a new world appears, now not to the eye of sight but of thought, steadfast in being such as it is, of a powerful "suchness," shapely, unique. Socrates calls this world *being*. He understands it to be all that knowledge requires. In knowing we have a sense of being anchored, rooted in something stable and lucid that the eye of the soul can behold (*Phaedo* 99 d). It is the world of the *eidos* understood as the object of knowledge, the knowable *eidos* (*Republic* 511 a).

Yet Socrates by no means regards the knowable *eidos* as a mere contrivance for granting himself knowledge. On the contrary, he thinks that we are, all of us, capable of the experience of going into ourselves in thought, led on by the beckoning *eidos*, a process so vividly like the raising of a memory that he calls it, mythically, "recollection," the calling-up of a primordial memory (*Meno* 81, *Phaedo* 73). The way to the *eidos* is by a passage through our own souls, not by a penetration of external things—or better, these two ways are one.

The *eidos*, I must add, is knowable, but it is not knowledge. It confronts the soul and is not of it. To put it in modern terms: It is a presence to the soul, but not a *representation* within it. We might say that Being is for us irreduceably *aspectual*: We look at it and move among its articulations for it has a power of affecting the soul and being known (*Republic* 511, *Sophist* 248 e). We may even, speaking figuratively, comprehend it. But we cannot pass *into* it. For Socrates philosophy, the desire for being, remains forever literally philosophy—an unfulfilled *longing* for knowledge.

V. *Appearance and Being*

The *eidos* is steadfast and lucid. But the world which envelops us is shifting and opaque. Yet the Greeks call what appears before our eyes the *phenómena*, which means "what shines out," "what shows itself," for the things that appear glow and ensnare us by their kaleidoscopic spectacle: we are all lovers of sights and sounds (*Republic* 475 d). I should note here that although I cannot help talking of "things," the appearances are not things in any strict sense since they have no "reality" (which is but Latin for "thinghood"), no compacted, concrete character. Socrates sometimes uses the word "business," "affairs" (*prágmata*), for our world. The "phenomena" sparkle busily, but it is all surface.

Now the systematic illusions and the serried variety of appearance can be mastered by various sciences, for example, the sciences of measuring, numbering, and weighing (*Republic* 602 d). Yet there is still a recalcitrant residue, an incorrigible phenomenality that shows itself as a two-fold multiplicity. First there are always many irreducibly diverse items of a kind: many different beautiful things, many different just acts. And second, no particular beautiful thing and no particular just act is that way perfectly, unbudgeably, purely, but each changes as our perspective on it changes in time or place. Appearance *as* appearance is scattered and shimmering, fragmented and iridescent.

But most of all it is *not* what it shows, or to put it plainer: Appearance is appearance *of* something, it points beyond itself. What is that whose refracted form appears to us in appearance? What appears in appearance must be in itself invisible. This invisible *eidos* is what Socrates thinks of as the being behind appearance, and appearance is becoming regarded as a manifestation. This *eidos* which is a being, is all that appearance and becoming are not: not scattered but one; not multiform but of a single look (*Phaedo* 78 d); not mixed but pure (66 a); not passive but potent (*Sophist* 247 e); not elusive and illusory but steadfast and true; not for busy show but the thing in its verity, the very thing (*to auto pragma*); not self-contradictory but

self-same (*Phaedo* 78 d, *Cratylos* 386 e); not dependent and *of* something, but itself by itself, absolved from subservience, or "absolute" (as later commentators render Socrates' deliberately naive term "by itself"); unique, immortal, indestructible (*Phaedo* 78 d), outside time and beyond place (*Phaedrus* 247 b). All that lies in Socrates' simplest expression: *the* Just, *the* Beautiful.

Whatever has this characteristic of potent, shapely, and, one might almost say, "specific", self-sameness is called a being. It provides such "beingness" (*ousía, Cratylos* 386 e, *Meno* 72 b) as appearances have, and it does this by somehow "being by," having presence in them, (*parousía, Phaedo* 100 d). The eidetic beings are responsible for the fact that the question "What is it?" asks not only *what* the thing is but also what it *is*: every "whatness," all quality, brings being with it.

Beings, once again, are not "real," for they are not things and do not move in the categories true of things, nor do they "exist," for to exist means to be here and now.[10] But they are not unreal or non-existent either. They *are*, in the way described, and as they appear they give things their looks, their visible form (*Phaedo* 104 d).

VI. *Same and Other*

The being I have named so often is not Socrates' discovery. It comes to him from those so prejudicially called Presocratics, in particular from Parmenides who entered the sanctuary of being in a blazing chariot. Thus it comes to Socrates already fraught with established controversy and difficulties. Even he has an inherited legacy of "problems," that is to say, of questions posed in terms of his predecessors' inescapable doctrines. Questions posed in this way, as problems, notoriously have resolutions which pose more and tighter problems, and thus is launched the tradition of professional philosophy. Socrates does not escape this unfresh beginning.

This is the problem Socrates takes up when still almost a boy: the being Father Parmenides discovered *is* and nothing else. It is, one and only, without distinction or difference, for we cannot think or speak what is utterly not. There is no sentence which does not contain, audibly or latently, an "is", an assertion of the truth of being. Such austere attention to what speech *always* says is not primitive. Listen to W. H. Auden:

> Words have no words for words that are not true. ["Words"]

What Parmenides says—that what is, is, and in merely being is without inner distinction, all one—is compelling since we have no immediate speech with which to deny it; we cannot say: "Being is different from itself; being is not being; being is not-being." But it is also monstrous: it negates both our multifarious world, the one in which we are at home, along with the very possibility of articulate speech itself, since we may never say anything of anything other than that it is. Because Parmenides' grand insight brings all articulating speech to a halt, his zealous follower Zeno does not attempt to defend his position, but, instead, cleverly attacks the opposition, who continue to talk and say that being is not one but many. He understands the claim that being is many to require that being be *at once* like and unlike itself, self-contradictory, unthinkable. But Socrates knows both that the visible world, at least, *is* like that and that thoughtful speech cannot bear such self-contradiction. He offers a supposition which saves at the same time the integrity of that which speech is always about, namely this "is" which is at the heart of every *logos*, and the manifest multiplicity and inconsistency of appearance as it is revealed in speech. He saves Parmenides from sinking into the white silence of being.

Socrates' supposition is the *eidos*, which is not being itself but *a* being. His resolution is that being is many, but not confused. The *eide* are each self-same, as being should be, but they are also diverse from each other. The appearances somehow "participate" in these beings in such a way that the diverse beings intersect in them and are superimposed. Thus the appearances become self-opposed; the *eide* save at once the purity of being and the alloy of becoming. Young Socrates shrugs off Parmenides' problem about multiplicity with the phrase: "Where's the wonder?" (*Parmenides* 129 b), the universal paean of those who have resolved another's perplexity. An older Socrates will say that philosophy *is* wonder.

Socrates' solution, that there are several and diverse beings, of course poses new problems. The most telling of these is that each being is also a non-being—at least it is a *not*-being; it is *not* what the other beings are. Hence Zeno's problems with the self-opposition of the world of appearance has been but raised into the realm of being. A few weeks before the end of his life Socrates is present at a great moment in the course of philosophy when a visitor from Parmenides' country presents, by way of resolving this higher problem, a momentous elaboration of Socrates' supposition which, while turning it almost irrevocably into a "theory," advances it greatly. For if Socrates had shown how we can come to terms with the inherent and unavoidable self-opposition of the world of appearance, the visiting stranger will go on to show how we can account for the spurious being deliberately invoked in false and fraudulent human speech.

The stranger begins his solution of Socrates' problem by establishing that all the *eide* are beings, and that they must therefore all take part in being itself; they all belong to a highest *eidos*, the *eidos* Being. But then the stranger boldly claims that there is also another, unheard of, *eidos* which ranges in a peculiar way through all the *eide*. This *eidos* is indeed not-being, but not-being rightly understood, understood as a being (*Sophist* 258 c). He calls it the *Other*. The *eidos* of the Other runs through all beings and makes them other than each other—not what the other is. By being *scattered* through all being the Other is the cause of its pervasive distinction and difference. It is a peculiar principle which relates by opposition and unifies by diver-

sity, for since all have otherness in common, their very community makes them different. It makes all beings confront each other. It is the very *eidos* of relativity. It is not a new name for non-being that the stranger contributes but a new view of the world as articulated and bonded through difference. It is a world in which the fact that we take one thing for another and speak falsely, as we surely do, is accounted for: to say what is false is not to say nothing or what is not, but to say something *other* than what is the truth.

The stranger mentions in passing also another principle, evidently not itself an *eidos* among *eide*, but comprehending, surpassing and beyond all being. He calls it the *Same* (254 e), in antithesis to the Other. It is that which gives the *eidos* of Being, and through it all the beings, their very own nature, their steadfast abiding by themselves, their being what they are through and through: the Same gives the *eide* their self-sameness. It is the culminating principle. Depending on how it is approached, it is also called the Good, because it gives beings their vividness and fittingness (*Republic* 509 a), and in Plato's "Unwritten Teachings"—recall that he declined to write down the most central things—it seems to have been called the One, because it is the first and final totality. Socrates speaks of it explicitly, though in metaphor, but once, likening it to the sun because it gives the *eide* their luminous sight-likeness (*Republic* 509 b).

Aristotle told a story of Plato's famous lecture on the Good, which he held at his school, the Academy. People came in droves, expecting to hear something fascinating to themselves, about health or wealth or power. But it was all about arithmetic and how the *eide* are a certain kind of number, ending up with the just-mentioned revelation that the Good is the One. So they got disgusted and drifted off (Aristoxenus, *Elements of Harmony* II, 30). Mr. Klein used to add—as if he had been there—that only one person stayed, comprehending and critical. That was Aristotle himself.

What Plato spoke about then was what is called dialectic in the last and strongest sense, thinking by and through the *eide* (*Republic* 511 C, 532), attending to their grouping, hierarchy, interweaving or "intertwining" (*symploké*, *Sophist* 240 c). Such dialectic, the ultimate use of the *logos* and the philosophical activity proper, appears in the dialogues but once, namely in the *Sophist*, and scholars have not succeeded in recovering much of it. There is, I might add, a chapter in Mr. Klein's book on Greek mathematics which engages in true dialectic and tells how the *eidos* Being can be understood as the number Two.[11]

VII. *Original and Image*

There is one greatest, almost overwhelming, perplexity about the *eide* which Socrates knows about from the very beginning (*Parmenides* 131 c). How *can* an *eidos* do the very business for which Socrates has submitted it to us? Are not the *eidos*-units,

> being each one and ever the same and receptive neither to becoming nor to destruction, ever steadfastly the same? But having entered into becoming, must such an *eidos*-unit not be posited either as scattered and having become many within the things that are becoming, or, if it is still whole, then as separated from itself, which latter would be the greatest impossibility—that one and the same thing should be at once in one and many? [Philebus 15 b]

Then how *can* the *eidos* be the source of the appearances around us, how can it have truck with what is always changing and multiple? This question can be called the "lower participation problem" since it deals not with the community the *eide* have with each other but with that which is below them. How do we understand the working relations which the *eide*—once we suppose them to be—have to the variety, the passages and the contradictions of our world of appearance? It is the most pressing Socratic problem.

Socrates uses a number of terms to name this relation. He speaks of the partaking, the "participation" (*méthexis*, *Phaedo* 100–102) of the appearances in the eidos, but, of course, he does not mean a part-taking as when people take up a part of an awning they sit under (*Parmenides* 131 b). He speaks of a *community* of the *eidos*, and the appearances, of the appearances being *named* after the *eidos*, of the *presence* of the *eidos* in them (*e.g. Phaedo* 100 c,d, 103 b). These terms indicate that the two realms are strongly related, but they do not reveal what the appearances can have in common with beings, or why they merit being named after beings, or how the beings can be present in them.

But Socrates does use another group of words which tell more. He speaks of participation through similarity, likeness, imaging, imitation (*Phaedrus* 250 a, *Phaedo* 74 e, *Timaeus* 39 e and, above all, *Republic* 510 b).

The thought that our world should stand to the realm of *eide* as copy to exemplar (*Parmenides* 132 d, *Timaeus* 48 e) has a certain high plausibility. It conveys a falling off from the fullness of being, an imitative, derivative mode. It suggests that one original *eidos* will have many image-appearances, and that no appearance can stand free, but most appear, like all the images with which we are familiar, incarnate in some stuff, as the statute of Socrates is worked in marble (*Timaeus* 52 c). It indicates how every appearance could be doubly dependent: on the *eidos* for being *visible*, and on our sight for being *seen*. If the appearances somehow image the *eide*, their inferiority, multiplicity, materiality, and sensuality becomes comprehensible—and so does the fact of their inescapably beguiling books.

There are, however, apparently devastating difficulties with this primordial imitation. Of these one is most vulnerable to formal argument: If the *eidos* is what is originally beautiful, and beautiful things are copies, and if the likeness of copies to their originals comes from their sharing the same quality, then both have the quality of being beautiful. It follows that the *eidos* of beauty is beautiful, as the *eidos* of justice is just—and Socrates does not scruple

to say just that (*Protagoras* 330 c, *Symposium* 210 c). But that way of speaking, that beauty is beautiful, is an insupportable redundancy, called by scholars "self-predication". Furthermore, if the function of the *eidos* was to account for the fact that anything is beautiful, then another *eidos* beyond will have to be posited to account for the fact that the *eidos* itself has been said to be beautiful. Aristotle calls this dilemma the "Third Man", because behind the man and the man-like *eidos* of mankind there must appear a third man-*eidos* (*Metaphysics* 990 b).

But these terrible perplexities, whose various versions Socrates knows about (*Parmenides* 132 d, *Republic* 597 c), miss the point. Socrates so often chooses to employ the phrase "the beautiful" rather than the noun of quality "beauty," not because he is simply deaf to the fact that in Greek, as in English, the former phrase sounds as if it meant a beautiful *thing*, being an adjective turned into a substantive. He speaks that way because he means to make us face the self-same "suchness" of the *eidos*, to divert our desire from the apparent beauty of the appearances to a better but invisible beauty, to convey its greater desirability, to persuade us to "look to" it. The turns of speech that call the *eidos* verily beautiful, through and through beautiful, *the* beautiful itself, are philosophical rhetoric. They intend to evoke a new kind of longing, so that we may turn more willingly from that which appears as beautiful to seek that hidden sight which first makes it possible for us to see and say that anything on earth is beautiful. The *eidos* beauty is certainly not ugly, but no more is it to be described by the adjective "beautiful;" it is rather such as to be itself the sole source of the attribute in others. The word "beautiful" does not *describe* this suchness, but it *reaches* for it.

How then can beautiful things be images of beauty if it is not, as seems indeed to be impossible, by likeness, that is, by sharing the same quality? It is because imaging, mirroring, turns out to be the deepest capability of being, the accompaniment of the pervasive otherness which haunts it, that non-being which dogs every being. Each being confronts another as its other, and its own otherness is mirrored in the others.

For the image nature of an image is not really caught when we point out similarities, say of conformation and color, between it and its original. The closest we can come to telling what an image is, is to say that it is, in truth, not what it images, and then again it somehow is. We are apt to say of a little statue of Socrates looking like a pot-bellied satyr: "That's Socrates", but we know at the same time that it is not. We mean that Socrates is in some sense present in the stone—"represented"—but not genuinely, not in truth. For an image is that which *in its very nature* is *not* what it *is*; it is an interweaving of being and non-being (*Sophist* 240 c).

Now among the beings, the *eide*, each is self-same and truly what it is, and also other than and not what the others are; its not-being is only with respect to the other beings; the interweaving of beings is not a commingling: the strands of being and non-being remain distinct. But becoming, Socrates explains, is an *amalgam*, a blending, of being and non-being (*Republic* 477 a). The appearances commingle *within* themselves non-being and being; they have neither steady self-sameness nor fixed difference, and yet they seem somehow enduring and definite. *In their very nature* they are not what they are, and might on that account be called images of being. So here is a formal way of conceiving the claim that appearance images the *eidos*. But it must be said that it in no wise solves our greatest problem: *how* the *eidos* drops down from the context of being to become entangled with non-being in a new and world-making way—*how* there can be an *eidos* incarnate (*Phaedrus* 251 a).

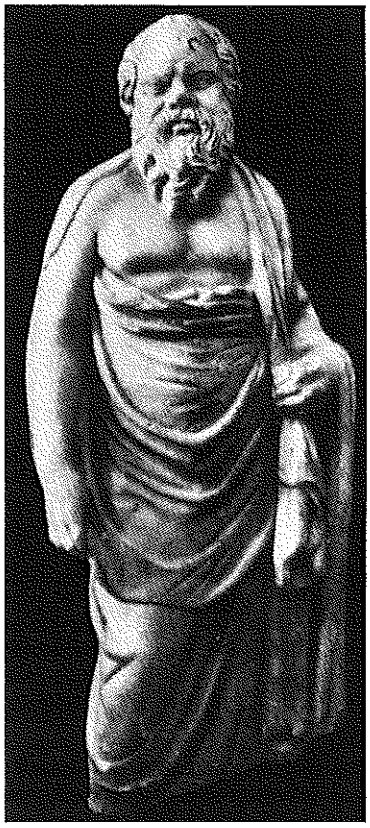
Socrates ascribes to us an initial power—most startling to see in children—of image recognition (*eikasía*, *Republic* 511 e), by which we identify a counterfeit *as a* counterfeit at the same moment that we recognize the original lurking in the imitation (510 b). In its developed form it is a sense for what Mr. Klein once called the "duplicity of being." It is our capacity for philosophy.

I have said what I think Plato's Socrates thought, but I do not want this lecture to be what is, wonderfully, called an "academic" exercise, so I must now say what *I* think. But before I do that, let me make mention one last time of the name of Jacob Klein to whom this lecture is most certainly dedicated in loving memory and who—so good a teacher was he—taught me nothing but what I could straightway recognize as my own.

Socrates himself says of the *eide* that they have become buzz-words (*Phaedo* 100 b); there are even those people known, a little absurdly, as "the friends of the *eide*" (*Sophist* 248 a). That kind of thing comes from being drawn and fascinated by Socrates' sights without having ourselves seen them. What is more, Plato does not reveal, indeed conceals, in the dialogues the answer to the question: did Socrates himself view the *eide*? did anyone ever?; in short: *are* there accessible *eide*?

Therefore our attention naturally turns to the Socrates through whom we hear of these matters and to his trustworthiness. And I find the man who is commemorated in the *Dialogues* trustworthy beyond all others. I trust his slyness and his simplicity, his sobriety and his enthusiasm, his playfulness and his steadfastness, his eros and his dignity. Yet it is not mainly his character that I trust, but his presuppositions, and I think that they must have formed him more than he did them.

I make Socrates' presuppositions out to be these: That there is that in human life which stands out, that there are heights and that there is a way to them, an ascent. That what is desirable is at a distance, by itself and in itself, and therefore sight-like and yet invisible, and that there must be a means for reaching it. That this mediating power is speech, which is able to shape our irritable wonder at common things into that springboard of thought called a



question. And first and last, that where there is a question, an answer has already been at work, and it is our human task to recollect it.

These presuppositions are not at all necessary. Our specific human work does not have to be thought of as arising from enthusiasm about the extraordinary or marvelling at the common, as Socrates says philosophy does (*Theaetetus* 155 d). It can come from a cool, sober sense that the ways of the world should be exposed and explained, its myths dismantled and its depths made plane; that not what is best but what is individual, not what is common but what is ordinary, should preoccupy our efforts; that we should not view but master, not play but work, not suppose but certify, not ask but determine, not long but draw limits. I am describing that self-controlled maturing of philosophy which is responsible for all that we call modernity. I do not think for a moment that we should play truant from this severe and powerful school. But I do think that Socrates' suppositions are that philosophical beginning which can be forgotten but never superseded.

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1. Let me add here that the next most important source of the Theory of Ideas, very difficult to use, is Aristotle, who reports its technical elaborations and problems and looks at it, as it were, askance.
2. I am thinking of the so-called problems of participation and separation, of self-predication, of the Third Man, and of eidetic structure. Incidentally, in the *Parmenides* Socrates is portrayed as the supporter of that very version of the theory—that the ideas are "separate" from things—which Aristotle explicitly denies he held. Aristotle makes this claim in a puzzling passage which is the prime source for all denials of Socrates' authorship of the theory (*Metaphysics* 987 b).
3. The meaning of *theoria* in Greek is, however, that of a viewing, a sight seen, contemplation, and in that sense the Ideas are very much a "theory."
4. A Socratic hypothesis is unlike a post-Baconian hypothesis in not being a conjecture to be verified by observations, that is, experience. It is a little closer to an astronomical hypothesis such as Plato is said by Simplicius to have first demanded. He required of astronomers an intellectual construct, a mathematical theory, devised to "save the phenomena," that is, to display the anomalous appearances as grounded in regularities acceptable to reason. A Socratic hypothesis, however, is not a postulated construct but a discovered being.
5. Nor is the translation "*form*" quite good, because it is too reminiscent of the Aristotelian distinction between form and matter. The *eidos* may "produce" a form in a thing (*Phaedo* 104 d) but it *is* not its form.
6. I have given this presentation a questionable coherence by ranging through the dialogues as if Plato's works constituted a planned-out whole. But then I believe that they do, and that what scholars consider the "development" of Plato's thought from early to late dialogues is largely the advancing of one or the other of these different beginnings and aspects.
7. Accordingly the *Phaedrus*, in which this beginning of philosophy is preeminently set out, was once, probably wrongly, thought to be Plato's earliest dialogue.
8. Of course, the visible things do not constitute the *eidos*, nor is the *eidos* their concept, that is, an abstraction from a class or the definition which selects its members.

I want to mention also that, although it is not his fixed usage, Plato does refer to the greatest *eide* as *gene*, genera, kindred groups (*Sophist* 254 d), thereby indicating that in the highest reaches eidetic shapeliness yields to associative characteristics.
9. For Socrates *méthodos* means a *path* of inquiry (*Republic* 533 b) indicated by the inquiry itself, not a pre-set investigatory *procedure*.
10. (a) The word *ousia* did play a role *analogous* to modern "reality" in common language. As we speak of "real" estate, Greeks used *ousia* to mean one's property or substance.

(b) Scholars attribute to Socrates the distinction between two uses of the verb "to be," the predicative and the existential. In its predicative use "is" acts as a copula, a coupling between the subject of discourse and what is said of it, as in "This face is beautiful." The existential "is" occurs in the chopped-off sentence "Justice is," meaning "is to be found sometimes, somewhere in the world;" but "Justice exists." But distinctions in verbal usage are not Socrates' aim. When we say that "this face is beautiful," he will ask what beauty is, or, again, when we assert that "justice exists" he may want to know in what realm—and it will not be one which has time and place.
11. *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (The M.I.T. Press) 1968 7 c, 79 ff.

In brief, it goes like this: According to the stranger the *eidos* of Being is composed of two *eide*, change and stillness (*Sophist* 254 d), since first of all everything that is, is either in motion or at rest, though never both at once; these *eide* never mingle. Being is not either of these alone, or their mixture, but precisely *both together*. That, however, is just how number assemblages behave; Socrates himself draws attention to this fact in that favorite formula: each one, both two. (*Hippias major* 301 a, *Phaedo* 97 a, *Republic* 476 a, *Theaetetus* 146 e). Each unit in a number remains what it was, *one*, but both together have a new name and nature, *two*; they are *together* what neither is *by itself*. Being, the highest *eidos*, would then be the eidetic Two—not anything above or beyond the two eidetic units, change and stillness, which constitute it, but simply *their being together*. Aristotle reports the Academy's interest in the arithmetic organization of the *eide*. (*Metaphysics* 987 b). He also points out that the eidetic units are not, like arithmetic units, indifferent, and so capable of being "thrown together" any which way, that is, added, (1081 a). They can only associate into unique eidetic numbers, each according to its nature; such eidetic counting, which drives speech to and then beyond its limits, is dialectic proper.

Three by Meyer Liben

from

New York Street Games—
Stories and Memories

LADY, I DID IT

A bunch of us were standing on the corner,

future-bound,

in a moment of dissatisfaction and restlessness. It was a late evening in early spring, darkness swarmed softly over sidewalk and stoop, softly filled in the cracks of light, remnants of a day forever gone.

We had finished an afternoon of hard and concentrated play and had enough of that, prefiguring the days not too distant when our play would be put off as a childish thing, opening up long periods of dissatisfaction and restlessness, for nothing rushed in to fill the vacuum created by the lost possibilities of play.

We wanted adventure, activity outside the internecine play on which we had fed for so many years.

"Let's have a track meet," one of us suggested, but nobody budged.

"Let's find the 115th Street Gang," one of us suggested, but nobody budged.

"Let's play *Lady I Did It,*" one of us suggested, and that was just right, being midway between the play we could not leave and the power of the outside world we did not quite dare approach, for the 115th Street Gang was an older gang, all-powerful in the area stretching from the Harlem to the Hudson between 110th and 116th Streets.

So we started to play *Lady I Did It.*

This is a game which stands midway between the play and fantasy spirit of childhood and the demands of the outer world. It is a group testing of the Reality Principle.

It is a simple and insolent game. Any number can play.

We approached a ground-floor apartment in a house up the block and one of us rang the bell. There was the sound of footsteps, and a woman opened the door, looked out at us.

"Lady I Did It" and we ran off.

Though any number (more than one) can play this game, it requires at least five to work up the necessary gang spirit, bravado, and sense of protection of the guilty one to give the game its interest.

Part of the interest is in the woman's surprise at the *number* of kids, also as to the reason for our presence.

This was the insolence of the game, that we stayed to tell her what we had done, that we had done it. This was much different from the antics of the little kids on the block, who played the game of *Ringing Doorbells,* then ran off before anyone answered.

Meyer Liben (1911–1975) was a New York writer. I remember him in the names and the sights of the various neighborhoods of the times of his life: the West 111th Street in Harlem of his childhood, the Washington Heights of his youth, the Village and Chelsea of his adulthood. He went to City College ('32) where he was editor of the college newspaper, *The Campus,* and played on the basketball team. Trotsky, he told me they used to tell him at City, was really a City graduate. Unprepossesing and simple, he had a life in his eyes which I will not forget, and a gentleness which was quite capable of letting you know when you were unfair—without scolding. He knew where he came from and where he had lived and did not forget or hide it, which meant he was loyal with a loyalty that was never a burden to others. Every word of his I have ever read tells you that.

For more than thirty years he published in many magazines. In 1967 he published a collection of nine short stories and a short novel, *Justice Hunger,* that went unnoticed. Shortly after his death, George Dennison described him (*New York Times,* August 1, 1976), probably correctly, as "a writer of a kind most of us don't believe exists, an unknown first-rate writer." Most of his work remains unpublished. The three stories published here come from an unpublished collection of twelve stories and an essay on New York street games called, *New York Street Games, Stories and Memories.*—L.R.

With us the confrontation *was* the game—the band of us, emboldened by numbers, staring down the confused woman in that instant of silence which preceded the disclosure.

Properly speaking, the disclosure did not answer the woman's question (which we rarely gave her the chance to ask), that question being:

"What do you want?"

Before she could ask that question, for which we had no formulated answer, one of us announced his guilt and off we scooted.

The announcement by the guilty one made it no easier for any one of us who happened to be caught, because we were all equally blamed.

This was one of the hazards of the game, we came up against it on our very next venture, when a man answered the ring.

"Mister I did it," one of us said feebly, for the heart was not in the formulation, partly because it was an irate *man* facing us and partly because it was not the formulation and so violated the rules of the game.

Quick as a flash, he went after us, just missed the trailing one with a kick which, had it landed, would have propelled that trailer much closer to the front of the line.

Our next ring was answered by a little girl of about three years old, whose smile and interested surprise was in sharp contrast to our nervous belligerency. She looked around from one to the other, pleased at our numbers, unaware of our defiance, which, under her infant scrutiny, withered fast. We felt very foolish, standing there with our stored energy directed against a target insensitive to our needs and power.

When she called out:

"Ma, boys are here," the spirit of the gang softened more. Grumbling and cursing, we broke up, moved away aimlessly, disregarded the door which was slammed behind us.

"Baby I did it," one of us yelled, and we laughed, recovered our spirits a bit, tried our luck in another apartment house.

Here we were again disappointed, for there came to the door a very old man, he was wearing a *yarmulke*, and peered at us through eyes half-shut, without saying a word.

We were again at a loss, stymied by the presence of another impervious object, for even had he asked us, in a voice cracked and torn, what it was that we wanted, and had one of us announced that he was the culprit, the daring bellringer, the old man surely would not have reacted with any resentment or even any interest to this disclosure, which, for an instant, bound the guilty one to us with the feelings we reserved for the hero in danger. But there was no danger. We had nothing to say, and the old man only looked and shrugged at this unexpected image of adolescent solidarity, now breaking up before his bleary eyes, for with mumbled imprecations we again scattered, while the old man swiftly, and in a voice much clearer than any one of us imagined he owned, uttered an incomprehensible prayer, probably of deliverance.

Then, on our next venture, our game succeeded perfectly, we were pleased the way a troupe is pleased when after all the rehearsals, all the fumblings and imperfections, the play is suddenly performed to the utmost limits of its meaning and its form.

We chose, by one of those random universal choices where the inclinations of the warring individuals are for the moment subsumed in a joyful group harmony and solidarity, a top floor apartment and stood for a moment in front of the chosen door, enjoying the possibility of the imminent appearance of the key figure and the swift completion of our curious game.

During this pause we chose, by an intangible stirring, a movement of the group spirit, a series of lightning calculations, stray memories, movements of withdrawal, by the prominence in the foreground which one of us suddenly assumed, by a curious exigency of space, by the discipline of a gang, by a (finally) unanimous inclination—we chose one amongst us to step forward and commit, for all of us, the predetermined act.

He stepped forward swiftly, with a courage partly determined by the presence of the rest of us, partly by the role towards which he advanced, and partly by the ordinary amount of the spirit of play which he possessed, and pushed the button. He stepped back into the anonymity of the group, and we closed ranks about him, as a protective cover, until the moment when he would step forward and expose himself as the culprit. The bell rang and almost immediately we heard the footsteps, vigorous, of the person coming towards the door, down the long hallway into which were built the bedrooms. We were quiet in the moment before the confrontation, one of us looked back towards the head of the stairs, measuring the distance to safety.

This was in a way a very satisfying moment—the thing had been done, for better or worse, together we awaited the issue, bound communally in face of the danger which we ourselves, by our collective will, had brought into being, for we didn't *have* to be in front of this door, awaiting the answer to our insolent summons. We could have been playing in the street, in some violent opposition to each other, or been standing on the corner, talking of the heroes of the world, those who had left their blocks and made their ways in far-off realms, figures shadowy and real, gods we dreamed of approaching and rivalling. Instead we stood in front of this door, our rivalries, jealousies, and dreams buried for the moment in this unified thrust against the adult world.

The door opened, and there appeared in the doorway, slightly harrassed, interrupted in household work, a rather young woman, who gazed quizzically, without fear, at the band of boys who formed a semi-circle in front of her door.

She was genuinely puzzled, not the suspicious type who assumes that because strangers are at her door, harm

is meant, and shuts the door swiftly before the harm is done.

Nor was she one of those who recognized this game, like the smart-alecky woman, who seeing us crowd her door, exclaimed:

"Lady I did it" with the hysterical glee which some show in destroying the pleasures of others.

No, the woman now at the door was genuinely puzzled, could not imagine what it was that we wanted, tried in fact to collect her thoughts, to shake off her household distraction, to concentrate on the meaning of this little gang which stood defiantly in front of her, betraying an excitement which *she* could not understand was created by the imminence of a disclosure which in itself would be rather pointless to her, though certainly annoying.

Then, when the pause had reached its fullness, not too early, before the suspense had been built up, and not too late, after the novelty had worn off, our chosen one, before the lady had a chance to make a comment or ask a question (and it was always more dramatic when *we* broke the silence) shouted out, in a voice of triumphant self-confession:

Lady, I Did It,

and we all beat it down the stairs to the street, where we exulted for a moment in our victory.

King of The Hill

Because of the date of his birth and because of the regulations of the Board of Education (lucky for this story) Davey Flaxman entered public school in midterm, February. He was not quite six, and had been in this strange new world of school no more than a couple of weeks when the teacher, Miss Dawson, announced that the next day, February 22, was a holiday, to celebrate the birthday of our first president, George Washington, and there would be no school. Indeed, the school would be closed (but Davey's best friend, Chick, wise in the ways of the world, said that the school custodian, Mr. Ogden, would have to come in to take care of the furnace).

Miss Dawson was not one of the strict ones. She was tired and kind. She said that George Washington was the father of our country, that he led us in both war and peace.

Davey was puzzled by the idea of a holiday. There was no school on Saturday and Sunday, but it was not called a holiday. He was of course aware that not all days were the same, that his parents fasted on a certain day in the year, that firecrackers were shot off on another day. These were some of the unusual days in the changing daily scene, but here after going to school regularly, he was told that he would not have to go to school because tomorrow was a holiday, and a Thursday. A holiday meant that you did not have to go to school, just the way, for his father, a holiday meant that he did not have to go to the store. But he usually went to the synagogue on those days.

"Do we have to go anywhere on George Washington's birthday?" Davey asked his older brother Daniel.

"Are you crazy or sumpin'?" asked Danny. "you don't have to go anywhere, you just don't have to go to school."

There was an assembly and a big picture of George Washington on the wall. He looked very serious, but not angry.

If he is the father of our country, thought Davey, who is the mother of our country. He asked his brother that, but his brother thought that was very funny. He even laughed, and didn't bother to answer. Davey thought it was maybe because he didn't know, but most of the time his brother answered Davey's questions.

Nor had Miss Dawson said who was the mother of the country, but she had said that our country used to be a *colony*, that it belonged to England, and then came the Revolutionary War to make America free from England.

Davey repeated it at the supper table that night.

"Of course," said his father, "he was like Moses, he led his people to freedom."

"Is there a holiday for Moses' birthday too?" asked Davey.

Although he had only been in school for a few weeks, and although Miss Dawson was not strict, like some of the other teachers, but tired and kind, Davey liked the idea of no school somewhere in the middle of the week. He did not find it much fun to sit in one place for about five hours every day.

Mr. Flaxman laughed at Davey's question. It seemed that most questions about holidays made people laugh.

"Passover is the celebration of the freedom of the Jews," he said. "I don't know about Moses' birthday. I don't know if it's written in the Bible or not."

On that day, in that year, February 22 was cold. It had snowed the day before, snowed heavily and steadily, and then, in the early hours of the morning, it had stopped snowing, a bitter wind quieted down, and snow lay evenly on the streets, with the far-off quiet of snow.

The kids came out early, lured by the snow, the heaviest snow of the season. Some of the bigger kids carried ice skates, on their way to the park, from which news had spread that the lake was frozen, kids of all ages came out with sleds, the older ones off to Snake Hill in the park, the younger ones to belly whop on sidewalk and in gutter, racing one another, or seeing who could cover the most distance (complexities of time and space). In those not-exactly pastoral days, play in the gutter was conceivable, actual.

Davey, like most of the little kids, came out to play in the snow-filled streets; they made curious designs in the snow, wrote their names, and the names of others, in the snow, wrote random numbers or showed their arithmetic powers in more detail, made little houses and other architectural shapes, made snowballs and hurled them at likely targets, including one another.

Snow is not a pervasive element for New Yorkers, some winters there is hardly any snow at all, not enough to

make a firm snowball, to say nothing of a minihouse, and to say less than nothing of the great hill which was slowly formed by the work of many hands, a firmly-packed hill, with a solid base, not so much soaring as rising to a height of eleven, twelve feet, no Mount McKinley, but a fine, even impressive hill in the eyes of Davey and his friends to play on, and what game is more likely to be played on such a hill than King of the Hill?

Of all the simple, basic games in the world, what *can* compare (for basicness and simplicity) with King of the Hill? Someone, by decisiveness or speed, or after formal choosing, gets to the top of a hill, most often stone, but the material is indifferent, snow is just fine. Why should *he* be on top of the hill? Why should he have the greater view? And above all, why should he look *down* on everyone else? Why should he be alone up there, even in splendor, and the rest milling about on the flat earth, hardly possessing that ground, sharing it, certainly not in control, and he up there King of the Hill? These were some of the questions that went through the minds of Davey, of Chick, Richie, Benjy, and the other kids, as they looked up at Allie, secure atop the snow hill, gazing down in disdain at the groundlings, daring them, by his presence and manner (for few on top of the hill will act in a modest or casual way, in an unkingly manner) to dislodge him from his lofty perch.

That is not the most difficult of tasks, it sometimes takes time, there are repulses, the would-be king can be pushed off, even tumbled ignominiously down the hill, but after a while, in the fullness and necessity of time, by a swift ascent, by curious distractions, by a planned movement, maybe flanking, of two or three aspirants ("you go slow up that side, you start to holler, I'll sprint up the other side") the king was dethroned, and a new King was in command of the height. No one of them was king forever.

Now, while these efforts were being made (the succession was always violent, not hereditary), Jerry appeared on the scene. He was one of the big guys on the block, Chick's older brother, a sophomore at CCNY, and a keen and eager analyst of any situation at all. He paused to observe the scene and then to comment on it.

"Some day to play King of the Hill."

"Whatdya mean?" asked Benjy.

"I mean," said Jerry, "that today, as you well know, is George Washington's birthday, and there were some people in America who thought that he ought to be made king, forgetting the nature of the colonial struggle."

Jerry, in making his point, forgot that he was talking to six year olds, then remembered that he was talking to six year olds, and said:

"I mean, some people forgot that we got rid of one King George by fighting a war, so what was the sense of having another king. It turned out that his name would have been George, too."

"A president is better'n a king," said Benjy.

"Why?" asked Jerry, suddenly seeing himself as Socrates.

"Because," said Benjy, "he's elected."

"So what's so great about being elected?" asked Jerry, suddenly seeing himself as the Devil's Advocate.

Benjy seemed puzzled, couldn't come up with an answer, so Chick chimed in:

"If you're elected, it means you know what the president *stands* for, he has to tell you, a king doesn't have to tell you nothing if he doesn't want to."

Benjy made a swift movement up the snow hill, was easily repulsed, just about managed to come down on his feet.

"That's very good," said Jerry to Chick, suddenly seeing himself as the Encouraging Older Brother, rather than the older brother.

"Yah," said Benjy, "all you have to do to be a king is to be a king's son."

Noting that Allie seemed bemused up there on top of the hill, Richie sprinted up, but Allie shook off his bemusement at the sound of approach and thwarted this new challenge, more than ever King of the Hill, though truth to tell, he was becoming a bit bored with the loneliness of his position and somewhat yearned for the company, commonplace though it was, of the groundlings down there. He was no doubt ready to be toppled, but aware of his own vulnerability, he showed the greater determination in a fierceness of mien, a stubbornness of posture, to remain King of the Hill.

Jerry was a Freudian, and he thought, watching the game, that here was another illustration of the theory of the Primal Horde, the banding of the brothers (though on a somewhat individuated basis) to topple the father from his throne and then to win the mother, though she seemed to be nowheres in the game (murder, he also thought, is much less of a taboo than incest).

Chick moved up the hill warily, and while Allie covered his movements, Davey sprinted up, pushed Allie (who was ready to be overthrown) off the top of the hill. He slid in a babyish way down the slope, and now Davey was King of the Hill.

Jerry was also a Marxist (it was before the time of the Freudo/Marxists) and he saw this game as another illustration of the endless struggle for power that was going on everywheres, but the kids would soon be finished with this game, and start on another, for it was George Washington's birthday, no school all day.

The Relay Race

On a late afternoon in June 1924, a group of kids were coming to the end of their track meet on a street in the North Central Park area. It was a contest between the *up-the-blocks* and *down-the-blocks*, not one block against another, but these internecine struggles can be the bitterest of all.

It was close to the median point between the end of the war (not *which* war) and the beginnings of the depression,

and these are always the greatest points. Calvin Coolidge was filling out Warren Harding's term, and jokes about the New Englander's taciturnity were heard:

"Mr. President," said a woman reporter, "I've wagered that I can make you speak three words."

"You lose," said the unsmiling Cal.

But these youngsters were more interested in the Olympic games which were coming up in Paris, and were following avidly the exploits of Jackson Scholz, DeHart Hubbard, Harold Osborn, to say nothing of Paavo Nurmi, the "Phantom Finn," who, stop-watch in hand, was running all competition into the ground.

Considerations of a technical and human nature restricted the scope of these street track meets. The high jump, for example, proved impractical in competition because it was not possible to trust the steadiness (or the neutrality) of the two rope-holding lads. And nothing could be *thrown*. That cut out the javelin, the shot-put, the discus, the hammer. But most everything else was in—the sprints, the jumps, the middle and long-distance runs, the relays, even the Marathon (which was omitted in this particular meet for lack of time, it being a race ten times around the block). The pole vault had not yet penetrated the popular athletic consciousness.

Though Davey and Chick lived in the middle of the block and considered themselves *middle-of-the-blocks*, for purposes of competition they allied themselves with the *up-the-blocks*, partly because that area was less populated than down-the-block, for up there was the Yiddish theatre, whose side wall took up space which otherwise would have been taken by apartment buildings.

The meet was over, except for the relay race, and it had been very close. The running broad jump had just ended, and the contestants were crowded around the scorekeeper, who was keeping count, chalking up the score in the gutter.

"What's the score? What's the score?"

"Lemme alone, lemme figure," said the scorekeeper, Pimples, who had been chosen not so much for his arithmetic ability, but that he was one of the older guys, and therefore in a sense above the battle, and mostly because he was around and willing to take on the job. The starter and judges were picked out of the same complex of reasons.

Pimples was scribbling away furiously. The scoring was spread 10–5–3.

"It's 84–78," he said, "the score is 84–78."

"Favor who?"

"Favor the *down-the-blocks*," he said, "who do you think?"

What he meant was that anyone who had been keeping score wouldn't be asking such an idiotic question, but certain of the *up-the-blocks* argued, from what he said, and from the *tone* of his voice, that he was obviously on the side of the *down-the-blocks*.

"Whats the difference who's ahead?" asked Davey, "it all depends on the relay anyway."

That was because the relay counted 10 points for the winners, 0 for the losers. This procedure had been agreed on, that is, it had ostensibly been agreed on, for now there came forth a champion from the lists of the *down-the-blocks*, one Wally, to ask since when did the relay count 10 points, when from time immemorial the relay had always counted 5 points.

But Wally was so obviously trying to pull a fast one (the combined weight of the scorekeeper, the starter, and the judges being against him) that even his own teammates pulled him back.

"He's just kiddin'," said one of them, but nobody took it very humorously.

"Cut the stallin'," cried one of the spectators, "and let's get the relay started."

There were spectators: girls, non-running boys, older kids, even a few stray adults. They sat on the curb, or stood on the sidewalk. There were viewers too, from the apartments; they leaned out the windows, silently watching, or crying out encouragement to their favorites.

The relay race was a four-sewer race, each contestant running one sewer, which was 33⅓ yards, that is, if three sewers made up 100 yards, which was the popular notion. This notion rested on a legend that many years back, someone (long grown and moved into the great world off the block) had actually measured three sewers—though it was pretty clear that the sewers were equally spaced—and had come up with the 100 yard figure. It was, of course, a fine figure, the classic sprint distance and all that. We always thought it was pretty intelligent of the city authorities to figure the distance between the sewers that way.

So this relay wasn't much of a race from the point of view of distance covered. But two sewers each man was out because there weren't enough sewers on the block. There was another possibility: each man running two sewers and then the third man doubling back. But this had led to many arguments in the past—the third man tended to overextend his welcome to the oncoming runner, meeting him before he had completed his stint.

There was another reason why this double-back relay, where you ended up at the start, was not favored. It lacked a significant character of a relay race, whose primary charm is in the fact that distance is cooperatively covered, that the precious stick has been carried further into the distance. The circular track, of course, has helped to destroy this aspect of the relay race.

They were getting ready for the relay race. There was jockeying for position—both sides trying to anticipate the other's line-up, to put a strong man up against a weak man, etc. The general procedure was to put your fastest man last; in the case of *up-the-blocks*, that would be Benny, a stocky lad who ran like a streak, with absolute absorption, everything propelled him forward—legs, arms, and heart. Davey was a brilliant starter and the obvious choice for lead-off man. In so short a race, a slow start could be fatal. Chick and Allie were running second and

third, in that order, though it was difficult to say what motivated this choice. Allie was the fastest runner, so you had double strength at the end of the race, but it was as easy to argue that it was more important to get off to a strong start, and then depend on the last runner to make up for the third man's weakness. The line-up of the teams always led to interesting, and sometimes vehement discussion, with undertones of character analysis. There always seemed to be one weak man on a relay team.

"Why don't they get started?" asked a bystander.

"They're getting the sticks," said another.

The "sticks" were tightly-rolled sections of newspaper. The officials were rolling these papers, making sure that both "sticks" were the same weight, and the same length, for they had to meet the extraordinarily detailed scrutiny of both teams.

"I hate the relay race," said one of the kids watching, and there was some agreement. They thought it was somehow not a real race, it being the only non-individual event in the track and field program. After the first runner, it became a kind of continuing handicap race.

"You're making a great mistake, kids," said Chick's older brother, Jerry, a sophomore at City College. He had just come out of the candy store with a pack of cigarettes in his hand; he lit one of the cigarettes with the awkward nonchalance of a beginner. He was 17, having skipped twice and then gone to Townsend Harris Hall. He was standing down the block, near the finish line.

"A great mistake, kids," he said, "the relay is something special."

"What do you mean *special*?"

By now the "sticks" had been analyzed, measured, and approved, and the eight runners were moving slowly towards their places at the manhole covers. Some of the runners were limbering up.

"I mean," said Jerry, and you could see he was torn between not talking over the kids' heads and showing off his newly-won knowledge and vocabulary, "that the relay is a cooperative event, people working together for something."

"What's so great about that?" asked one of the kids.

"Plenty," said Jerry, "that's how things get accomplished in the world. Take science—one scientist does the work, and then he dies. So another scientist carries it on. It's like a relay race. Copernicus to Galileo to Newton to Einstein. What a team!"

"I'll take the Yankees," said another kid, who was working with a soft ball, trying out different positions with his fingers, for curves and drops, perhaps dreaming of the fade-away and double shoot.

"Where do you think the word *relay* comes from?" enquired the young collegian.

There was a pause devoid of expectancy.

"It comes from the French," he went on, "it has to do with relays of dogs and horses, you've seen in the movies how a team of horses and carriage comes into an inn, the horses are exhausted, foaming white spit, then a new team of horses takes over. It's a relay."

"Now that we have autos," said a youth, "who needs those relays?"

"That's not the idea," said Jerry, "it's one man taking the load from another, carrying on. And let me tell you, it's much faster too. Do you know what the mile record is?"

"That's Nurmi's record."

"It must be about 4:11."

The kids were interested.

"That's pretty close," said Jerry, "It's 4:10.4 and it's held by Nurmi all right. And let me tell you what the mile relay record is. It's 3:16.4. Almost a minute difference."

"Well naturally," said one of the kids, "there's four guys running."

"That's just it," said Jerry, "doing it cooperatively, cutting down the time almost a minute."

He introduced the word "cooperatively" in a rather gingerly way, but nobody paid too much attention, because up the block you could see Davey and his opposite number, Mitch, take their places at the starting line.

Now the relay race we are about to describe is one of those events where the description will surely take a longer time than the duration of the thing described (unless, in the utmost baldness of narrative, we were to say, simply: the *up-the-blocks* took the lead, kept it on the second leg, lost it on the third leg because of faulty passing of the stick and then regained the lead on the anchor leg to win the race. That is what happened, and takes less time—to read or write—than the what? 30 seconds it takes to run this race).

In the first place, there were two false starts, one by Davey, the other by his opponent. This was blamed on the starter: seasoned observers contended that there was too much of a pause between the *Get Set* and the *Go*, that the kids were too nervous and bound to "break" in the long interval. Then, as they got set for the third try, an automobile turned the western corner of the block. Now there were guards at each end of the street, and had the race started, the car would have been stopped (as cars had been stopped during the running of the other events) until the race was over, but since the relay had not started, the car was allowed to proceed, and then all the runners started limbering up again, some of them quite desperately, as though their muscles were undergoing some unusual tensing as the car travelled over the stadium.

"No more cars," cried the starter. This message was heard by the traffic official up the block and was relayed to the one at the other end of the street.

"It'll get dark by the time this race starts," grumbled one of the spectators, but he was talking of a race whose duration was—what? 30 seconds?—and the afternoon sun, though sinking, was quite a way from its home in the Hudson.

The starter cupped his hands around his mouth.

"On your marks. . ."

"Get set. . ."
and taking to heart the criticism which had been hurled at him, he pushed ahead of his natural inclination, with a swift
"Go"
and off went the two lead-off men. They got off to a pretty even start. Mitch, a little taller, had a longer stride, so he took the lead. But Davey was a fleet lad, a form devotee, he would not hesitate to see a movie through again so as to get back to the newsreel which showed Charley Paddock streaking off to another sprint victory. Davey flailed his arms, plunged forward towards the waiting Chick, whose hand was outstretched. In such a short relay, the handling of the stick is, of course, fundamental. Moving slowly away, Chick took the stick smoothly (the fruition of long practice between the friends) and tore off towards the third man, Allie, with an edge on his rival. This was an edge that Chick maintained, but when he came to pass the stick, there was a moment of confusion. The handling was not smooth—either Chick was anxious, or Allie held on, the timing was bad, the transitional instant was prolonged, so that Allie was a couple of steps behind his opponent. He strove valiantly, ran with a kind of stubborn chagrin, picked up a step, and then made a perfect relay to Benny, who tore after his rival as though he had been shot from a gun, and, head bobbing, came even with him, passed him in the last few yards, and kept running almost down to the end of the block. Then he turned around and ran springily to the finish line, for the plaudits of the crowd.

That was how the *up-the-blocks* won the track meet; then most of the kids stood around in front of the candy-store, discussing the various events, the turning points, the key performances.

"You kids ran a terrific relay," said Jerry, "and that pass from Allie to Benny, that was perfect."

"Yeah," said Chick to his older brother, but the relation between affirmation and agreement was not clear. "Benny ran some race."

He was in this way lowering the importance of the passing of the stick (because of his difficulty in that maneuver) and contradicting the cooperative point of view of his brother by fastening on to the exploit of the anchor man. He was also just contradicting his older brother.

Jerry waved off his kid brother.

"What do *you* know?" he asked, in the immemorial way you treat a kid brother who is disputing you in public.

"Plenty," answered Chick, in the immemorial way a kid brother stands up to an older brother who is putting him in his place in public.

"The worst thing that can happen in a track meet," said Jerry, "is when one of the runners drops the stick, particularly when it's a close race. You don't realize how important that stick is till you drop it. The runner is ashamed, angry, the crowd's sympathy is spontaneous. And when the runner picks up the stick and starts on his hopeless quest, the crowd is with him."

"For a minute," said Davey, "then they forget him."

"Certainly," said Jerry, "their attention then falls on the ones who are carrying on their task victoriously. That's natural."

Then the kids began to drift home, for supper.

Scientific Discovery, Logic, and Luck

Stillman Drake

Innovation in science frequently appears to have started from mere hunch or chance observation. But when one man introduces several innovations, it might seem that in science luck is not random, which is a contradiction in terms. The books written about "the logic of discovery" have been by logicians, not discoverers, and have been more of interest to philosophers than of use to scientists. Since an element of luck enters into every scientific discovery, and luck does not lend itself to logical analysis, the most that has been concluded is that "fortune favors the prepared mind."

There is nevertheless a sound reason for the invariable presence of some element of luck in scientific innovation, and that reason also has a bearing on the curious historical pattern in which, time after time, an era of brilliant innovation has been followed by one of methodical progress before another burst of discovery. The reason, and the pattern, depend on the fact that science is *developed* by logic, of which the rules must never be violated, but it is also suddenly *advanced* by unexpected innovation. Whatever can be rigorously deduced by logic from things already established cannot require luck in any useful sense of that word. An enormous amount can be deduced from a single basic discovery—usually more than the discoverer lives long enough to work out, and often enough to keep a whole generation of scientists busy. That is why we do not regard a product of rigorous logical deduction as a startling *new* discovery, at any rate for the most part. Innovation requires something more than logical development of things already established—and that "something more," being itself not logical, lends itself to classification as hunch, insight, chance, or luck.

It has often happened that a scientist has made an observation or has hit upon an idea that he himself did not follow out, but which later, at the hands of another, became extremely fruitful. We have then the case of the "precursor" in science, usually a man who was too logical to pursue anything not previously established, or was too weak in logic to perceive all possible implications of his observation or idea.

In contrast, there appear from time to time men extraordinarily fruitful in scientific discoveries, one of whom was Galileo. It contributes nothing to an understanding of his achievements to say that he had many precursors—men who saw, or were on the brink of seeing, the law of free fall but did not assert it and develop its implications; or who invented telescopes but did not turn them to the heavens; or who did, but saw no more than many unrecorded fixed stars; and so on. Nor does it diminish Galileo's physics to note that full recognition of the law of inertia, or surface tension, or strength of materials came only later. The discoveries that the pendulum is not precisely isochronous in large and small oscillations, and that the path of a projectile is not truly parabolic, improved Galileo's science after his death, without thereby detracting from the value of his initial approximations.

In cases of men who made several innovations in one field, or new discoveries in several fields, it seems to me a poor procedure to charge those contributions off one by one to good fortune—although if my view is correct that can always be done, inasmuch as there is *some* element of luck in every innovation. I think that instead we should accept the adage that luck favors a prepared mind, and then see how the mind of a Galileo was prepared for so many strokes of luck by watching how he worked when confronted with one. As an example I shall use not a famous discovery of Galileo's, but one that is hardly known except to specialists—one that did not require genius, and that anyone can easily follow. At the same time it was not trivial, having both scientific and practical implications.

On 7 January 1610, Galileo noted some tiny stars that on the next night seemed to have moved; within a week he knew them to be revolving around Jupiter. By a habit of mind now common among scientists, Galileo soon opened a journal of observations, putting down each time of observation, a diagram of the satellite position, and a numerical estimate of their separations. It is anything but clear what use for such detail Galileo had in mind, but thinking quantitatively is how scientists prepare, even when they know not for what.

By 12 March Galileo's *Starry Messenger* was already in print, announcing telescopic discoveries that at once became the subject of widespread popular admiration and vehement philosophical contradiction. Having had so short a time to study his observations, Galileo contented himself with saying that the closer a satellite was to Jupiter, the more rapidly it went around, and that the period

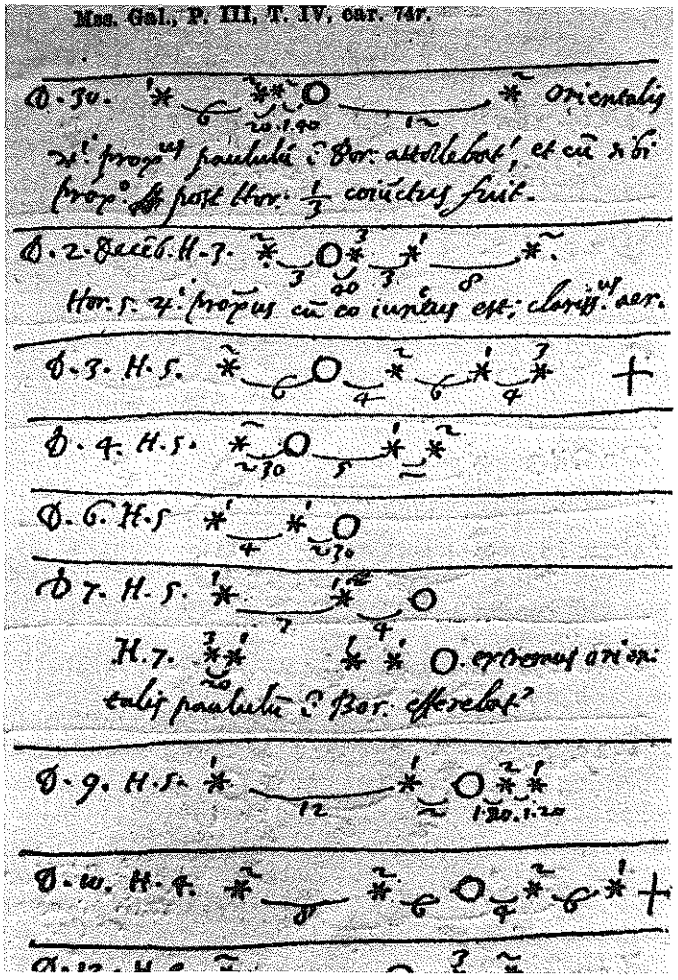
Stillman Drake's latest work is *Galileo at Work: His Scientific Biography*, (Chicago, 1978).

of the most remote one was semimonthly—he prudently preferring at this early stage a noncommittal word to any number.

In September the German astronomer Johann Kepler confirmed the existence of Jupiter's satellites by observations of his own and remarked that, though Galileo had assigned a fortnightly period to the outer one, the periods of the others were not known and might never be. Kepler was by far the most expert, practiced, and imaginative astronomical calculator of the age. One would think that if anyone could discover all four periods it would be Kepler, and that he would have known how to do it, had he thought it worth the bother. Yet all he ever offered was an estimate, in April–May 1611, that the next lowest satellite had a period of eight days. By that time Galileo not only knew the approximate periods of all four satellites, but had begun predicting their future positions.

Kepler's pessimism was surely not based on inability to think of a logical and systematic way to find the periods, for even I can do that. Rather, Kepler was pessimistic because he knew all too well the practical difficulties of carrying out the obvious logical procedure. This obvious logical procedure would begin with determination of the exact period of the outer satellite, now called IV, in the same way that Galileo had first estimated it. The outer satellite conveniently separates itself visibly from all the others by moving much farther east and west than any other. After many recorded observations, one could find two times of greatest departure from Jupiter either way, and derive from them the hourly advance of IV in its rotation around Jupiter, assumed uniform. Armed with this, by the simplest trigonometry, one could next remove IV from *all* the previously recorded observations. In such diagrams, III (the next lowest) would have the previous unique qualities of IV. But in cancelling IV from the original diagrams, some other satellite that occasionally had happened to be in line with IV might also be eliminated, and real difficulties might also arise in deciding which of two satellites to eliminate when another one was near IV. The ensuing steps would simply repeat the process; but here is where Kepler, from long experience, foresaw problems that might be insuperable. Thus, as Jupiter is more closely approached, the number of unintended cancellations and mistaken identities increases; innumerable trials might turn out to have been in vain, and hence the logical method seemed hardly worth the trouble.

Galileo read Kepler's remark and was not a bit discouraged. He had gone on making observations as regularly as he could, despite his move from Padua to Florence, a new job, other activities, cloudy nights, and the inevitable period each year when Jupiter is too close to the sun to be observed (or requires one to get up too early). He continued to record observations as exactly as he could, but did not attempt any systematic search for the satellite periods, at least so far as any of his surviving notes show. This was not aimless; Galileo knew very well what he was doing. Unkindly put, he was waiting for some lucky



Galileo manuscript Figure 1

chance in order to save needless labor; more kindly, he was biding his time and watching, like a cat at a mousehole. The only difference is that a cat knows what it expects—a mouse—and Galileo did not know the exact form the clue he needed would take. Nevertheless, he was confident he would recognize a valuable clue when he saw it.

On 11 December 1610, Galileo wrote to the Tuscan ambassador at Prague, through whom he had been previously in touch with Kepler: "I hope I may have found the method of defining the periods of the four Medicean stars, deemed with good reason by Sig. Kepler to be almost inexplicable." Now, what kind of a way is that to talk? How can you announce possession of something and at the same time attribute good reason to someone who doubted its existence? Only by recognizing the logic behind Kepler's pessimism and by having found a completely different solution to the problem. After a quarter-century of attending closely to Galileo's exact words, I took these particular words to mean that Galileo *had* hit on a method of approach that could not *reasonably* have been known to anyone else. I therefore examined his journal of observa-

tions to see if anything had recently shown up, and sure enough, there was Galileo's "mouse."

Beside Galileo's record of the observation on the night of 10 December 1610, he placed a cross. The only other such marking among his observations stands beside the entry for the night of 3 December, just one week before (or to be exact, one hour less than a week). Those two observations provide the key to the "method" that Galileo said, in his letter of the next day, might lead him to the determination of the periods of all the satellites.

To understand this key, you need to know the meanings of the markings in Figure 1. First, Galileo entered the day and the hour of observation; the month and year are found by looking through his journal. He gave the hour after sunset at Florence (not a casual, but an astronomical point in time each day). He represented Jupiter by a circle and each satellite by a star. Between each pair he put his estimate of separation, in units of one visual diameter of Jupiter. Above each star Galileo generally placed another number, which represented his judgment of its telescopic magnitude on the traditional scale of six for naked-eye observations. His reason for doing this was that before he could systematically calculate satellite positions, he had no possible clue to their individual identities except relative brightness—not a very good clue, but one that might turn out to be useful.

If we add up the indicated separations between adjacent pairs to get the distance of each satellite from Jupiter's nearest edge, east or west of Jupiter as the case may be, Galileo's reason for having marked these two particular observations with crosses (and for writing his optimistic letter the next day) becomes clear:

3 Dec., Hour 5		E6	0	W4	W10	W14
10 Dec., Hour 4	E14	E6	0	W4	W10	

Galileo had made about ninety observations before 3 December, but nothing like this had previously occurred. It was the kind of clue he had been waiting for. We might say, "What luck, hitting on these two similar positions just a week apart, so that they came close together on the same page!" We might equally well say, "What luck, the cat pouncing on the mouse the very moment it came out of the hole!" But if we knew that the cat had been sitting beside the hole for an hour waiting for a mouse, we would not say that; we would say, "What patience!" Galileo had not been wasting his time making useless observations, even though nothing had previously turned up that he could see how to use. The observation of 3 December had not been remarkable by itself, and I am sure the cross was placed beside it on 10 December, not when he first recorded the position. What Galileo had felt confident about was that sooner or later something must turn up that he could get his teeth into. But it was not exactly *this* arrangement he was awaiting rather than some other, such as the remarkable situation which we shall see occurring on 15 March. It was mere luck, purely random, that produced the particular pair of similar observations which Galileo actually used as his start on the serious work of determining periods, but it was not mere luck that he recognized its value for that purpose. Recognition is the act of a prepared mind.

Next comes the place at which I fear that logicians will merely throw up their hands in despair at Galileo's credulity. No other satellite than IV had ever been seen near another one at such a distance from Jupiter as 14 diameters, and none at all had been seen beyond 15 diameters. Galileo now assumed that while IV had gone nearly from one extreme position to the opposite, each of the others had returned to its previous position. Of course, all kinds of possibilities of interchanges *might* have occurred, whence logicians would have advised Galileo not to jump at such a conclusion. He, on the contrary, jumped even further—because it is more efficient to go as far as you can with any clue to scientific discovery than it is to proceed with great caution. The important thing is not to be cautious, but to be ready to back down, or even throw the whole clue away, if it fails to produce.

Galileo reasoned that if the period of III, which he could not *logically* identify in his diagram, was one week (or rather 167 hours), then that of II was probably half a week, or about 84 hours, since if it made more than two revolutions in one revolution of III, II would be going awfully fast. The period of I was probably a quarter-week, or about 42 hours, since if it made only three revolutions in one revolution of III, it would have an even chance of being out of phase with it, and it was not. Galileo did not write this down, but what he did next shows that he tested this idea and it worked.

The immediate problem was to find a starting point for testing the idea. Only IV could be safely identified, and only when that satellite was very distant from Jupiter. To test his idea, he had to identify others. On 17 December, one week later, it was probably cloudy, since Galileo recorded no observation. On the 24th he again saw all four, but no longer in similar positions, which showed that the periods were not *exact* submultiples. Galileo would hardly have expected them to be, in the light of his many previous observations. It was on 29 December that Galileo was first lucky enough to identify a satellite at perigee. That was very important, since maximum elongations were not good for close timing, partly because thus far Galileo's estimates of distances from Jupiter were not very accurate, and partly because the greater its elongation, the more slowly the satellite appears to move. Here was his next valuable clue:

```
                                         0
29 December, Hour 2:30  *  *             *    *
                           2       6   5/6    2
                           *   *                *
                 7:00        2     5     0    3
                           *   *              *      *
                10:20        2     5     0    2      3
```

One satellite disappeared in the middle observation, passing across Jupiter's disc. When it reappeared on the other side, Galileo could assume uniform speed for it when so close to Jupiter, and could estimate when it had passed the center. Its westerly direction showed that it had passed in front of Jupiter, so at center it was at perigee. Galileo wrote this note: "At 5:30 a satellite was at perigee," and then added the words, "that is, satellite I." He could be fairly sure it was I because that is the swiftest and in nearly eight hours it had moved about 4 diameters, including one across Jupiter. In the same time, those to the east approached Jupiter by only about one diameter, and the one to the west moved only three. The next day Galileo wrote to Father Christopher Clavius, mathematician at the Jesuit College in Rome, describing these three observations, though he did not reveal his own analysis of them. Fair play, but no favors. To check his hypothesis, Galileo still needed one more disappearance of I.

On 6 January, at the 6th hour after sunset, two satellites could not be seen; the two that could be seen were far to the west (at 5 and 13 diameters). Hence one of the two *not* seen was probably satellite I. Galileo noted that the night was cloudy, making this observation anything but certain. The hours that had elapsed since 5:30 on 29 December came to 192; dividing this by 42 gives a little over 4½, so that if I was at perigee on the earlier date it should be a short distance past apogee at this time. As a matter of fact it was, just about at the minimum distance from Jupiter that Galileo should have been able to see it. But the night was cloudy and he did not see it, so he now made out the first little table of predictions found among his notes. It is a simple listing of times during the next two weeks at which satellite I should reach apogee, perigee, or maximum elongation, obtained by adding 10¼ hours repeatedly to the 6th hour on 6 January 1611. No observation Galileo made during that period conflicted with his list, though of course many positions listed came during daylight hours and could not be checked. The period of I is in fact not 42 hours, but 42½, as Galileo found out in March.

On 24 January an observation enabled Galileo to time the apogee of III, duly confirmed by looking back at observations made previously on the 17th and 20th, which until the 24th could not be definitely associated with the disappearance of III. He judged the period to be 170 hours; it is really 172. On 12 February he wrote to Paolo Sarpi, mentioning his belief that he knew how to get all the periods. I think it likely that Galileo had already anticipated apogee of II for the following night, which was then observed and indicated a period of 85 hours, only twenty minutes short of the modern figure. On 7 March he caught IV in conjunction with Jupiter and by the 9th knew that this had been at perigee, since it had moved far to the west. The approximate period of IV had presented no problem, as mentioned earlier; Galileo's first surviving close estimate was recorded late in March, and was within a very small margin (eight minutes in over 16 days) of our modern value.

In this way the problem Kepler had judged hopeless of solution six months earlier was cracked by Galileo. Satellite periods were found, not in the logical order IV-III-II-I, but (except for a very rough estimate for IV) in the order I-III-II-IV. To improve his estimates, Galileo needed an independent set of apogee or perigee times to apply to each satellite. This he got at one fell swoop on 15 March 1611, when all four satellites became and remained aligned with Jupiter for four hours at a stretch. Or rather, Galileo thought that to be the case, and proceeded as if it had been, though during this "great conjunction" (as he called it) there were also eclipse phenomena and confusing periods during which a satellite was merely too near Jupiter to be seen by Galileo. But science proceeds by the method of successive approximations, and the information gained on 15 March 1611 enabled Galileo to improve his previous findings so that he could soon calculate satellite positions forward and backward at will.

There is much more to the story, but this suffices for my purposes here. The historical problem was to discover how Galileo had known enough about the periods of the satellites to be able to proceed as rapidly and as systematically as he did from 15 March 1611 on. If we were to rely on logic alone, and had no clues from letters and Galileo's journal of observations, we might perhaps assume that he proceeded in the only obvious, logical, and tedious way; that Kepler had been mistaken in his pessimism about reaching success in that way, and that Galileo must have thrown away his earlier notes. That would be what I call "constructed history," very logical and persuasive, but unrelated to actual facts. Constructed history must be accepted when we have no other recourse. What we want instead is what I call "structured history"—not a mere chronicle of events, but a documented and credible account of discoveries and their subsequent development. Logic alone seldom explains discoveries. They do not *violate* the laws of logic, but to understand them we must also credit early scientists with common sense.

Thomas Henry Huxley, in the nineteenth century, characterized science itself as "organized common sense." That is what the science of his day was, and that is how Galileo's science was born. It is all too easy for historians to forget this, now that science has again become a logical and philosophical enterprise of looking for the ultimate secret of the universe through technical jargon and logical virtuosity, as was much of medieval science. Galileo, breaking away from that, turned to observation, calculation, and common sense. Respect for logic—with always an eye on the main chance—led him to discoveries in which fortune, as always, favored the prepared mind. To catch Galileo's method, biographers and historians must watch patiently like a cat at a mousehole, confident that something will emerge from his notes which will be recognized, much as James Bernoulli had recognized an anonymous proof of Sir Isaac Newton's when he said: "I know the lion by his paw."

On Sophocles' *Ajax*

David Bolotin

Ajax's Third Monologue (vv. 646–692)

Ajax: All things does long and uncountable Time
Bring forth unclearly, and once they have come to light, it buries them.
And so there is nothing not to be expected, but even
The dreadful oath and the obdurate heart are found out to be weak.
For indeed I, who once was so tremendously steadfast,
Like iron from dipping, had my edge softened
By this woman here. I feel pity
To leave her a widow among enemies and my son an orphan.
But I shall go to the bathing places
And the seaside meadows, so that cleansing my stains
I may escape the heavy wrath of the goddess.
And going where I can find an untrodden place,
I will bury this sword of mine—most hateful of weapons—
And dig it into the earth where no one will see.
But let Night and Hades preserve it below.
Since from the time when I received it in my hand
As a gift from most hate-filled Hector,
I have not yet obtained anything dear from the Argives.
But it is true—the saying of mortals—
"Gifts of enemies are no gifts;" they are not profitable.
Therefore, for the time left I will know to yield
To the gods, and I will learn to revere the Atreidae.
They are rulers, so one has to yield. Why not?
For even things dreadful and most steadfast
Yield to offices. Thus snowy-pathed winters
Give way before fruitful summer.
The gloomy vault of night stands aside for
Day with its white colts to kindle light.
The blast of dreadful winds puts to sleep
The moaning sea. And among these, all-powerful Sleep
Releases what it has bound, and once it has seized, it does not hold on forever.
And as for us, how shall we not learn to be sound of mind?
I will. For now I understand that
We must hate the enemy so much as is suited
To one who will also love us some day; and toward the friend.
In doing service I shall wish to benefit him so much
As is suited to one who always is not going to remain (such).
Since for the many
Of mortals the haven of friendship is not to be trusted.
Yet concerning these things it will be well. But you,
Woman, go inside and pray to the gods
That my heart's longing may be completely fulfilled.
And you, friends, honor as she does these wishes of mine
And tell Teucer, if he comes,
To have care for us and at the same time to be well inclined toward you.
For I shall go where my journey must be made.
And you do what I tell you, and you may well learn,
Though I am now unfortunate, that I have been saved.

After Achilles' death at the siege of Troy, the Achaeans decided to award his armor as a prize of excellence to the best remaining warrior. One might well have expected that this award would go to Ajax, the son of Telamon. Homer, or his Muse, speaks of Ajax as by far the most excellent of the Achaeans, after Achilles (*Iliad* B 761–69). Yet the Achaean judges chose Odysseus instead of Ajax to receive Achilles' armor. Ajax was enraged at this decision, and in retaliation he attempted to kill, under cover of night, all the other chieftains of the army. But the goddess Athena thwarted him by driving him insane. Instead of killing his enemies he merely butchered the army's livestock, under the delusion that these cattle were the Achaean chieftains.

Sophocles' *Ajax*, which begins on the morning after these events, falls into two halves. The first half of the play leads up to Ajax's suicide, and the second half culminates in his burial. A brief retelling of the play's story will suffice to bring out the difference in character between these two halves. Early in the play, after Athena has shown the still deluded Ajax to Odysseus, Ajax recovers his sanity. He despairs of revenge, and he soon resolves upon suicide as the only noble action left to him. His mistress, the captive Tecmessa, pleads with him to live, and for a moment it appears as if she has succeeded. In a powerful monologue, whose theme is the necessity for accepting the changes that time brings, Ajax leads her to believe that he will live. But his apparent yielding turns out to have been a deception. Soon we see him give a final speech, and then he falls upon his sword.

The second half of the play presents the aftermath of Ajax's suicide. It is largely occupied with an ugly dispute over whether Ajax is to be denied burial in punishment for his treasonous attack. This question is debated between Menelaus and Agamemnon, who prohibit the burial, and Ajax's brother Teucer, who tries to change their minds. Nothing is accomplished, however, until Odysseus reappears on the scene. Although Odysseus had recently

David Bolotin read an earlier version of this essay at St. John's College in Annapolis on January 7, 1977. His book, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: an Interpretation of the* Lysis, has recently been published (Ithaca, New York, 1979).

been Ajax's most hated rival, and his intended victim, he openly defers to his rival's superiority (1339–41) and persuades Agamemnon to allow Ajax to be buried with the highest honors. The play ends as Ajax's corpse is being carried out for burial.

The theme that binds together this seemingly disjointed story is the theme of friendship. (The word "friend" will be used throughout this essay to correspond to the Greek φίλος, which has a wider range of meanings than the English word "friend" normally does. The Greek word φίλος was used not only for friends in our sense, but also for relatives, especially those in one's immediate family. Moreover, Ajax's mistress Tecmessa, and his comrades-in-arms of the Achaean army, are referred to in the play as his "friends." Friendship in this wider Greek sense exists among all those acquaintances who live together as a community, and who may be expected to continue to do so.) More particularly, the play's theme is that of justice and injustice, or loyalty and disloyalty, to friends. In keeping with this, the first half of the play centers around Ajax's response to Tecmessa's plea that he not desert, and thus betray, her and their infant son. And throughout the second half, the quarrel concerns how to respond to Ajax's treasonous disloyalty as a comrade in the army.

Although Ajax does turn against his comrades and later desert his nearest ones, these facts alone give a quite misleading picture of his character as a friend. The play reminds us that Ajax had been an unusually valiant and trustworthy soldier when the army was in its greatest danger (1272–82). And Ajax shows himself within the play to be deeply concerned about what is owed to friends. In his view, the Achaeans who failed to award him Achilles' armor were ungrateful comrades, violators of the "correct law" (350) of friendship. His turning against them stems in part from his very attachment to friendship and from his awareness of the demands that it imposes (cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1327b41–1328a18). Friendship, and the difficulties that accompany it, are of central importance to Ajax. Accordingly, it is not surprising that his third monologue, which stands out within the play by its conspicuous beauty, should culminate in a thought about the weakness of friendship.[1]

The purpose of this essay is to examine the *Ajax* as a whole, with a view to a better understanding of Ajax himself and his relations to his friends. But in order to do this properly, we must first note that a concern with friendship was not the core of Ajax's character. He had always wished above all to be excellent (or virtuous), to show his excellence through victory in battle, and to crown his victories by receiving the *aristeia*, the army's prize for supreme virtue (434–40; 470–72). His chief ambition was the Homeric one: αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων, μηδὲ γένος πατέρων αἰσχύνεμεν—always to be excellent and to be pre-eminent above others, and not to bring shame upon the family of one's fathers (*Iliad* Z 208–09; cf. Λ 784). Ajax could not be satisfied unless his excellence gained him victory and honor, but he was too noble to settle for any undeserved success. And since he knew that intervention from the gods could give occasional victory even to a worthless man (455–56; 766–67; cf. *Iliad* P 629–32)[2], he openly scorned such easy gains. By his noble reluctance to be indebted even to the gods for his victories, Ajax angered the goddess Athena (758–76); and it was Athena's anger that led to the failure of his attempt to retaliate against his comrades.

Ajax's concern for friendship, although subordinate to his attachment to excellence and nobility, was closely bound up with it. His striving to be excellent went together, for most of his life, with an attachment to friendship, and to friendship as something permanent. Now the primary reason that Ajax had been a true friend is simply because of his love, since it is only natural for human love to want to continue. But the natural bonds of friendly love were greatly strengthened for him, as he expected them to be strengthened for his friends, by the concern to be noble. Human nobility, as Ajax understood it, demands both excellence in war and loyalty in friendship. And Ajax did not foresee that his noble attachment to excellence could ever come into conflict with his love, or with his duties, as a friend.[3]

This essay will show how the *Ajax* calls into question the understanding of friendship, and of virtue, that has just been sketched. The argument of the essay has two main sections, corresponding to the two halves of the play. The first section focuses primarily on Ajax's third monologue (646–92), for that is the peak of Ajax's own thinking about friendship and virtue. But since that monologue is Ajax's response to an unprecedented situation, we must first look briefly at the events and speeches that lead up to it. Finally, the second section of the essay will examine the dispute over whether Ajax is to receive burial.

What is especially striking in Ajax's first monologue (430–80) is his speedy recovery from the shame of having slaughtered the Achaean cattle (contrast 364–66, and 400). He is confident that Achilles himself, if he had been alive to judge, would have awarded him the highest prize for valor. And it is only Athena's intervention, her afflicting him with madness, that prevented him from taking revenge upon the chieftains. Ajax implies that the temporary madness during which he mistook cattle for the hated chieftains was no true failing on his part, since a god can enable "even a base man to escape from a worthier" (455–56).

Although Ajax's humiliating madness does not cause him to doubt, for very long, that he is noble, he is nevertheless at an impasse. He can hardly remain with the army, for he is a public enemy. And he cannot return home, where he must face his father Telamon, without having won a prize of excellence such as Telamon had once won. He also rejects the alternative of a single-handed, and suicidal, attack against Troy, on the grounds that such an attack might benefit his Achaean enemies.

But some such enterprise, he says, must be sought for in order to show his father that his nature, at least, is worthy of his ancestry. The enterprise that Ajax has in mind is suicide. Suicide is apparently his only choice, since "a noble man (εὐγενῆ) must either live honorably (καλῶς) or else honorably (καλῶς) be dead" (479–80). By killing himself now, thinks Ajax, he will show his father and others the nobility of his nature. He will show a noble refusal to accept any consolations for his single greatest defeat, his defeat in contest for the armor of Achilles. Ajax's first monologue thus ends with a reaffirmation of his claim to be noble.

Ajax's mistress Tecmessa responds to his monologue (485–524) with a challenge to the view of nobility that leads him to seek death. She pleads with him to live, and her plea has several aspects, including an appeal for pity. But it culminates in a demand for his gratitude.[4] "A man ought," she says, "to remember if he has received any delight" (520–21). And she gives a reason for this claim. "For kindness is that which brings forth kindness (or gratitude) always" (χάρις χάριν γαρ ἐστιν ἡ τίκτουσ'ἀεί, 522). But this thought of hers, though beautiful, does not seem to be wholly true, as we can see from her own threatened situation. Accordingly, Tecmessa adds a further argument: a man who does not hold in memory the benefits he has received would not remain—whatever he was before—a noble man (εὐγενὴς ἀνήρ, 524; cf. 480).[5] Tecmessa here appeals to Ajax's sense of the noble, and she points to what may well be his greatest failing—ingratitude, or the thoughtless disregard of help received (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1124b12–15; contrast especially 1132b31–1133a5). Ajax, who prides himself on the great things he has done, does not easily remember those benefits he has received from others. But Tecmessa compels him to acknowledge what she, the mother of his son, has given to him. Is he not obliged to her and to their son? And wouldn't it be ignoble for him to fail to give in return for what he has received? Ajax himself has said that a noble man must either live honorably or else honorably be dead. But would it be honorable for him to flee, in dying, a debt to the living?

Ajax's second monologue, however, gives little evidence that Tecmessa's appeal has moved him. His resolve to die, and his confidence that this is noble, remain unchanged (550–51). He does show concern for his infant son, and he expresses confidence that his brother Teucer will be able to take care of the boy. But he offers nothing, not even any hope, to the captive Tecmessa. In her alarm, Tecmessa implores him in the name of the gods not to betray them. The suggestion that Ajax is about to betray the gods, as well as herself, strengthens her earlier rebuke that he is being ungrateful,[6] and it provokes him to his most extreme statement: he claims that he no longer owes any service to the gods, since they too now hate him. Tecmessa warns him not to blaspheme, but he ignores the warning and commands her to leave. Tecmessa's last words to Ajax are a renewed appeal in the name of the gods that he relent. But he replies that she is a fool if she intends at this late date to school his character.

The chorus, which consists of Ajax's followers from his homeland Salamis, next calls into further question the nobility of his intended suicide. They sing of him as a man still afflicted by madness (611; 635; cf. 278–80, and contrast 274). In their view, the self-absorbed Ajax no longer lives up to the excellence of his former deeds, and he does not maintain the noble disposition of his race (616–20; 636–40). By choosing a death that serves no one, except perhaps himself, and that brings grief to his friends (614–16), Ajax appears to his followers as a man no longer worthy of his ancestry.

Let us now turn to Ajax's third monologue, in which he reveals that Tecmessa's plea has shaken the foundations of his way of life. The breadth of his thought is indicated by the opening word ἅπαντ'—all things.[7] "All things does long and uncountable time bring forth unclearly, and once they have come to light, it buries them" (646–47). Ajax does not mean by this that all beings come into being and then perish. For his reflections encompass immortals as well as mortals.[8] Rather, his contention is that time denies to all beings an uninterrupted pre-eminence and an unshakeable trustworthiness. Permanence in visible excellence and permanence in friendship have been Ajax's two deepest desires, and it is the claim to these that he now attempts to renounce.

"And so there is nothing," continues Ajax—and in particular no change—"beyond expectation, but even the dreadful oath and the obdurate heart are found out to be weak." A solemn oath had bound Ajax to serve Agamemnon and Menelaus. Yet this oath was broken by his traitorous attempt to kill the Achaean chieftains. And Ajax's obdurate heart has yielded, or so it seems, to Tecmessa's entreaties. "For indeed I," he goes on, "who was once so marvellously steadfast..., had my edge softened by this woman here. I feel pity," he says, "to leave her a widow among my enemies and to leave my son an orphan."[9] Ajax's new feeling that pity forbids him to leave Tecmessa is the crucial change that makes his entire speech possible, and indeed necessary.[10] For it is this pity that prompts his apparent decision to live and thus to learn all that is implied in coming to terms with the world of gods and chieftains.

Ajax's next words are, "But I shall go to the bathing places and the seaside meadows, to cleanse my stains and so to escape the heavy wrath of the goddess." Apparently, he now intends to perform a ritual of cleansing and purification, in the hope of appeasing Athena's anger. He must make peace with Athena if he is to live, and he now seems to want to live in order to care for Tecmessa and their son. To be sure, it might appear that this interpretation is excessively straightforward and that it rests on a superficial reading of his ambiguous words. For like much of the

monologue, these phrases about "cleansing" have a hidden aspect that points to his eventual suicide (cf. footnote 9). But I hope to show that Ajax's surface meaning, rather than the complex undercurrents of his language, is the necessary beginning for an understanding of his deepest thoughts as well.

Ajax next resolves to bury the sword he had received in the exchange of gifts that followed his famous duel with Hector (cf. *Iliad* H 54–312). And he gives a reason for doing so. "For from the time when I received it in my hand as a gift from most hate-filled Hector, I have not yet obtained anything dear from the Argives. But it is true—the saying of mortals—'Gifts of enemies are no gifts'; they are not profitable. Therefore (τοιγὰρ, 666), in the time remaining I will know to yield to the gods, and I will learn to revere the sons of Atreus." By his use of the word "therefore," Ajax implies that his willingness to yield to the gods and to his commanders follows directly from the fact that the gifts of enemies are unprofitable.[11] What can this mean? To answer this question, we must go back a little. Ajax has just decided, it seems, to seek continued life for the sake of Tecmessa and their son. In order to live, he will try to appease Athena's anger. But Ajax, even when moved by pity, cannot bring himself to live solely for the sake of a captive woman and a child. If he is to live, he too wants to receive those benefits that would make life attractive to him. He wants above all to receive honors, such as the armor of Achilles he has recently been denied. And he now blames his failure to win Achilles' armor on his comrades' resentment at his exchange of gifts with the enemy Hector. Consequently, he now goes to bury Hector's sword, which had been such a costly gift. In other words, he seeks to become reconciled with his own community, and he decides to yield to the gods and to his commanders. All this is for the sake of his own benefit, which he seeks because he chooses to live; and life in turn he chooses out of pity for Tecmessa. What his pity teaches him is that to be concerned to live is to be concerned with what is profitable—for oneself and for one's intimates—and that one must therefore be on good terms with the divine and human leaders of one's community.

For a better understanding of Ajax's decision to bury Hector's sword, and to yield to his commanders, we should look more closely at the duel and exchange of gifts with Hector. The encounter between Ajax and Hector figures prominently in the play (815–20; 1026–35; 1283–88).[12] Much of this prominence can be attributed to the following consideration: victory in a single combat is a less ambiguous sign of excellence than success in a public competition, such as the contest for Achilles' armor. As opposed to those who depend upon judges for their honors, the contestant in a duel can obtain his reward directly and by his own unaided efforts (cf. *Iliad* H 77–83). And more importantly, there is little uncertainty about the standards of judgment in a duel: victory, or even an honorable standoff, against a great rival is a clear sign of excellence. Judges who award public honors, by contrast, have every temptation to favor their friends and benefactors at the expense of the most excellent man. Although public honor is said to be awarded for excellence, even in the best case it is awarded primarily for those excellences which most benefit the community (compare Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1123b35 with 1163b3–8). The enemy, though he may win respect, receives no medal of honor. The community honors its benefactors and speaks of them as being the men of excellence (cf. Xenophon, *Hellenica* VII 3. 12). Less justly, a community may honor a potential benefactor in hope of future services (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1361a28–30). And what is worse, those whose excellence most benefits a community may also serve it through secret baseness, and yet they are typically not dishonored on this account (cf. *Philoctetes* 78–85, 119, 1049–52). Since the men who award public honors often allow their concern for the community's advantage to outweigh their attachment to excellence itself, public honor is always something suspect; it is ambiguous evidence of virtue. Accordingly, Ajax's duel with Hector can be seen in part as an attempt to win a more truthful sign of his excellence than the army could bestow. And the sword he received from Hector can be regarded as such a sign.

Just as Ajax's duel with Hector involved a certain defiance of the army's judgment, so his decision to bury Hector's sword is an act of submission to it. It is not, however, complete or wholehearted submission. One sign of this fact is that Ajax shows no sense of guilt over his recent attempt to kill his chieftains. In his view, the Achaeans did him an injustice in the contest for Achilles' armor; his attempt to kill the chieftains was merely retaliation. And in yielding, he goes no further than to abandon his claim to revenge. Life as Ajax now sees it does not allow the "luxury" that the community honor excellence truthfully. Rather than do harm to all around him, Ajax seems to have accepted his place in an imperfect community. To do this, he must bow before the gods and his commanders, and he must content himself with only so much honor as they choose to award. Hitherto, Ajax's loyalty to the Achaean cause had been subordinate to his deeper wish to be excellent, to show his excellence in battle and in single combat, and to receive the high honors he believed himself to deserve. Though he had not been fully aware of it, his loyalty as a friend had been limited by the condition that his friends be noble enough always to award the highest honor to the highest excellence. But now this impossible condition will be removed. Now for the first time, Ajax appears to have become a true member of his community; he appears to have learned to accept the union, or alternation, of self-interest and self-surrender demanded by public life and its friendship.

Ajax lessens somewhat the pain of yielding to his rulers by observing that "even things dreadful and most steadfast yield to offices" (τιμαῖς ὑπείκει, 670). "Thus snowy-pathed winters give way before fruitful summer. The

gloomy vault of night stands aside for day with its white colts to kindle light. The blast of dreadful winds puts to sleep (by abating) the moaning sea. And among these, all powerful Sleep releases what it has bound, and once it has seized, it does not hold on forever."[13] The most important, and most difficult, word in this passage is τιμαῖς, which may be translated as "offices," or "honors." It refers in the first place to the rulers, or to their offices, before which Ajax must yield. But the word also refers to Ajax's own motive for yielding to his rulers. Only by yielding before τιμαῖς, or "offices," can he hope to win again those public honors, or τιμάς, which the army bestows. For Ajax to yield before honors is in large part to yield before his own desire to receive honors. And in order to receive honors, Ajax will accept the terms under which honor is generally awarded. His yielding implies an agreement that the excellence that most benefits the army is most honorable, and most worth striving for. His yielding also implies an admission that the lawful commanders—however they should decide—are the authoritative judges of honorable action.

There is still, however, a barrier in Ajax's way before he can expect reconciliation with his Achaean rulers. He has been a traitor to the army, and as such he deserves to die. The threat of public stoning, as punishment for his night attack, had been hinted at earlier in the play. How can Ajax submit to the sons of Atreus if they intend to execute him? Yet perhaps there is a way out of this impasse. The main argument by which Menelaus and Agamemnon will later condemn the dead Ajax is that behavior such as his threatens the establishment of law and the preservation of armies and cities (1071–83, 1246–50). But on those very grounds, in the interests of the army, it would obviously be prudent for them to accept the submission of a still living, still useful, and still dangerous (721–32) Ajax. Moreover, no serious harm came to the army from Ajax's abortive attack. Perhaps, then, the chieftains can forget his fault, just as Ajax himself is willing to forego his hopes of revenge. If the Achaeans could disregard his excellence when they awarded Achilles' armor, why wouldn't they disregard his brief attack in consideration of the services he might yet perform? The threat of stoning is probably not a serious one. Tecmessa and the men of the chorus, at any rate, once they have been persuaded that Ajax intends to yield, give no further sign of being afraid for him (693–716, 787–88).

Since it is apparently to everyone's advantage to let bygones be bygones, no external obstacle seems to prevent Ajax from making his peace with gods and men.[14] If even the mightiest immortal powers—continues Ajax—can yield and submit, "then how shall we (mortals) not learn to be sound-minded?" All Ajax must do is to learn to be σώφρων, sound of mind or sane. Now this lesson of submission is admittedly difficult for Ajax, and events will show that he even finds it intolerable. But why? Ajax himself hints at an answer in his following words: "For I have lately come to know that we must hate the enemy as much as is appropriate to one who will also love us some day; and toward the friend, in doing service I will wish to benefit him so much as is appropriate to one who always is not going to remain a friend. Since for the many of mortals the haven of friendship is not to be trusted." These lines are striking in their bitterness. And at first, such bitterness seems strange, since it follows immediately upon Ajax's avowal that he will learn soundness of mind—the way of life that is dearest to the gods (677; cf. 132–33, 757–77). On further reflection, however, we can see that Ajax is merely elaborating the hidden implications of his decision to yield to his community.

The extremity of Ajax's bitterness can be best seen by contrasting his remarks with other versions of this same maxim about friends and enemies (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1389b24–25; cf. Bias, as reported in Diogenes Laertius I 5.87). What is most strikingly unique about Ajax's statement is his avoidance of the verb φιλεῖν, to love, when he speaks of his relations to his friends. By contrast, he does not hesitate to speak of the possibility that an enemy might some day come to love him (φιλήσων, 680). Moreover, he is quite willing to speak of the need for his group to hate, and not merely to harm, its present enemies. When he tells of his own posture as an individual toward his friends, however, his roundabout mention of services and benefits makes all the more noticeable the absence of the simple verb "to love" (contrast *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1615–19).

To better understand Ajax's new attitude toward friendship, one must recall that his willingness to return to the Achaean community followed from a wish for benefits from the group (665–66). He now sees friendship, or at least the friendship among fellow soldiers, as an association held together against its enemies in the expectation of mutual benefit. Toward this end, it may require forgetfulness of earlier hatred and oblivion of former love. Those who may cause *future* harm must now be treated as enemies, and only those who can bring *future* benefits are to be treated as friends. Who can be sure that old enemies might not some day find it profitable to do a good turn? And who can be sure that old friends will remain useful? The mutability of friendship is not merely a fact; it is a reasonable fact. A sensible man will therefore refuse to extend an unconditional loyalty to his friends. Because of the world's instability, and the apparent primacy of self-interest, Ajax is now unable to regard himself as a loving or trustworthy friend (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1395a31–32).

Ajax's coming to know the weakness of friendship is especially painful for him at this moment, since he has just promised to return to the Achaean community and to renounce the higher claims that had kept him apart. Previously, his striving for excellence, together with his demand for appropriate honor, had been in tension with

his loyalty to his Achaean friends. This tension had come violently to the surface after he failed to win Achilles' armor. Ajax's readiness to bury Hector's sword has shown, in contrast, a new appreciation of the claims of the community. It has shown him to be willing to be a true subordinate to his army's officers. Yet the renunciation of his higher demands, which was to have brought him closer to his comrades, instead makes him unable genuinely to love them at all.

There is one further, and still more abhorrent, aspect to Ajax's new understanding of friendship. The same reasoning that leads to a withholding of genuine love might on occasion lead to active treachery. The Achaeans themselves abandoned Philoctetes from such motives. Similarly, an individual might find it safer or more profitable to betray one or more of his friends. This thought, however, is especially intolerable to Ajax. Though he was not ashamed of his attempt to retaliate against the Achaean judges, he could never stoop to cold-blooded and calculated treachery. Yet his proposal to yield to his rulers has implied a readiness even for that. For this reason, more than for any other, Ajax rejects the proposed yielding and silently renews his earlier decision to die.[15] Ajax thinks that he can free himself from the baseness of life only through suicide.

Even suicide, however, will not offer Ajax an entirely noble alternative to life's meanness. His suicide will itself be an instance of betrayal. In particular, it will be a betrayal of Tecmessa. Though she has served him faithfully, he will leave her unprotected in a hostile Achaean army. Moreover, the manner of his leaving her is uncharacteristically deceptive. He is never explicit, in this last speech to her, about suicide, and he concludes the speech in such a way (684–92) as to encourage her wishful thinking that he will live (cf. footnote 9). Not only does Ajax desert Tecmessa, but he does so deceptively (cf. 807–08). Even in his dying, he is not wholly free of the baseness he despises.

Ajax himself, to be sure, does not admit that his suicide is in any way ignoble. He does not acknowledge the justice of Tecmessa's reproach that to abandon her would be base (524). Some words of his own, however, may hint that Sophocles disagrees with him. In the speech preceding this third monologue, Ajax had prayed for his son to be more fortunate than himself but like him in all else. "And then," he continues, "you would not be base" (ὡ παῖ, γένοιο πατρὸς εὐτυχέστερος, τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος. καὶ γένοι' ἂν οὐ κακός, 550–51). What Ajax means is that although he is unfortunate he is still noble—as noble as he could wish his son to be. But perhaps these words convey a further thought as well, one that contradicts Ajax's own meaning. *Both* parts of Ajax's prayer might have to come true in order for his son not to be base. Sophocles may be suggesting that Eurysaces must combine his father's character with a better fortune if he is to become, and to remain, "not base."

Might there not be misfortunes in which it is impossible for anyone, no matter what his character, entirely to avoid baseness? Hasn't Ajax himself fallen into just such a situation, in which any action he chooses will be base in some respects? And hasn't this impasse arisen in part as a consequence of his very nobility (consider 763)? To act nobly, and to avoid baseness, is impossible without external supports, supports that nobility itself tends to undermine. Though Ajax does not see this far, the truest significance of his death is that it reveals this weakness of nobility.

Ajax's suicide, and the reflections that lead him to it, present a deep challenge to the Achaean community. Though Ajax hopes to become reconciled, in death, with the divine order of the world (692, 865),[16] he seeks no reconciliation with his fellow Achaeans. His final speech even contains a prayer that the sons of Atreus may die miserably, and he extends this curse to the whole Achaean army. Ajax has suggested, more generally, that human communities are above all the homes of faithlessness and treachery (677–84; cf. *Philoctetes* 446–50 ff.). What are we to think of this? Ajax's death not only leaves the question of whether he deserves, despite his faults, an honorable burial.[17] It raises the still more important question of whether the Achaean community can bestow any but the most hollow honors. Does the community even have enough strength to withstand Ajax's curses? Does it deserve to withstand them? Just as the Achaeans must judge Ajax in deciding whether he is worthy of burial, so they too are being measured.

It might be objected that Ajax's failure to become reconciled with the Achaeans is his own fault. Even his temporary readiness to yield to the commanders might seem to have been less than he owed them. This readiness did not stem from a sense of duty, but from his awareness that submission was the more profitable course, for himself and for Tecmessa. Admittedly, he was briefly willing to forego his claim to vengeance, but is it entirely certain that he deserved to win Achilles' armor? What kind of submission would it have been for him merely to forego vengeance over a decision that was possibly correct? Should he not instead have asked forgiveness for his treasonous attempt to kill the other chieftains? And is it not outrageous of him to curse the entire army?

The case against Ajax, however, or rather the army's title to make that case, is seriously weakened by its commanders' behavior in the aftermath of his death. By refusing to allow him burial, Menelaus and Agamemnon disregard the divine laws that forbid this form of punishment (1029–32, 1343–48). Moreover, their arguments to Ajax's brother Teucer, when he protests the denial of burial, attempt to reduce the question of justice to that of what serves the army's interests. So limited is their perspective that they condemn Ajax's disloyalty to the army without even mentioning that he was bound by a sacred oath to serve with them (cf. 648–49; 1111–14).

Menelaus, who is the first to condemn Ajax, makes only one strong argument against him, an argument based on the interests of the army. An army, he says, (like a city) cannot be ruled soberly without obedience to authority, without fear, and without shame. He emphasizes the need for fear. But he forgets that an army also needs men of outstanding virtue (1273–82), and he ignores any obligation to honor such men truthfully. When Teucer later accuses him of having cheated Ajax in the contest for Achilles' armor, Menelaus refuses to discuss the matter. He doesn't even claim that the judging was honest, let alone that the outcome was correct; instead, he threatens to punish Teucer unless he drops the subject (1135–38). By his failure to respect either human excellence or divine law, and by the arrogance he shows in other ways, Menelaus undermines respect for the army. He seems to confirm the low view of human communities that had emerged in Ajax's third monologue.

Although Menelaus looks up to nothing higher than the army's interest, he is aware that he must offer an incentive for men to subordinate their private interest to that of the group. Threats of punishment for disobedience are not forceful enough without a promised reward for obedience. Menelaus therefore accompanies his threats with the (dubious) assertion that obedient fear and shame guarantee an individual's safety, as well as that of a community (1077–80).[18] His demand for loyalty to the army is thus ultimately based on an appeal, questionable even on its own terms, to the individual's desire for security.

The commanders' attempt to deny any higher claims than the army's interest, and the consequent weakness of their appeal for loyalty, are even more apparent in Agamemnon's speech than in his brother's. Agamemnon is less indignant than Menelaus at Ajax's unsuccessful attempt to kill them. And he regards the prohibition of burial less as a punishment of Ajax, who is already nothing in his eyes (1231, 1257; contrast 1068), than as a useful warning against future offenders (1250). Agamemnon does, to be sure, refer in passing to the "justice" (1248) of the award of Achilles' armor, but he probably means by this no more than adherence to established procedure. Agamemnon is so little concerned with the question of who deserved Achilles' armor that he confuses the judges' decision in that contest with his own decision to prohibit Ajax's burial. He seems to identify Teucer's protest against the denial of burial with Ajax's rebellion against the award of armor (1239–56). In Agamemnon's view, one decision is the same as another, and of equal validity; to object to either is equally to challenge established authority within the army. The army's interest, as he sees it, requires that the rulers' decisions always be accepted as final (1246–47).

Agamemnon knows that his interpretation of the army's interests is not a strong enough motive to persuade Teucer to abandon his brother's corpse. But since he himself does not defer to anything higher than the army, he can hardly ask Teucer to do so. He is therefore compelled—just as Menelaus was—to make the dubious suggestion that the army's interest coincides with the private interest of each soldier.[19] He accompanies this suggestion with a warning for Teucer to watch out for himself. Indeed, his argument for loyalty to the army comes to little more than a threat of violence. Teucer, however, who is too noble to submit before such a threat, claims that he would rather die for his brother than obey Agamemnon's order (1310–15). The unyielding severity with which Agamemnon tries to strengthen the army seems instead to weaken it.

Apart from his main argument on the basis of the army's interests, Agamemnon does offer one further argument. He contends that he and the others of the Achaeans are as much "real men" (ἄνδρες, 1238) as Ajax ever was. And in addition to denying Ajax a higher place than the rest of the army, he tries to assign Teucer to a lower one. He even challenges Teucer's right to speak publicly in support of his brother, by alleging that Teucer, whose mother was a foreign captive, is not of free and noble birth (1229, 1235, 1259–60).

Teucer's response, in addition to deploring the army's ingratitude to Ajax, is to hurl back some shameful truths about Agamemnon's own ancestry (1290–98). And this reproach is not merely name-calling: it calls directly into question Agamemnon's title to deference and respect. Unlike Ajax, who had insisted on showing his nobility through his actions, Agamemnon apparently thinks it enough to have a noble family name. But Agamemnon's family was never so noble as he would have men believe. And respect for that family does not keep Teucer from threatening forcible resistance to the decree against burying Ajax.

At this point Odysseus reappears on stage. It is he who prevents bloodshed and who secures an honorable burial for Ajax. More importantly still, it is he who restores the commanders' authority and the integrity of the army. Odysseus begins his appeal by establishing his position as Agamemnon's best friend among the Achaeans (1331). He then gives three arguments, which, taken together, succeed in persuading Agamemnon to allow Ajax's burial. We will consider each of these arguments separately.

Odysseus' third and last argument is that he (Odysseus) himself will some day be in want of burial. Agamemnon interprets this statement simply as a sign that every man is out for himself. Odysseus, though in all likelihood he was moved more by pity than by such a calculation (cf. 121–26), does not openly object to his commander's low interpretation of his remark. He even adds that it is reasonable and proper for him to labor for himself above all. To give Odysseus his due, we should note that the self-

interest he speaks of is a farsighted self-interest. It is the higher aspect of that view of the world which to Ajax had meant primarily the denial of true friendship (1354–61). Odysseus, in accordance with this farsighted self-interest, offers friendly service to a recent enemy. More than that, he offers to serve a dead man, from whom he can hope nothing in return. And in this, too, Odysseus acts in accord with his long-range interest. It is not prudent to help only those who can be expected to return the service, since everyone will eventually be in want of a service he cannot return. Everyone dreads the prospect of lying unburied, and so it is wise for all to permit, if not also to assist in, the burial of all others. To do this sets an example of humanity which serves everyone's interests. This last argument, by which Odysseus seeks to "enlighten" Agamemnon's self-interest, seems enough to overcome the commander's faltering resistance. But it fails to resolve the most important questions that have been raised within the play. It says nothing about what honor is owed to Ajax in particular, and it suggests too little about the sources of authority within the army.

A second argument of Odysseus is his appeal in the name of the gods and on the basis of divine law. Divine law forbids the prohibition of burial, no matter whether the dead man was an enemy or a friend, a bad man or a good one (1332–33; cf. 1129–32, and *Iliad* Π 453–57; 667–75). The laws of the gods, says Odysseus, could be ruined by denying burial to Ajax (1343–44). And although Odysseus doesn't say this, showing respect for divine law might help Agamemnon to preserve the army's respect for him. In a number of ways, the argument from divine law goes further than the one based on self-interest. But this argument, which would hold equally no matter who had died, is overshadowed by Odysseus' repeated references to the goodness, nobility, and excellence of Ajax (1340, 1343–45, 1355, 1357, 1380; cf. 1415–16).

Odysseus' chief argument in support of burial, the argument in terms of Ajax's own worth, is amazingly silent about the question of his innocence or guilt. Odysseus divides the world into friends and enemies, but there is not a word about traitors or disobedient subjects. He never says anything against Ajax for having tried to kill him and the other Achaean chieftains. But neither does he try to mitigate the gravity of Ajax's treason by recalling the outcome in the award of arms. Odysseus is silent also about the great services Ajax had done for the Achaeans while he was still a friend. He does not try to balance Teucer's case for gratitude to Ajax (1266–82) against Menelaus' desire for revenge.

Odysseus, who never even thanked Athena for saving him from Ajax (cf. 45 ff.),[20] does not always show gratitude to friends. But together with this, he does not expect it always in return. He does not allow the confident hope of friendly service to inspire in him the angry sense of disappointment at having been betrayed (1052–54, 1266–67). Because he knows the weakness of friendship, as well as the reasons for it, Odysseus has a certain distance from both gratitude and the desire to punish. And though his lack of gratitude stems in part from self-interest, he at least knows not to confuse one's true interest with the seeming profit in revenge.

Rather than defend Ajax's claim to burial in terms of his past services to the Achaeans, Odysseus does so simply on the grounds of his excellence. Odysseus, the winner of the disputed prize for excellence, claims that his rival was plainly (or in his eyes) the one best man among the Argives, after Achilles (ἔν' ἄνδρ' ἰδεῖν ἄριστον Ἀργείων, 1340). Perhaps because he knows that the one warrior who is openly the best is not always best for, or of most service to, the army as a whole, Odysseus does not reproach the judges who had awarded *him* the prize. But he does say that it would be unjust now to dishonor Ajax. Justice, he says, forbids men to harm—that is, to dishonor—a good man who has died (1343–45). Odysseus never claims that it is unjust to harm a good man while he is still alive. Such a man might be an enemy (cf. 1347), and it would be dangerous if not fatal to believe that one must never harm a good man who is an enemy. If he should die, however, it becomes a demand of justice to honor him, or at least not to dishonor him by withholding his corpse from those who would bury it.

Odysseus explains his intervention on Ajax's behalf by saying that virtue "defeats" him, or that it weighs far more with him than hatred (νικᾷ γὰρ ἀρετή με τῆς ἐχθρας πολύ, 1357; cf. 1355). Not friendship or love, but virtue, prevails over the hatred between Ajax and the Achaeans. Odysseus' suggestion that virtue "defeats" him seems also to imply that his rival, or at least the virtue to which his rival had been dedicated, has won the most important victory. Yet his homage to Ajax's virtue could also stem in part from a sound calculation of the army's interest, and his own. For although Odysseus implicitly acknowledges that public life usually has more urgent demands than the demand for truthful honoring of virtue, he may also have understood that loyalty to one's community cannot be the supreme law. He may have seen that the principle of loyalty, whenever it is separated from virtue as a whole, tends to be supplanted by the rule of private self-interest. A community that looks up to nothing higher than its own law, and its own interests, is always prone to disintegration. There is admittedly a danger to any community from excellence, and from individuals' attachment to it. But not to give excellence its due is also dangerous—dangerous to the whole community, and especially to its rulers (along with their closest friends). Through their disrespect for Ajax, the Achaean commanders endanger their own title to respect, and to any obedience more reliable than that from self-interest. And this threat to their ruling offices is not sufficiently met by reliance on the nobility of their family names (cf. also 1093–96). Odysseus' success in persuading them to show a noble respect for Ajax is therefore necessary for the army's stability. His generous hon-

oring of Ajax's virtue helps to maintain the threatened Achaean community in its integrity, whether or not his primary aim was to do so. By openly deferring to his rival's excellence, Odysseus complements that excellence with a more serviceable, and unobtrusive, excellence of his own (cf. 1356–57).

As Ajax's body is being carried out for burial, his brother Teucer makes a final public statement about him. He says that Ajax is, or was, a good man in all respects (τῷ πάντ' ἀγαθῷ, 1415). The play itself, however, has raised serious doubts about such a boast. Even apart from the question of political loyalty, the mere thought of Tecmessa (who is probably on stage until the end) would make us doubt that Ajax had been entirely virtuous. Yet it may be necessary for the Achaean community, and for any healthy community, to disregard some failings in its heroes.

1. Compare B. M. W. Knox, "The *Ajax* of Sophocles," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* lxv, 1961, 1–37. See also Heinrich Weinstock, *Sophokles*, Leipzig, Berlin, 1931, 50–51, and Kurt von Fritz, "Zur Interpretation des *Aias*," *Rheinisches Museum* 83, 1934, 124–25.
2. The importance of this fact and its relation to the whole question of heroic virtue is examined in "The *Aristeia* of Diomedes and the Plot of the *Iliad*," AGŌN, *Journal of Classical Studies* 2, 1968, 10–38, by Seth Benardete.
3. Compare Achilles' self-reproach upon learning of Patroclus' death; *Iliad* Σ98–104. On the importance of loyalty as a Homeric virtue, see also Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus*, Berkeley, 1971, 26 *et passim*.
4. The weight of Tecmessa's argument, and of her character, has been recognized by G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama*, Ithaca, 1958, 105–06.
5. Tecmessa does not assert that gratitude suffices to make a man noble; rather she says that an ungrateful man would *no longer* remain noble. She admits, in other words, that nobility has some higher source than the memory of benefits received.
6. 588; cf. 522. For the kinship between gratitude and loyalty, consider 1267: χάρις διαρρεῖ καὶ προδοῦς' ἁλίσκεται. Gratitude, or the recollection of good things, may be at the root of our acceptance of the duty to be loyal. Consider Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* I 2.6 and *Anabasis* V 8.26.
7. The word order, as well as the sense, suggest that we treat the word ἄδηλα as a proleptic adjective and translate it as "unclearly."
8. Contrast Knox, "*Ajax*" 2, 19, 20.
9. As Jebb has noted, the normal meaning of this sentence is "Pity forbids me to leave her", though it could also imply that his leaving is imminent. Here a word is necessary about the much-disputed question of deception. According to Knox, if Tecmessa and the chorus are deceived by Ajax's speech, "they have no one to blame but themselves" (14). Yet misleading phrases such as this one argue in favor of the older view that Ajax deliberately deceives his hearers—or at least deliberately encourages their self-deception (See Jebb's Introduction, 124; and compare Stanford's Appendix D, London, 1963). Now it could well be, as Knox argues (10–14), that Ajax begins his monologue without thinking of his listeners. But he is surely conscious of their presence by the end of his speech. Then, at least, he has renewed his resolve to die, and yet he encourages Tecmessa and the men of the chorus to believe otherwise. That he should encourage the wishful thinking of Tecmessa and the chorus is, of course, compatible with the veiled truthfulness of his words.
10. Compare I. Errandonea, "Les quatres monologues de *l'Ajax* et leur signification dramatique," *Les Etudes Classiques* 26, 1, January, 1958, 34. See also Kirkwood, 103–04.
11. H. D. F. Kitto, in *Form and Meaning in Drama*, London, 1956, 189, 194–95, has called attention to the importance of the word τοιγὰρ in line 667. I do not, however, follow his interpretation, which ignores the simplest and most obvious train of thought.
12. Compare Kitto, 194.
13. On these lines (669–76) see especially Kamerbeek, The *Ajax*, Leiden, 1953, 140–42.
14. To suggest that Athena is willing to forget her anger is one of the dramatic purposes of Calchas' warning to Teucer. For a fuller interpretation of this warning, see M. S. Wigodsky, "The Salvation of Ajax", *Hermes* 90, 1962, 149–58.
15. Compare the somewhat different analysis of Weinstock, 51. Kitto, 194–95, among others, has argued that these maxims about hate and friendship are not so much ignoble as enlightened and humane. But to argue this, and to turn attention away from the acceptance of betrayal among friends, Kitto has had to focus on the surprising beneficence to Ajax of his former enemy Odysseus. (See also Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy*, Oxford, 1944, 41.) Yet before interpreting Ajax's statement in the light of subsequent events, we must first understand it as it appears in its own context.
16. Martin Sicherl, "Die Tragik des Aias," *Hermes* 98, 1970, 14–31, especially 29–30. Compare also Wigodsky, and cf. footnote 9.
17. Bowra, 47.
18. Kamerbeek, 210, finds the logical sequence of Menelaus' argument here to be unsatisfying, and Stanford, 195, even suspects misplacement or interpolation at 1077–80. But while Stanford is right that "Menelaus jumps back and forth from the individual person to the πόλις, without warning of a change of subject, in 1081," this confusion mirrors precisely the inner flaw in Menelaus' position.
19. In lines 1250–52, and especially in the words ἀσφαλέστατοι (1251) and κρατοῦσι (1252), it is unclear whether Agamemnon is referring to armies or to individual men. In the light of the preceding argument, these lines seem to justify the award of arms by the claim that men like Odysseus, rather than Ajax, contribute most to the survival and success of the army (cf. Kamerbeek, 238). But in connection with what follows they look more like a warning to over-confident men like Ajax and Teucer to watch out for themselves.
20. It could be argued, indeed, that Odysseus did not really owe gratitude to Athena, since in her punishment of Ajax she may not have cared that this would also save the lives of the other chieftains. James Tyler, in "Sophocles' *Ajax* and Sophoclean Plot Construction," AJP 95, no. 1, 1974, 24–42, has noted the absence of any mention of such concern on her part. To Tyler's argument one could add that Athena never claimed to be punishing Ajax for his violation of an oath to serve the army. Yet despite Tyler's careful discrimination between the avowed motives of Ajax's divine and his human adversaries, it is strikingly fortunate for the army, to say the least, that Athena chose the moment she did to intervene. This coincidence alone might be enough to keep alive at least the hope that the gods, while hating those who are bad, also love and care for those who are sound-minded (cf. 132–33).

First Readings

Leven's Creator

Creator, by Jeremy Leven, 450 pp., Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc, New York 1980.

Creator, Jeremy Leven's first published novel, is cast in the form of a series of notebooks written during the last year of his life by Dr. Harry Wolper (born Jan. 1, 1900, died December 25, not inappropriately Christmas, 1969), and published by his son as a condition for receiving his father's legacy. The notebooks themselves are a record of the experiments, reflections, autobiography, family history, philosophical meanderings, sexual exploits and fantasies, marriage, paternity (both literally of sons and daughters and metaphorically of a son in a novel he has been writing) and, most importantly, the attempt by Dr. Wolper to recreate parthenogenetically his dead wife (he has been culturing a number of her cells for many years), and of his thoughts about what creation, both biological and artistic, means, hence the title of the novel. Harry Wolper, then, God, creator as parent, biochemist, and novelist, and ultimately, the creation himself, perhaps, of the protagonist of the novel he has been writing, is the medium through which Mr. Leven, himself, reflects on the meaning of creation and the philosophic questions which fall out of such a concern.

The book is multi-layered and subtle, and it is clear that Mr. Leven has read widely and carefully and made good use of what he has read. I cannot, in a brief review, do justice to the care and wit with which the book is worked out, but I will look at several of the opening journal entries with some attention to detail to give an indication of the way our creator works.

The first journal entry is for January 1, 1969, Harry's 69th birthday and the first day of a new year. The sixty-nine is both a sexual allusion and the age of Socrates when he was condemned. Socrates is important in the novel for a number of reasons, but first as the narrator of the myth of the cave, for "The World's Oldest Operating Metaphor" (January 13) is one of the more important recurring images of the book. The New Year and the new beginning it represents begins a comic version of *Genesis.* It opens:

> 1st. To begin with, there is no earthly reason to begin. Heaven knows.

Harry's creation does not begin with earthly motives, or at least none that he is aware of. Perhaps Heaven knows, but there is a strong suggestion later that even God wasn't too sure of what he was doing when he created man. The question of what man as creator knows, however, is opened, and the rest of the novel wrestles with this central question.

After some mention of his advancing years and consequent decrepitude, Harry observes, "Together, body, mind, and soul are in the last lap of a sweepstakes to see who will be the first to his agony's jackpot," which reminds us of that other thinker who mulled over that problem of the relation of mind, body, and soul, and recreated his world in the seven days of his *Meditations,* Descartes, who enters the novel explicitly in the entry for Jan. 18 in a reflection on man's relation to nature and of his soul to his body.

Harry, faced with the emotional and physical disorder of his own life, begins his journal, he then tells us, to protect himself against Boris, his fictional protagonist, his creation, who has gotten out of hand and is asserting his independence. Harry observes that he "must get organized" and sets out his "week's chores."

1. Pull up shades.
2. Do Zodiac.
3. Mop floor. Water plants.
4. Replace lightbulbs (outdoor spots and nightlights).
5. Check incubator. Fill birdfeeder.
6. Create life.
7. ?

So we get Harry's version of the creation in *Genesis,* the creation, in order, of light, the firmament, the gathering together of the waters to allow the dry land to appear and the creation of plant life, the lights in the firmament, the creation of all animal life other than man, the creation of man, and, one hopes, a day of rest. But we find that Harry is not as efficient as God, and although he apparently disposes of the first tasks in one sentence each in the journal entries for Jan. 1–5, problems arise on the sixth day.

> 6th. Ah yes. And now for the beginning. Damn, I forgot to mop the floor. Where the hell is my list.

Harry is not the tidiest of creators (his laboratory we see later is near chaos, a condition he sees as particularly appropriate for creation), the water is still sloshing around, and hell and damnation enter the picture very early. It becomes clear that he will not do the job in a week, and the book will not end with the entry for the 7th.

> 7th. What a lousy week this has been. I haven't accomplished a damn thing. I need a rest. Badly.

And we do, in the novel, get a temporary rest from his creative labors as we move back to his first meeting with his Eve, Lucy, to whom he indeed cleaves in a variety of positions as they become one flesh (though not without some hellish interruptions) and engender Arnold, their Moses (Jan. 20).

The final entry for January once again raises the issue of the relation between God and man and poses it in a way which informs the rest of the novel.

> 31st. Here's another thing about God.
>
> I do not accept that God made man, as my mother told me when I was six, because he was lonesome. My mother had an alcoholic husband, and she was lonesome. God created man as a joke. He was bored.
>
> Take, for example, Adam and Eve, reaching all over themselves to hide their nakedness, ashamed, and quaking at the very thought of being banished from their garden.
>
> It has always seemed to me that if Jehovah, in his omnipotence, had really not wanted man to eat the apple, He would not have made a man who does exactly the opposite of what he's told. Man is God's practical joke. Believe me.
>
> Here's another joke. God made man in his image.
>
> I'm concerned with the Almighty's sense of humor tonight because I'm

convinced that I'm only days away from discovering the secret of life. God must be in hysterics.

The relation of God to man is reflected in the relation of man to the things he makes. If man is God's practical joke, so are our creation, our practical jokes, or, at least, the novel tells us, they often turn out that way whether we intend it or not. Our children turn out to be made in our image though recalcitrant in ways we never intended. Our works, novels, poems, inventions, destructions, reveal us and tell us things about ourselves we might not have wanted to know. And, finally, if we could find out how to make life, if we could really be Godlike, would our creations, too, think that we made them as a practical joke?

Harry does discover the secret of life. He finds out how to implant cells of human beings into the unfertilized ovum of a woman and return the egg to the uterus to grow. The young woman, Meli, whom he hires to be the incubator turns out to be a major character in the novel. Starting as a totally ignorant post-adolescent, she acquires by extensive reading in Harry's library and by long, sometimes very interesting conversations with him, a good liberal education. And she finally ends up as his second wife, carrying in her womb not only his first wife but, as a twin, Harry himself who will have gone Oedipus one better. Counterpointed with Harry's drama is the life of Boris, his fictional Stephen Dedalus (entry for January 9) whose life resembles in many ways Harry's own and whose arguments with Harry, his creator, are implicitly those between Harry and his God.

I hope I have given some suggestion of the formal and intellectual complexity of the novel—a novel which discusses and embodies many of the most interesting questions. The discussion is witty throughout, the structure ingenious and well executed, and the novel is certainly intelligent and sharp and perhaps profound.

George Doskow

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Eyes of His Own—and Words

Oilers and Sweepers and Other Stories, by George Dennison, Random House, New York 1979.

Dennison's work is important because he knows himself as an artist, because he knows how to make things and how to let things happen. He knows how to live with his mistakes; he knows what he can do and when the works he fashions call for things he cannot do. This means his faults strengthen his work rather than distort it, as they would if he tried to hide them—or worse still, pretend they were not there. His work has the intelligent ambition of restraint, not the stupid ambition that takes recklessness for freedom. Because his stories do not give false assurances, they make you love the world, and hate things worthy of hate:

> There was one human intelligence, one human pride, one human integrity and giving-forth.
> How wonderful mankind was, that monster!
> Tears were standing in his eyes, though he was filled with rejoicing.

These four stories and a "Vaudeville Play," which together make up a whole that is all the more one because unplanned, could appear in a newspaper, if our newspapers employed reporters who could see. Dennison's accounts tell "news" that *The New York Times* looks desperately for in its "human interest stories"—"stories" which tell of no city on heaven or earth and make the Victorians look worldly because, in contrast to many of us, they knew when they were afraid and when they were embarrassed, and knew that there were things that were rightly embarrassing.

Of Dennison's accounts, the strongest are "Oilers and Sweepers," which deals with looking, but with a remoteness that approaches coldness; "The Author of Caryatids," which addresses itself to creation, a creation good enough to remind you of the creation of Michelangelo's God touching Adam or Rodin's hand opening with a man and a woman unfolding like an embryo within it—but with daring laughter; and "The Smiles of Konarak," which tells of success in love and art and their relation, in the streets of the lower East Side of New York, and almost ends with a recreation of *Coriolanus* in Tompkins Square Park:

> What would you have, you curs, that like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you, the other makes you proud. He that trusts to you, where he should find you lions, finds you hares; where foxes, geese.

The vaudeville play, "The Service for Joseph Axminster," wants the severity and solace of the rites of death and burial, is somehow empty, perhaps because it needs a living audience rather than silent readers.

Set somewhat awkwardly in a France too familiar to be recognizable, really the France of the American expatriates in the 20's, "Larbaud, A Tale of Pierrot" tells of the ravages of superior powers of intelligence on those who struggle to let them come to something.

At a carnival a mime enamored of Minot Larbaud makes a casting of his face and head and moulds a mask on it. There is no hint of a death-mask, but you cannot help thinking of it. Wearing this mask of himself Minot discovers he has a gift of jumping high—of soaring. The discovery of this gift, although unexpected, does not entirely surprise, for there is something with the hint of the god-like about Larbaud: "He could not divest himself of authority."

The leaping shows him forth, quite unexpectedly, as a man who knows enough of life to live without self-imposed limits, without self-restraint. "It was a joy to leap, a joy to give way utterly to my powers," he writes later in recollection to the narrator. And the public, at least his first public, recognizes this giving way utterly and the strength that rises from it: "When Minot leaped now, our cheers expressed more than mere enthusiasm. Some deeply lodged hope, if hope is the right word, had been stirred into wakefulness."

After the carnival Minot becomes a champion in international competitions. To his delight, at the circus clowns with springs on their feet imitate his leaps. But in the newspapers and at radio round-

tables charges, never challenged by those who knew them to be lies, are voiced that Larbaud uses a trampoline. When a few spectators "boo" him, Larbaud leaves the amphitheater, never to jump again. Even earlier, the narrator had counseled withdrawal: "...I urged him to put an end to this career. For I had come to believe that his talent was a meager thing compared to the rare intelligence he possessed; compared to his character which was perhaps the rarest thing of all."

Minot leaves the South for Paris where he prospers with the establishment of an electronics factory. Suddenly, he collapses: his self vanishes. This collapse, an astute young psychiatrist recognizes, shows a struggle for self-cure, rather than sickness:

> His face [the face of the psychiatrist] came alight. "He [Minot] is vital," he said. "He is extraordinary. He is like a baffled animal who gathers himself within his fur and waits. My treatment—." Here he smiled in such a way as made me want to take his hands. It was a smile that told me much. It lit his face with an expression that men inherit from their mothers; and I understood that this austere young aristocrat had come from a working-class home; I even fancied I could see his mother bending at her work, harassed, overburdened, vehement in opinion...and intellectually free.
>
> "—my treatment," he said. "is to keep away. No drugs. No talk. He is curing himself. I know he is."

As Minot comes again into himself, he studies birds and their flight, their soaring. Two important works come from him and he dies—forseeing the time of his death like an ancient hero. There follow like an elegy a few pages of the narrator's boyhood recollections of Minot.

This story is of greatness, shyly about greatness but about greatness. It is also about strength and the fearfulness of giving in to it. It amounts to the story of a life. Its own strength comes from its modesty which has all the resilience of assurance. For this modesty comes of the author's respect for what he does not understand but will not ignore—life itself, moving of its own sweet will.

All of these accounts have real subjects and real content, because Dennison hardly ever tries to instruct, but simply surprises without appearing arbitrary. When he contrives, it is with the assurance of convention, of a convention he does not always acknowledge. The clarity with which he sees New York, with which he can distinguish the few actually murderous from the many fearfully struggling to come to life owes something to distance, the distance of a gentleman in Russia in the 19th century who could always leave the city for the country. Without breaking into a smile he can describe a man in his late thirties living off a trust fund on the lower East Side going to Sixth Avenue for "greens" and University Place butchers for steaks. But the revolution he remembers is the Mexican, which, ten years before the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, took its own course without ideology and without the lust to export its sufferings (one million dead)—and is, therefore, now largely forgotten.

He can describe death with enough compassion to make you weep. There is a place for children in his work, unobtrusive but unmistakable. He can describe the sky, the sun on the trees. He can make you hear *The Magic Flute*. He does not quote Moliere or even Shakespeare but lets them speak. The test of all that has gone before in "The Author of Caryatids" is the capacity to describe the dawn at the end without great and wordy preparations (except for a moment of forced quaintness), just because his account leads him to it.

Dennison's capacity to describe these simple and obvious things comes from his respect for the surface. In this respect for, no, love of, the surface, from which he never asks more than it can give and so receives more than you expect, Dennison is like the Impressionists, but like an Impressionist painter after the Cubists, the Futurists, Suprematists, Abstract Expressionists, and so on. He is like a man who can return to his eyes and see, because he has been through all the complications without mentioning them, a silence that tells of hard passages. He does not restore the surface but discovers it anew: he comes upon the simple things because he has gone through all the complicated brilliance and been left with the simple things almost self-evident before his eyes.

Dennison's capacity to alternate between real thought and seeing and not to confuse one with the other shows that his love of surface does not come of a fear of depth. Dennison's thought reaffirms the world and leads you into it. It makes you capable of seeing, just as his seeing encourages you to think. He knows, in the way few people dare know, that a work of art "...is a large, bold, dazzlingly energetic manifestation of self in which intelligence and feeling [support] each other."

In all this Dennison owes something to Goethe, who never thought anything he could not see. But he would not have been able to learn from such a master had he not been smart enough to take Paul Goodman as a teacher. For in this Goodman (in his stories, poems, plays, and novels) was great without qualification, in that he could learn from the masters and teach you to learn from them—and, thereby, put naturalism in perspective, the naturalism many writers rebel against but cannot get rid of. Like Goodman's style, Dennison's is classic; that is, it respects facts, knows the difference between words and action (and their relation), between thought and brooding, between imagination and fantasy, and it does not flatter. Without Goodman's learning, Dennison is also without his coldness, which in Goodman was a fear of feeling, a fear that he would tear up the world if he got too close to it.

You cannot have intelligence, surface, and depth, in short content as well as feeling, thought as well as sight, without experience of art, which will guide you when you are fashioning a work. Without an apparent esthetic theory, Dennison has an artisan's practical esthetic awareness, rare these days, that at other times might have been called taste. This awareness allows him to discover instead of "experiment." More importantly, its clarity of outline and the excitement it occasions awaken the reader to active attention. Every one of these stories shows respect for the reader and knows his presence in give and take.

LEO RADITSA

At Home and Abroad

Letter From Moscow:

A Rude Introduction

On the sixth day of my stay in the Soviet Union, on my way to meet fellow American students of the Pushkin Institute for dinner, I was stopped and questioned for about two hours by a man from the KGB. For the next several weeks the recollection of the ordeal gripped me. I told myself that I had not been in any real danger and that the incident might have ended quickly had I had my passport (school officials had collected them to prevent theft). But reasoning didn't help. I hated life in the Soviet Union, and I knew I had to stay there for the next four months. It turned out that this incident was not repeated and that I greatly enjoyed my stay, thanks to the friends I made. But I did not know that then.

On my first trek downtown, I noticed that policemen stand on every corner, and I was awed to see droves of soldiers and officers in uniform. They were everywhere, in the subways, in restaurants, on the streets. The city seemed an armed camp in which an invading army had set in—yet it was the Soviets' own army.

On November 7, the anniversary of the Revolution, we students, and probably most of the nation, watched on television as soldier after soldier marched and tank after tank, missile after missile rolled onto Red Square and past the Politburo members, who stood at attention and saluted. On that day, the regime celebrated brute, awesome military might instead of the supposed ideals of the revolution.

The Propaganda

The propaganda—strong in all the cities we visited (Leningrad, Kiev, Tallinn, and Lvov) but most incessant in Moscow—depicts a world of the past: the central hero is Lenin and the main events are the Revolution and World War II. A visitor who knew no history would imagine that these events had just happened. This frozen concentration on the past, this attempt to fix it forever in the present, continually amazed me. The Paradise-bound tone of idealism—of building Communism and the New Soviet Man—is curiously out of place in the fast-paced, apathetic world of present-day Moscow.

The war is the subject of countless books and movies with one-sided heroes and villains; Germans from World War II are never called "Germans" or "Nazis," but only "Fascists;" a common slogan declares, "Nothing is forgotten, no one is forgotten" who perished in World War II—but where is one word, where is one statue to the millions whom Stalin had murdered? A common street poster saying, "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the honor, mind, and conscience of the 20th Century —V.I. Lenin" angered me whenever I saw it; I thought of Stalin henchmen and Hitler youth.

Lenin is portrayed not merely as the founder of the Soviet Union but as a prophet and god—infallible, just, and virtually immortal. Our visit to Lenin's corpse (skeptics say, only a wax imitation), enshrined in the temple-like Lenin Mausoleum, left us with an eerie feeling of having taken part in a pagan rite of worshiping the dead. Lenin's body, dressed in coat and tie, is protected by immaculately clad honor guards with long rifles and bayonets and deadly serious faces. A hushed silence reigns. On most days hundreds of Russians and foreigners pay homage to Lenin, like Moslems on a pilgrimage to Mecca; many newlyweds come straight from the wedding ceremony to lay wreaths at his feet. Often the line stretches along the Kremlin Wall, past Red Square, past the Historical Museum, and onto Gorky Street. His diminuitive yet commanding figure seems to prove true the street slogans which declare, "Lenin lived, lives, and always will live;" "Now he is more alive than the living."

The unrelenting barrage of posters and billboards that line the streets dazzles the newcomer, but Russians have developed a faculty for tuning it out. In a private conversation with one of my teachers, who naively but sincerely believes in the Soviet regime, I mentioned a poster which said, "A driver—an interesting profession!" My teacher said she had never seen the poster, and when I teased her, she insisted vehemently that I had made the whole thing up. This struck me: the poster was, in fact, one of the most common in the city, yet even my teacher, despite her conventionalism, had blocked it out of her mind. I can only wonder how many other posters she blocks out as well.

How much of the propaganda do the people believe? We students met numerous Russians who consider the United States aggressive and the Soviet Union defensive. They stressed that the Russian people want peace because their suffering in World War II has taught them the horror of war. They insisted Americans do not understand because they never really suffered in World War II and now they have forgotten altogether (the title of the documentary "The Forgotten War," which was shown in the Soviet Union, convinces many of them of this). Some of these persons were elderly, simple, kind-hearted folk who had little education. Others were 20 and 30 year-olds who worked instead of going to college. And several of my teachers, who were sophisticated and well-educated, expressed these opinions in candid conversations with me.

But many other Russians whom I knew held contrary views. They were all deeply ashamed of their country for its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Many told me, "The United States has fallen greatly in our eyes," because it has not retaliated militarily against Iran. To prove to me their own country's militarism, one couple showed me their 14 year-old son's textbook, with pictures on how to clean a rifle and how to protect it while crawling through fields on your belly.

Despite—or because of—the propaganda against the decadence of the West and the attempt to prevent contact with it, a cult does exist, particularly among the young, of things Western, a cult so intense that, in our eyes, it amounted to a worship of anything with Roman lettering on it. The black market in jeans, watches, records, and American dollars is fierce and the prices exorbitant. Jeans, which sell for 200 rubles each (equivalent to almost two month's average salary) are a special status symbol: at a party in honor of a man about to emigrate (parties common enough to have a special name in Russian), the guests, who were all formally dressed, considered

the best dressed among them a scientist in jeans and blue denim jacket. Russians shower Americans with questions on the latest trends in rock and jazz, in theater, and in clothes. Elvis Presley is a favorite of the young Russians I met, who showed me a half-dozen "obituary" columns that had seized the occasion of the singer's death to denounce him for "bourgeois decadence." The attempt to insulate Russia from the West shows the meaning of the Russian proverb, "The forbidden fruit is sweet."

Many Russians, however, do consider the West corrupt. One man, a professor deeply impressed by his recent travels on his own in America, insisted to me that the American government should censor pornography and reports of crime, since their incessant repetition in sordid detail depresses individuals and society. Another man, upon learning of an attempt on Senator Kennedy's life last fall, told his son, who was planning to apply for permission to emigrate, "America is ahead of us in many things, in many things. But there is so much crime there, so many murders. They killed Kennedy, their own president, they killed his brother, they killed Martin Luther King. Why do you want to go there?" This man's views deserve consideration because he feels deeply the injustices of the Soviet regime, and like his son had once considered emigration. He told me that the Soviet constitution is good on paper but not in practice. Soviet citizens have the right to file charges against discrimination, but no case of anti-Semitism has ever been brought to court. In contrast to Tsarist Russia (Vera Zasulich) and Nazi Germany (in connection with the Reichstag fire), no court in the Soviet Union has ever acquitted a political defendant. His passion grew with each example and culminated in bitter anger in his account of the first trial of Alexander Ginsburg. Defense lawyer Zolotukhin had submitted his speech to the Bar Association for censorship and received permission to deliver it in its entirety. After the trial, the Bar Association had his membership in the Communist Party revoked and disqualified him from the further practice of law. The Bar Association warned fellow lawyers who protested to keep silent if they wished to avoid similar punishment. The man telling me these stories was in a position to know their authenticity.

The propaganda works not just through false assertions, but through silences and omissions. One of our teachers, a highly educated woman, was astounded to learn that Solzhenitsyn is still alive, and she showed intense curiosity to learn what he is saying and writing today.

Other Russians I met knew Solzhenitsyn's works, all of which—including *Gulag Archipelago, First Circle,* and *Cancer Ward*—circulate privately in smuggled or in clandestine domestic editions. My friends knew Solzhenitsyn's speech at Harvard University in detail. An elderly couple who had never before criticized the Soviet Union said at the farewell dinner they held for me: "We respect Solzhenitsyn for his role as citizen: he said the things that everyone feared to say but that needed to be said." The two other Russians present, a professor and his wife, agreed.

To obtain banned books is difficult, to own them fraught with danger. A friend who showed me drawers full of poetry from the 1920's and Bulgakov's short novel, *The Heart of the Dog,* said that these works "are deeply anti-Soviet," and that he kept them despite his fear. The teacher who did not know that Solzhenitsyn is still alive perhaps hints at a Russia in which many remain in ignorance because their genuine interest in the truth does not outweigh their fear. Nor does the availability of the banned books console the Russians who dare to read them: a graduate student—who had previously gotten in trouble for the books he owned—told me that the necessity for secrecy fills him with shame for his country, with a gnawing sense of indignation, and has led him to decide to emigrate to America.

The Living Conditions

In the face of the difficult daily living conditions, the propaganda, with its praise of the Revolution and its blessings, struck us with its irony. Living was a struggle: to some extent physical, since nourishing food was hard to find, and to a great extent psychological, since daily conditions exasperated us. Adjusting to Russia took all our energies. And the Russians' way of dealing with the conditions exasperated us more than the conditions themselves. They constantly pushed and shoved and shouted at each other (and at us). They had reason to do so: cashiers were desperately overworked and customers were tired and hungry; one teacher—whom we considered the kindest of all our teachers—once told me that she had no shame in pushing others out of her way to get into a bus, since the alternative was to wait in the cold for an extra hour and be late for class.

Living conditions disgusted almost everyone in our dormitory—students from Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, and North America. Only the Vietnamese looked upon the Soviet Union almost in awe as a miracle of modern industrialization and as a friend which had helped them in need. At our Institute's Party of Friendship, an informal get-together in which students from each country performed on stage, the Vietnamese alone sang patriotic Soviet songs and shouted out Soviet slogans with fervor.

I told myself I had to tolerate these conditions for four months only—the poor Russians had to suffer them for a lifetime. I realized the luxury of the conditions I had taken for granted in America.

Russia Disguised: The Tourist's View

While the real living conditions drained me of energy and patience, the false view of them purveyed to tourists filled me with indignation. They stay at plush downtown hotels—which they do not select—such as the Rossiia, a huge hotel whose single rooms cost 100 dollars a night. Its guests may dine at any of the hotel's twelve restaurants, never having to wait in line at a cafeteria for a typical meal of greasy soup and exceptionally fatty meat. The hotel has its own *Beriozka,* a special store where foreigners alone may shop—no Russians allowed—and where they must pay in foreign currency only—no rubles accepted. The stores for Russians display some of the high-quality merchandise found in the *Beriozkas,* but sell none of it. Taken on official tours, guests are shown only the very best of Russia and hear its worth exaggerated by the rapturous and mendacious speeches of the tour guides ("The Olympic stadiums show that Soviet technology is the greatest in the world—America had better learn a lesson from us"). Several times when I tried to enter the hotel—to

dine at the main restaurant or to go to the post office—the doorman denied me permission—guests only. Some tourists take the carefully constructed facade for the country itself and leave the U.S.S.R. satiated and impressed. Our trip had the opposite effect on us: most of us came with not-too-unsympathetic a view of the Soviet Union and left detesting it. At our Thanksgiving dinner we raised our glasses to patriotic toasts we would have scoffed at just a few months earlier.

Incidentally, that dinner was held at the Natsional restaurant, the very place in which I was questioned by the KGB in the first week of my stay. By my second visit, I had learned that the restaurant, perhaps the best in Moscow, serves only top Party officials and foreigners who pay in their own currency, not rubles. On that first visit, I had been chased through a large chandelier-lit dining room where elegantly dressed foreigners ate five-course meals with champagne and caviar as a live singer and band performed romantic Gypsy songs in the background. On my return visit, I was treated to the hospitality lavished on foreigners and to a meal of turkey, cranberry sauce, and other extravagances.

Our Own Isolation

As a rule our friends in Moscow did not visit us in our dormitory. They were not officially banned, but they knew visits to us could get them into trouble. Our dormitory was monitored by kind maternal old ladies (*dezhurnaias*) who took turns guarding each floor around the clock, and who wrote daily reports to the KGB. Two Russian males who were our age hung out on our floor, professing great interest in the West, speaking excellent English and German, ingratiating themselves among the Westerners, and taking careful note of the few Russians who did visit us. They said they had been expelled from the university and were unemployed but independently wealthy. And my American classmates believed them!—and called me paranoid for saying the two were spies. "Are Americans really still that naive!" said a Japanese diplomat. The *dezhurnaias* allowed the pair to carouse freely, but they stopped a Russian friend who tried to visit us discreetly and demanded to know her identity, occupation, and nationality ("Ahngleesh," said our friend, in her attempt at English).

Blat

Often I wondered how the Russians manage to survive in such intolerable conditions. (Some do by drinking, as we saw on the streets daily at all times of the day and night.) I learned the answer only gradually because a large part of the economic life is hidden from public view.

Some things in the Soviet Union are built impressively: hotels and restaurants for foreigners, the Olympic stadiums, tanks and missiles. Besides these priority items, however, no one and nothing appears to work: outside our dormitory piles of bricks crumbled unused; one morning we saw construction workers lean on their shovels and lie down in the field to go to sleep. The Soviet professor who had been to America told me that his greatest impression, along with the friendship Americans offered him, was their "pure attitude toward work." He said he saw carpenters accomplish in one day what a brigade in Russia would struggle to achieve in a month—and, if they did, would be awarded medals of honor. Russians, who have jokes for all the absurdities of Soviet life, have one that captures the national attitude toward work: "In Russia two groups know how to make believe—the Party, which makes believe that it pays people real wages for their work, and the people, who make believe that they work for their pay."

But outside the public view exists a dazzling world of barter known in Russian as *blat*. A waiter and a shoe salesman will quietly exchange quality meat and fruit for a new pair of shoes—commodities almost impossible to get otherwise; factory managers will keep their plants running by trading indispensable materials that official suppliers fail to deliver on time. My roommates helped our dormitory's construction chief by hauling mattresses for several hours, and in return he gave us the parts to a closet which we assembled on our own—thereby getting one three months before our neighbors did. An artist painted portraits of Brezhnev's physician and foot doctor in exchange for their medical services—or so surmised a Russian friend of mine when we saw the portraits in an exhibit. The friend told me that the wealthiest Russians are the managers of restaurants and clothes stores who deal on the black market and trade through *blat*.

Our Friends

Although our Russian friends could not come to us, we could go to them. (We never had any real problems in doing so, although one of my friends said that, on the night after my first visit, his father, a lawyer, could not sleep because he expected the KGB). As I would leave the bedlam and coldness and rudeness of the streets and enter my friends' homes, I felt as though I were entering another world, one of warmth and generosity and kindness. They always fed me extremely well with large and tasty meals, never letting on what sacrifices it took to get the food. Once I offered to help make the meal but confessed that I didn't know how to. "That's okay, you don't need to," said my friend. "To make up for it, you eat very well."

My Russian friends had a special depth. They talked over disappointments and larger problems, listened to others' and my own, and were ready at a moment's notice to help out a friend, no matter what the sacrifice. We Americans felt that our friends had protected us from the cold world of Moscow.

One of my friends never took a music lesson but taught himself to play jazz by listening to songs on the radio, and now he is Russia's leading jazz musician. He has a total purpose in life: to bring jazz to Russia and to make a Russian contribution to it. To do so, he tours the Soviet Union constantly, choosing this grueling life over the easy one he could have playing schmaltzy music in Moscow.

Another friend, a twenty-eight-year old graduate student, thought—and did not shrink from telling me—that I had the habit of setting overly ambitious projects for myself, that I would begin feverishly, and soon abandon them in frustration with nothing accomplished. He thought I had potential but needed discipline. And that he had: he was the most organized person I have ever met, thriving in the face of obstacles—Russian living conditions compounded by intractable bureaucracies—

which would overwhelm and devour lesser persons. The evening before we departed, he gave me and one of my roommates a paternal farewell lecture, urging us to set intellectual goals and to work in spite of all obstacles to achieve them. If we forsake intellectual endeavor, he warned, our lives may seem satisfying, or fun or financially rewarding, but when we grow older we will recognize them as empty.

My teachers knew they could not become our friends outside the classroom, and perhaps to make up for that, they put themselves into their work inside the classroom. The core courses, those on Russian phonetics, conversation, and grammar, were the best I have ever had (and I have been to three of the best colleges in America that teach Russian). Our teachers not only felt the language's nuances, but knew how to articulate them. One of them told me that a teacher must always strive to improve, must never be self-satisfied. Although they were supposed to address us on the formal *vy*, several of our teachers switched to the informal *ty* when they got to know us.

In the homes of my friends I discovered that Russians live in two distinct, even opposite worlds—a public and a private one. If my experiences had been restricted to the public one my sojourn would have been unbearable. It was the personal, private world of Russia that redeemed my stay.

STEPHEN DEANE

Stephen Deane spent four months in the Soviet Union (September–December, 1979) after completing his studies in the Soviet Union Program at Harvard University.

FROM OUR READERS

February 16, 1980

To the Editor:

...I was most pleased...to read in this month's *Reporter* that the last issue you edited was no one-time accident but in fact heralds the birth of a *St. John's Review*. This is a venture which should succeed as well or better than the *Kenyon* or *Sewanee* Reviews of yore and serve as a splendid introduction to St. John's for that diminishing but still wide community of thoughtful citizens who still don't know what we're doing.

Let me confess, incidentally, that I was particularly and quite personally taken with two pieces in your issue—Fehl's reminiscences of Vienna in 1938 and your own "Letter from Budapest and Pécs." I am a survivor of that same dreadful time in Vienna and indeed was moved for general examinations (admission to, in my case, rather than graduation from, the Gymnasium) to the same all-Jewish school Fehl describes. My impressions of the place were of a generalized terror contained within the forms of propriety and rationality of a dimension which strikes me with dread forty-two years later. There was more laughter among the inmates of a Vichy French concentration camp that I experienced in 1940 than in the corridors of the Chajes Gymnasium.

In that connection your aside about the rapt attention of the Viennese audience to a performance of *Nathan der Weise* was most telling. If today's Viennese remember 1938 and after, it is in clandestine and secretive ways. The overt attitude to those days is best described by a Viennese folk expression, which incidentally long predates the twentieth century: "Das ist ja nicht mehr wahr (that isn't true any longer)," an expression with which all unpleasant memories may be dealt in the interest of contemporary *Gemütlichkeit*. Submersion is so complete that Vienna's best circulated yellow rag, the *Kronenzeitung*, can offer caricatures of Menachem Begin and of Austria's (Jewish) Chancellor Bruno Kreisky in the style of *Der Stürmer* without arousing commentary, let alone protestations....

BERNARD FLEISCHMANN
New York City

To the Editor:

In "Prometheus Unbound: Karl Marx on Human Freedom" (*The College*, January, 1980), Mr. Simpson speaks of a new freedom that Marx suggests but cannot detail in advance because history alone can reveal it. Marxism has no "schema," he tells us, but history will show its veracity and significance. We are justified, then, in judging Marxism by that history.

The century since Marx's time has shown "present suffering...(and) the depths of human bondage" (Mr. Simpson's words) in the Soviet Union. In the name of Marxism, the self-styled dictatorship of the proletariat has arrested and murdered millions; and it has deprived Russia of the liberties it gained in 1905, dismissing them as merely "bourgeois." Yet Mr. Simpson exercises the liberty enjoyed in America to praise "Marx's concept of human freedom" and to criticize our "society (for)... deny(ing) real freedom." He says: "Marx prizes highly...political freedoms," but I read differently the Communist Manifesto's call for "centralization of the means of communication...in the hands of the state." By insisting that historical action alone can really define the new social and political structure, Marx opens a Pandora's box of tyranny. Because many of the old Bolsheviks deemed historical action the progressive unfolding of dialectical materialism, they could say nothing when the "will of history" turned its terror on them.

Mr. Simpson says we could attain enormous productive capability "if we turned over our *present* factories and skills to production for rational human ends." But *who* is to determine those ends? Without answering that question, Mr. Simpson lacks justification to state:

> We are Prometheus, fully able to foresee a new order, but pinned to a system which denies us the realization of all that lies within reason's grasp.

The irrationality, inefficiency, and worker alienation that in Mr. Simpson's view characterize our economy are incomparably worse in the Soviet economy. When I lived in Moscow, I saw how poor Russians are (and how comparatively wealthy Westerners are) and how thoroughly alienated (and often drunk) Russian workers are—precisely because they own nothing and have no competitive incentive to work. Power, not supply and demand and price, determines who gets what: scarce items are low-priced, but high officials alone can obtain them.

Mr. Simpson says: "Our major single national effort. . . is the continual preparation for. . . nuclear warfare. And the target. . . is 'communism.' " That assertion, as well as the belittlement of our "bourgeois" freedom, reminds me of the propaganda I heard in the Soviet Union. The United States has nuclear arms not to wage war against the U.S.S.R. but to deter it from waging nuclear war against us. When the U.S. alone owned nuclear weapons, it did not use them against the U.S.S.R. According to General Haig, the U.S.S.R. worked feverishly to catch up to the U.S. in nuclear arms—and after it did so, it has continued at the same pace. The Chinese are no better: in the 1960's they castigated the Soviet Union for not putting nuclear power to political advantage and declared that nuclear war would result in Communist victory.

America has deep problems. Marxism, however, would not solve them, while it would take away our prosperity and freedom.

STEPHEN DEANE
Regional Studies—Soviet Union Program
Harvard University

Mr. Simpson replies:

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to Stephen Deane's critique of my "Prometheus" article. Perhaps in so doing I can clear up positions which were unclear to other readers as well, and even carry the argument one stage further. My purpose in the College lecture from which the article was taken was to track down Marx's concept of human freedom, as well as I could, and to look for relations to our contemporary experience. If there is any doubt about it, let me make clear now that I do not know of any society on earth today which exemplifies those freedoms Marx envisioned. I certainly did not intend an apology for the Soviet Union. The concepts Marx advanced do not stand or fall by the test of the Russian society, which has been twisted and distorted from the original intention of socialism into the horrors of Stalinism and all of its contemporary legacies. These are consequences of one specific history, not the least part of which is the initial fact that at the time of the revolution Russia was one of the countries least prepared to move into a socialist future. The first point, then, is that the Soviet Union is nothing like the free society Marx describes, and it is not useful to the discussion to bring it forward as a model for comparison with our own or other societies.

The question remains, however, whether the Soviet tyranny is an inevitable outcome of any attempt to achieve Marx's goals. It is commonly assumed, as Mr. Deane argues, that since history is proposed by Marx as the only forum in which political thought can advance—history is the arbiter—then an historical outcome must be accepted as the decisive verdict upon any political experiment. By this reasoning, Marx is held responsible for the Soviet Union, and the conclusion is drawn that socialism *leads to* the Stalinist tyrannies.

Now, of course, anyone who sees the *praxis* of history as the true vehicle of dialectic, must take every aspect of that dialectic very seriously. We cannot turn our backs upon historical consequence. But the motions of that intricate dialectic resist this sort of simplification: we do not get "A leads to B" in history any more than we do in the *Meno*. Certainly there is historical consequence, but it must be traced with more care. We cannot validly conclude, from that one dark train of events out of the October Revolution into the present Russian tyranny, anything in general about the inherent implications of Marx's concept of human freedom. "History" is a theater much too large to admit of easy inferences. Mankind is seeking freedom: we do not yet know where to look—we have not yet even got the question well formulated.

I invoked the concept of a society which directs its efforts to rational human ends, and I take it as a manifest that to a very large degree, ours does not. I did not address the question, which many people have quite properly raised, how those ends are to be defined. Behind the mask of reason, we suspect tyranny. Let me try to speak to that question now.

It is characteristic of our time to be disillusioned with democracy, but I do not share that disillusionment. We are plausibly skeptical of "government", which we have seen merge with the ubiquitous business corporation; we doubt the efficacy of a voter's choice between essentially equivalent options; we have watched public relations and communication technologies preempt the political forum. But is it not, nevertheless, historically premature to despair of democracy? New democratic forms emerge in the midst of the rigid frameworks which are no longer responsive to the popular mind. These initiatives should be welcomed: they are the living tradition of democracy, which necessarily has its true roots at the bottom, not at the top, of a political structure. Can the people be trusted to make valid judgements of the complex, technical issues of the modern world? For my part, I trust the people far more than I do the experts of the Pentagon, the National Security Council, or the ancillary universities. We have to ask again the classic questions: how can the heterogeneous collection of popular judgements take shape as a reasoned policy? Well, there is always something rough-and-ready about reason in its freshest form. We need that fresh, human reason. The old patterns of metered confrontation among nations have become stale; they are locked into arrays of madness. There are not just two ways open to the world, "capitalism" and "communism." We must be open to third possibilities. I lectured on Marx, and I urge the reading of his texts, as an opening to that larger conversation.

I should like to add a word about St. John's, because the College has been on my mind as I formulated these last thoughts. I think the New Program at St. John's was established to open a stale academic conversation to new possibilities. Our rejection of conventional scholarship was designed to invite new readers to the books, with new questions and new readings. We proposed a special kind of responsibility: responsibility to the conversation itself, a dialectic in which every voice was welcome to be heard. I think that was a deeply democratic impulse, and an intentional move in the direction of the rational democracy I have tried to suggest. How far does that conversation, which in this case begins at the seminar table, extend? I guess I am saying that it is inclusive, finally, of all honest human discourse. Much of that discourse in the world today has been deeply moved by Marx. I think we should recognize its community with our own questions, and be prepared to listen, and respond. We really may have something to learn, even about ourselves.

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