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Review

Unbecoming Conduct in the Reign of Tiberius According to Tacitus

David Appleby

> Besides, there is a great difference between doing what one does not approve of and feigning approval of what one does: the one is the part of a weak man, but the other belongs only to the habits of a valet.
>
> —De Tocqueville[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the few positive characteristics Tacitus attributed to Tiberius was an interest in public moderation: the proper, the decorous, and the fitting. A memorable example occurs in 22 AD, a year of peace abroad but anxiety in Rome about possible measures to curb rampant luxury. Aware of the princeps' old fashioned frugality, and in view of widespread neglect of the existing sumptuary law, the senate simply referred the matter to Tiberius. He had often remarked in private that attempting to limit these excessive appetites might not be worth the indecency *(indecorum)* of trying and failing, or succeeding through coercive measures and bringing great men into dishonor and ill-repute *(ignominiam et infamiam)*. He answered the senate in a letter decrying shameful luxury: vast houses and domestic retinues, rich furnishings and ornament, foppish attire for men, exotic gems for women, over-the-top banquets. All were symptoms of an illness of the soul, one that harms the state even as it ruins great families. "May decency *(pudor)* change us for the better—the poor because they must; the wealthy because they have had enough."[2]

The *Annales* make it clear that self-interest, ambition, and

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vice led Tiberius to present himself as an enemy of unbecoming conduct. By contrast, Tacitus's own concern for *decorum* was deep and sincere. The obligation to speak and behave with dignity and seemliness, with the attendant imperative to avoid unbecoming conduct, was a principle of his moral and social world-view. I shall argue that one of his greatest objections to the new regime under the Caesars was that it created a climate in which members of the senatorial order, Roman society's natural leaders, were induced to behave in disreputable ways. When the public arena in Rome became a sort of theater in which great men routinely presented themselves in ways that were false, unworthy, and ridiculous, not only individuals and their families were disgraced, but the whole class was placed in an unflattering light. In Tacitus's judgment, this was one of the most unforgiveable effects of the tyranny.

Why did Tacitus take such an interest in seemliness? Two main reasons present themselves, the first more obvious than the second. In the first place, Tacitus was keenly aware of style and its effect upon readers. As we shall see, an important aspect of decorous speech and behavior was paying attention to how others perceive one's words, gestures, and facial expression. Educated Romans knew that identifying what is seemly involves anticipating how one's interlocutors will perceive one's words and appearance. As annalist, historian, biographer and ethnographer, Tacitus represented reality in a highly personal and even idiosyncratic manner. But his words seem always to have been chosen for their likely impact upon readers. He created the effects that he sought through vivid description, asymmetrical construction, oblique narration, and epigrammatic brevity, disposing readers not only to behold the spectacle in a certain light, but to judge along with the author. Anticipated impact upon his reader seems to dictate word choice, sentence structure, and narrative strategy.

What he described—wars and mutinies, plots and murders, above all the gloomy sense of impending dread under the Julio-Claudians—is memorable in large part because of the way he described it.[3]

His arresting style tends to obscure the second reason for his interest in seemliness, namely his practical experience as magistrate and orator. The son of a senatorial family in southern Gaul or northern Italy, Tacitus belonged to a privileged social order whose members felt entitled to honor their ancestors by exercising authority and generally playing the leading roles in affairs of state. Along with this came an obligation to present oneself in word, gesture, and deed in conformity with one's social standing. With this innate sense of duty and appropriateness, he began an official career under Vespasian (r. 69-79), continued it during the difficult reign of Domitian (r. 81-96), and in 97 became consul under Nerva (r. 96-98). Under Trajan (r. 98-117), Tacitus delivered an important funeral oration, joined his friend Pliny the younger in a high profile prosecution, and served as proconsular governor of Asia. He was known as an impressive speaker, and around the year 100 he published a treatise on style and various sorts of oratory. In short, as man of action no less than as man of letters, Tacitus was attuned to appearance and how one is perceived.

2 DECORUM

Before investigating seemliness in the *Annales*, it is worth considering the idea in the tradition within which Tacitus worked and in the pages of one of his distinguished Roman predecessors. The noun *decorum* refers in the first place to the beauty or pleasing appearance of a thing or person; it applies secondarily to non-visual beauty, elegance, charm, and distinction; and then it opens onto other things that are appropriate, seemly, and fitting in ways that attract honor and approval. Like *to prepon,* its Greek counterpart, *decorum* is

hard to render consistently with one word in English because of its range of aesthetic, histrionic, forensic, and moral meanings. In the rhetorical tradition *to prepon* had been a principle since Aristotle and Theophrastus, and by the time of Quintilian (d. ca.100) *decorum* applied to invention, style, arrangement, and delivery. Quintilian owed an immediate debt to Cicero (106-43 BC) whose remark in *De oratore* that "by action the body talks, so it is all the more necessary to make it agree with the thought"[4] bears some relation to the subject at hand.

Cicero's expansive account of *decorum* as a moral concept in Book I of his *De officiis* helps us to approach the intellectual milieu of the *Annales*; for Tacitus, while not himself a Ciceronian, still wrote for, and belonged to, a class that understood itself as embodying the urbanity and standards of conduct that Cicero assumed as normative.[5] The discussion of what is honorable that occurs in Book I of *De officiis* includes a consideration of the four cardinal virtues as the source of all moral goodness, and hence the source of all that is honorable.[6] *Decorum* and the duties it entails spring from the broader virtue of moderation.[7]

Decorum consists in thinking, saying, and doing what one should, and in appearing to be as morally well ordered as one is. Since the decorous is neither deficient nor excessive, it reflects moderation, and this is understood not only with respect to particular objects or actions, but as the overall balance, order, and harmony of the soul, and as the beauty of the life of one who enjoys such moral equilibrium. Cicero presents *decorum* as the outward manifestation of the soul's integrity, the moral analogue of physical beauty.[8] *Decorum* is thus the perceptible aspect of moral goodness; every act of moral rectitude, whether in thought, word, or deed, reveals some element of propriety. Just as the beauty of the body reflects bodily health, *decorum* reflects moral virtue.[9]

Cicero also emphasizes the social aspect of *decorum:* the good person's speech, actions, and appearance make his moral virtue discernible to others; and the good person has modesty *(verecundia)*—that is, he shows consideration for the sensibilities of others. Much of the discussion of *decorum* in *De officiis* aims at instilling in the reader a greater awareness of the impression he makes upon others. Cicero explains that playwrights have just this aspect of *decorum* in mind when they craft words and actions to express the qualities of a particular role *(persona)*.[10] The audience knows the characters in the play only by what it can infer from their words, expressions, gestures, and deeds. As a sort of playwright outside the theater, nature assigns us the parts *(personae)* of consistency, moderation, and self-control, but also teaches us to have respect for others and to attend to how we appear to them. Once again comparing *decorum* to physical beauty, Cicero says that just as the order and symmetry of the limbs of a body attract the eye and please the viewer, *decorum*, which illuminates the whole life, is an order, consistency, and moderation of every word and deed that attracts the approval of the people among whom we live.[11]

According to Cicero, the duties associated with propriety are rooted in nature. This means, in the first instance, submitting the appetites to the control of reason, especially in one's pastimes, joking, and pleasures. One thereby avoids the vulgarity and sensuality of an uncontrolled, irrational, or bestial life, and instead lives with the self-control and steadiness appropriate to man's rational nature.[12] These are fundamental matters of decency, but are not the only duties associated with propriety.

Specifying these other duties is hard, not only because propriety is assessed with respect to circumstance, occasion, and context, but because it is also inextricably linked to one's personality and character. Cicero explains that nature clothes

each of us in two roles *(personae),* one common and universal, the other individual and proper to each. Our common human role provides us with our dignity as rational beings, our moral goodness, and thus our *decorum*; we must use our rationality to control our appetites and observe at least minimal standards of decency and consideration.[13]

The particular role that nature has assigned each one of us accounts for the other duties associated with propriety. Just as one person differs from another in bodily size and physical constitution, so too we find diversity of manner, temperament, and aptitude. While harmless in themselves, these differences have to be taken into account when determining what is fitting and proper for each person. Cicero explains that, within the limits set by universal human nature, the gentleman will attend carefully to his own particular nature in order to determine what is proper and seemly: "nos studia nostra nostrae naturae regula metiamur."[14]

On the other hand, just as nothing is so becoming as to find the way of life suited to one's own nature and then to follow it in a steadfast and consistent way, the inconsistency of a moral lightweight is highly indecorous.[15]

Decorum of the sort Cicero described stayed on the minds of educated Romans during the principate. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (d. 65), for example, pictured the happy life of the self-consistent man in terms reminiscent of Cicero's account.[16] Again, the correspondence of the younger Pliny shows that in its general outline Cicero's view of *decorum* was still influential during the lifetime of Tacitus. Although these letters adhere to a different formality than that of the philosophical manual or discourse that Cicero and Seneca had written, the elements of upper-class seemliness nevertheless appear frequently.[17]

3 *PRINCEPS* AS TONE-SETTER

Like Cicero, Tacitus was aware of *decorum* and its social di-

mension, and like him Tacitus accepted it as a principle of civilized conduct. But as moralist and political philosopher, Cicero concerned himself with action as it should be, with theory more than practice. As historian, Tacitus reported how people actually behaved, which in many cases fell far short of the norms and ideals of the theorist. Perhaps there had once been a time when prominent citizens had conformed to standards of decency and comportment rooted in nature and discovered by reason. What Tacitus saw in his own generation, and what he could learn of the reign of Tiberius, however, was that the princeps himself more and more became the axial pole of *decorum*; that is, the place that Cicero had attributed to nature and reason in determining the criteria of decorous behavior, Tacitus found, in practice, had been taken over by the princeps himself. This is not to say that Tacitus knew nothing of nature as norm, or of reason as the guide to understanding nature. Indeed, as we shall see, the men he praised had moral strength and good character consistent with, if not explicitly related to, natural law. But for many prominent Romans the preponderance of the first citizen eclipsed any view of a natural standard. For them it seemed more expedient to conform themselves to his perspective and his way of doing things than to an abstract ideal of natural virtue. The reason they used to determine their behavior was the prudence involved in first trying to discern the expectations of the princeps and then attuning themselves accordingly.

The princeps came to set the standard of decorous behavior because of the character of the regime. Force and political inequality lay at the root of the principate, but its day-to-day aspect was the tone set by the princeps himself. Augustus himself had established the pattern of effective autocracy tacitly juxtaposed with republican institutions and the semblance of liberty for the senatorial elite. He took the lead in matters

of public behavior, holding or declining certain magistracies and official posts, nominating friends as candidates for others. Sometimes setting the tone meant giving direct advice and instructions, but more often it involved modeling this or that behavior, enacting or showing how things were to be done. The poetry of Virgil and the histories of Livy reflect the classicizing and patriotic outlook of Augustus and his circle. So do buildings and statues like the *Ara Pacis* and the *Augustus of Prima Porta.*[18] Even Augustus's epitaph, which he composed for himself, has a calm tone, evokes a sense of its author's modesty, and presents an image of strength in service of the common good.[19]

Noble Romans accommodated themselves as best they could to the example or standard of the first man. As Tacitus puts it, "with political equality gone, everyone looked to the commands of the princeps."[20] They did this for various reasons. Tacitus is aware that people often unconsciously emulate their superiors, and sometimes this urge to get into line *(amor aemulandi)* is more effective than the threat of punishment in promoting conformity of mores and behavior.[21] Other people realized that the new social and political order presented opportunities for advancement or enrichment to those who could adapt properly. But apprehension and outright fear were more important incentives to conformity. Augustus had dealt harshly with his opponents in the civil war and afterwards, and from the outset it was evident that Tiberius was not a man to cross if one could avoid it.

But how was one to avoid crossing him? Conformity was bound to be difficult insofar as the standard to which people sought to conform kept shifting. A mutable standard of propriety was to some extent endemic to the new regime. Always in the principate there was disparity between appearance and reality, between the appearance of liberty of a republic restored by the first citizen and the fact of one man's hege-

mony.[22] The norm of behavior always tended to oscillate between the image of liberty and the reality of domination, because such oscillation reflected the nature of the regime itself. A princeps whose public character was affable, fair, and steady might minimize this oscillation and thereby make it easier for others to attune themselves. He would moderate his own speech and behavior in ways the leading men could decipher and respond to with as much dignity as the circumstances of the autocracy would allow. But a weaker princeps might not.

Whether Tacitus judged Augustus to be a better ruler, less tyrannous than Tiberius, is not clear. There are signs that he viewed the regime's founder with irony and skepticism.[23] But at least Augustus had presented a consistent figure and a steady face. This made it possible to live with the new order and its master. According to Tacitus, life was more difficult under Tiberius because of the dissonance between his public mask and his real thoughts and intentions.

Tacitus's censure and disapproval of Tiberius are open, though at first somewhat muted, for he mentions that the tyranny emerged in stages, as the man's character gradually showed itself. Before the death of Tiberius's son Drusus in 23, business had been conducted in the senate, where there was still some free discussion. The princeps himself had discouraged flattery, and tried to make sure that offices and magistracies went only to those whose birth, merit, and distinction made them worthy. Taxes and provincial administration were handled equitably. After 23, with Drusus out of the way, Sejanus, Tiberius's sinister lieutenant, gained greater influence, with the consequence that moderate policies were dropped, and Tiberius eventually withdrew from the city.[24] Another turning point came in 29 at the death of the Augusta, Tiberius's mother. Livia, who had been a match for her smooth and voluble second husband, Augustus, was also

equal to the secretiveness and dissimulation of her son. She had exercised a moderating influence upon Tiberius and Sejanus, but once she was dead, they openly took action against those they perceived to be enemies of the government.[25]

The depth of Tiberius's corruption may have become more apparent over the years, but all along he had been hard to deal with because he was cryptic and obscure, cruel and vindictive. Even before he assumed overall power, he was secretive and prone to dissemble. When Augustus grew old and ill, speculation as to his successor quickly brought Tiberius into consideration. He had the maturity and the military experience necessary to rule but suffered from the congenital arrogance of the Claudian family, and "many signs of a cruel character broke out, try though he might to control them." His time spent on Rhodes, which was called retirement but was in fact exile, had been filled with anger, deceit, and hidden passions.[26]

The first notable deed of Tiberius's principate was one of violence and deception. He ordered the murder of Postumus Agrippa, grandson of Augustus and possible rival for supreme power, and then pretended his father had commanded it.[27]

In his treatment of the senate and the magistrates Tiberius was also hard to read. Immediately after the death of Augustus, he acted "as though the republic still existed and as though he was doubtful about taking up command: even the edict by which he summoned the senators to assemble was issued in virtue of the tribunician power that he had accepted from Augustus. The words of the edict were few and very modest."[28] But in sharp contrast to the edict and his apparent concern for republicanism were his actions. He had armed guards at the court, soldiers in the forum, soldiers in the senate house; he sent letters to the army as a veteran leader would, and never showed hesitation except when he spoke

in the senate.[29] Tacitus reports that the main cause of Tiberius's fear was the thought that his nephew, Germanicus, who commanded a large army and was extremely popular at home, might prefer to have rule instead of just waiting for it. Also, Tiberius wanted to make it seem that he had been called and chosen by the state rather than forced on it through his mother's ambition in getting Augustus to adopt him. Tacitus adds that it later became known that Tiberius pretended to hesitate in order to ferret out the intentions of the senators, carefully remembering what he took to be their expressions of hostility so that he could eventually exact revenge.[30]

At times it seemed that Tiberius was reserved and cryptic because he suspected treachery. Certainly he had enemies, some open, others camouflaged. Germanicus, Agrippina, and their supporters he considered rivals, and mistrusted.[31] Augustus was said to have given Tiberius a list of men to watch.[32] In public or private, he was capable of receiving insult with apparent equanimity, but he did not forget a slight, storing up his anger even over a period of years.[33] Sejanus knew Tiberius's suspicious and credulous *(suspicionum et credendi temeritas)* character, and after the princeps' withdrawal to the island of Caprae in 28 he supplied information carefully selected to arouse and channel it.[34] People even wondered about the quality of the relationship between Tiberius and his mother, which looked amicable on the surface but which included unmistakable indications of bitterness.[35]

Misdirection was a tactic for Tiberius, as, for instance, in 16 when he showed favor and friendship to Marcus Scribonius Libo Drusus, who had been denounced privately for treasonous plotting. In private conversation with Libo, "Tiberius could have halted all his words and deeds, but he preferred to know them."[36] But in the sequel the utility of concealment was less apparent. Once Libo came to trial before the Senate,

he directed supplications to Tiberius who listened with a blank expression, and Tiberius read out the charges and names of the accusers in a moderate tone of voice that seemed neither to minimize nor exaggerate the charges.[37]

At other times, shame caused Tiberius to avoid the public gaze. Tacitus reports that Tiberius's son Drusus led a life of frivolity—theater and arena by day, banquets by night—pursuing the pleasures often sought by young men. His father, by contrast, kept to himself and led a joyless life of dark watchfulness and malevolent undertakings.[38] Tacitus suspects that Tiberius withdrew permanently from Rome in 26 not only because of the influence of Sejanus and an aversion to his mother, but to lead his vicious and licentious life in secret.[39]

Quite aside from their utility, however, opacity and concealment seemed to suit Tiberius. He prized dissimulation as his own greatest virtue, clinging to it all his life.[40] He projected his personal preference for secrecy onto the divine when in 15 he rejected a proposal to open the Sibylline books to seek guidance in responding to recent destructive flooding of the Tiber.[41] He habitually mingled jest and earnestness,[42] and routinely spoke in euphemisms.[43] Only shock or crisis provoked outbursts of frankness, and these could be dangerous, as when anger toward personal enemies caused lapses in his prudent moderation.[44] Even when advanced age and illness brought him close to death, Tiberius pretended *(simulans)* to be healthy, and Tacitus remarks that dissimulation *(dissimulatio)* was the last power to leave him.[45]

Although the speeches of Tiberius often carried a double meaning,[46] sometimes they were simply inscrutable. After the funeral of Augustus, his address to the senate was so uncertain and ambiguous that his intended meaning was impossible to understand.[47] Again, in 20, at the trial for treason, magic, and adultery of Lepida from the illustrious gens Aemilia,

Tiberius "mixed signs of anger and clemency," and intervened in the proceedings in ways that some considered non-autocratic, but others saw as prejudicial to the defendant. Lepida was condemned and exiled.[48]

Doubt often enshrouded the real thoughts and feelings of Tiberius, but it must have been apparent to all that he was watching. The more they looked to him for clues of his expectations, the more they were aware of being under scrutiny. He and his friends and informers attended to their words and actions, their gestures and appearances.

He watched the senators carefully, twisting their words and facial expressions into criminal significance, and storing them away in his memory, as was mentioned earlier.[49] Even at a distance Tiberius was informed not only about the actions of important men, but about their appearance and comportment. While Germanicus toured Egypt, word reached Tiberius of the manner of his dress and behavior, that it was disagreeably informal and Hellenic, comparable to that of Scipio Africanus while he was in Sicily.[50] Thus, finding themselves under scrutiny, those around him sought to make sense of Tiberius's thoughts and desires so as to conform themselves to his expectations.

4. VARIETIES OF CONFORMITY

People who came into contact with Tiberius behaved in ways that reflected not only the opacity of the princeps but also their own fear, ambition, corruption, and sometimes even moral strength. That is, in most—but not all—cases their words and comportment mirrored not a Ciceronian standard of nature and reason but their more or less accurate reading of how best to save themselves, or how best to profit in the prevailing climate. Here I shall survey the main varieties of conformity as Tacitus presents them.

Those who were most like Tiberius accommodated themselves best to him. Men like the astrologer Thrasyllus[51] un-

derstood him, and so were able to conform their behavior to his expectations. It is no accident that the two people Tacitus presents as most successfully attuning themselves to him were the villainous Lucius Aelius Sejanus and Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus. Sejanus was an equestrian whom Tiberius appointed commander of the Praetorian Guard and then came to depend upon to carry out his policies in the Senate, especially after retiring to the island of Capreae. To Sejanus alone Tiberius disclosed his secret designs in an unguarded way. Decent outwardly, inwardly Sejanus was consumed with lust for power.[52] He hounded the adherents of Agrippina in a series of treason trials, but his hope to marry into the imperial family came to nothing, and he was eventually purged for aiming at the principate itself. Ominously, it was Gaius, or Caligula as he was called, the grandson and terrible successor of Tiberius, who came to mirror the mood and even the words of Tiberius more closely than any other person Tacitus mentions.[53] His reign began with the murder of Tiberius.

Those who were not like Tiberius, or less like him, found life challenging. Most conformed in more or less indecorous and shameful ways. Some went beyond disgrace to the active commission of crimes. Some refused to conform and usually perished before their time. A few managed to serve and lead public careers worthy of their ancestors almost as though the free republic still existed. All experienced a public discourse that was "narrow and slippery under a princeps who feared liberty but hated flattery."[54]

From the outset many dishonored themselves by composing their appearance and words in false, and therefore indecorous, ways. When the news arrived in Rome that Augustus was dead and Tiberius in charge, "consuls, senators, and knights rushed headlong into servitude; the more noble were also more false and hasty, with expression carefully arranged

to appear neither happy at the death of the princeps nor sad at the accession, they mingled tears and joy, lament and flattery."[55]

People tried to read the meaning behind Tiberius's words, and then to articulate responses that mirrored well enough—but not too clearly—what the listener thought Tiberius was getting at. The results were always dishonorable, sometimes absurd, and occasionally dangerous.

In 14, after the funeral of Augustus, Tiberius ostentatiously refused the leading role. The senators, who were afraid to show that they saw he wanted to be asked and to be persuaded to accept power, poured out tearful prayers to him, reaching toward the gods, the statue of Augustus, Tiberius's knees. Declining to bear the whole burden of government, Tiberius expressed a willingness to accept whatever part was entrusted to him. Gaius Asinius Gallus then made the mistake of asking what part of the government Tiberius wished to be given. Tiberius registered his annoyance with a dark look and protracted silence, but then reiterated his preference to be excused altogether, and said he refused to pick and choose. Gallus tried to smooth over his blunder, saying that he had only tried to get Tiberius to acknowledge that rule could not really be divided at all. This and further flattery failed to allay Tiberius's irritation with Gallus, who was also the object of hostility for having married Tiberius's ex-wife, Vipsania.[56]

Flattery took the form of undeserved civil or military honors.[57] An ironic example occurred in 29 when, seeking a remedy in flattery *(remedium adulationis)* for the fear generated by the wave of treason trials, the senators voted to erect altars to Mercy and Friendship, the latter flanked by statues of Tiberius and Sejanus.[58]

Flattery often shaped elections, as in the year 21, when Tiberius recommended two men to the senate for consideration as governor of Africa, one a distinguished noble, the

other the uncle of Sejanus. It was assumed that the latter was the approved candidate. While both men begged to be excused, Sejanus's uncle was less convincing, and a chorus of flatterers urged him to accept.[59]

Flattery also led men beyond disgrace into active wrongdoing. In the year 22, the new consul, Decimus Haterius Agrippa, proposed death as the fitting punishment for the equestrian author of scurrilous verses about Tiberius's son, Drusus. Marcus Aemilius Lepidus countered by proposing a lesser sentence better proportioned to the offense. All but one of the senators, Gaius Rubellius Blandus, supported Haterius, and the equestrian was immediately put to death. Tiberius rebuked the senate, but with enough ambiguity not to preclude similar punishments in future. Lepidus and Blandus had been unable to prevent shameful adulation from becoming outright injustice.[60]

Although at first it seemed a means of attaining safety, flattery quickly became equivocal, for in an environment of corrupt mores, express servility could be dangerous by its presence as well as its absence.[61] This fact may have intensified the search for new strategies to protect the frightened, and new strategies of advancement for the ambitious.

Servitude rapidly assumed the colors of liberty. In the year 14, when Marcus Valerius Messalla Messallinus proposed in the senate that the oath of allegiance to the new princeps be repeated annually, Tiberius asked him to acknowledge that he had not put him up to that proposal. Messalla said that when it came to public business, he would express his own thoughts, no matter who took offense. The historian's terse judgment is that this was the only sort of flattery left.[62]

Again, in 22, Lucius Ennius, an equestrian, found himself before the senate charged with treason for melting down a silver statue of the princeps. In response to Tiberius's inter-

cession on behalf of the accused, Gaius Ateius Capito made a show of independence, urging that the senate's power of judgment ought not be diminished, and pointing out that the offense had serious public implications, even if Tiberius was willing to overlook the injury to himself personally. Tacitus remarks that Capito's behavior was all the more infamous because, as a civil and religious jurist of note, he dishonored these arts as well as himself.[63]

Shameful displays of independence became competitive. In 16, the senators Gaius Asinius Gallus and Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso disagreed over whether the senate should conduct business during the absence of Tiberius. Piso claimed the "speciem libertatis" by asserting that it would be worthy of the republic that senators and equestrians could continue their official work even in the absence of the princeps. Gallus answered that nothing would be more illustrious or worthy of the Roman people than to do business only in the presence and under the eyes of Caesar. Tiberius listened in silence to these undignified invocations of the dignity of the state. No action was taken.[64]

Unbecoming conduct grew worse. Just as the treacherous path of public discourse led great men to competitive adulatory assertions of liberty, so too did compliance and obsequiousness gradually degenerate into wickedness, as members of the aristocracy turned informer.[65]

A remarkable instance occurred in 16, when Firmius Catus, a senator eager for advancement, and Lucius Fulcinius Trio, a well-known prosecutor who hoped to increase his notoriety, brought Marcus Scribonius Libo Drusus to trial for conspiracy against the princeps. The charges were trumped up; Libo's consultations of astrologers and necromancers were inept and pathetic, not threatening. But Trio presented the matter as "res magna et atrox," and by the time the case came before the senate, Catus and Trio had been joined by

Fonteius Agrippa and Gaius Vibius Serenus. Libo anticipated the guilty verdict by taking his own life. His property went as reward to the accusers, along with the rank of extraordinary praetor to those of the senatorial order.[66]

Libo's posthumous condemnation triggered a flurry of sycophantic proposals and resolutions in the senate. Tacitus omits nothing: Cotta Messalinus moved that the image of Libo be barred from the funeral processions of his descendants; Cnaeus Cornelius Lentulus proposed that no Scribonianus should bear the cognomen of Drusus; Lucius Pomponius Flaccus suggested that days be set aside for public thanksgiving; Lucius Munatius Plancus, Gaius Asinius Gallus, Marcus Papius Mutilus and Lucius Apronius voted thank-offerings to Jupiter, Mars, and Concord, and they moved that 13 September—the date of Libo's death—should be a public holiday. Two astrologers were executed, and the senate ordered that the rest be expelled from Italy. The historian's explicit purpose in cataloguing all this is to make known how early the public disgrace began.[67]

Some of the doings of spies, informers and accusers were ludicrously outrageous. In 28, four senators hoping for advancement sought to please Sejanus by prosecuting an illustrious equestrian friend of Germanicus, Titius Sabinus, ostensibly on charges of treason, but really because of the enmity between Sejanus and Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus. Tacitus records the names of the four, and explains how one of them, Latinius Latiaris, lured Sabinus into his confidence and induced him to complain about Sejanus and Tiberius. To strengthen their case, the others hid between the roof and the ceiling with their ears pressed to holes and cracks while Latiaris conversed with Sabinus in the room below about recent hardships. Then in a letter to Tiberius, the four detailed their findings as well as their disgraceful *(dedecus)* ploy.

This was material better suited to the comedian or satirist than to the historian, but the unfortunate truth was that the main actors were among the most prominent members of the senatorial order. Sabinus was immediately condemned and put to death. Tacitus reports this event's chilling effect upon public life: fear emptied the roads and squares; conversation ceased even among friends; people eyed the very walls and ceiling with suspicion; it was assumed that Tiberius was tightening the noose on Agrippina and her son.[68]

Since they were entitled to claim a part of the property of those condemned for treason, accusers had strong incentive to file charges. The grotesque results went beyond injustice to impiety, as son accused father and brother sister.[69] The senate was filled with informers; friends turned against one another; no place, public or private, was safe for open conversation. It was like a plague in the city.[70]

Those foolish or honest enough to speak their minds were at risk, as Agrippina discovered. After the poisoning of Drusus, son of Tiberius, there was widespread but secret rejoicing at the prospect of one of Germanicus's sons eventually succeeding Tiberius. While the senate and people "concealed their joy with expressions of sorrow," Agrippina, widow of Germanicus, concealed her hope less effectively, and thereby brought down a quicker ruin, when Sejanus, who had planned the murder of Drusus and had imperial ambitions for himself, was able to point to Agrippina's hope and her popularity in order to intensify Livia's animosity toward the sons of Germanicus.[71] It seems likely that the brutal Sejanus would have targeted these boys whether or not their mother had disguised her thoughts more effectively. But according to the historian her failures to dissemble and conceal her true thoughts at least hastened *(adceleravere)* their destruction.

Another example of the high cost of open expression is the outspoken and independent-minded Lucius Calpurnius

Piso. He openly registered his disgust with the corruption and aggressive tactics of prosecutors, and was bold enough to bring charges against a protégée of Livia. Although he announced his withdrawal from public affairs and resolved to leave the city, he apparently did not leave, and a few years later was charged with treason. Piso's timely death, whether by suicide or natural causes, prevented the case from coming to court.[72]

In the year 25, the historian Aulus Cremutius Cordus faced the senate charged with treason for praising the assassins of Julius Caesar in his own *Annales*. Because his accusers were minions of Sejanus, and judging by the grim expression *(trux vultus)* of Tiberius, the outcome of the case was not in doubt. Knowing that death was near, Cremutius defended himself with dignity, calmly adducing examples from the Roman tradition of legitimate free expression. Cremutius was allowed to starve himself to death. The senate voted to have his books burned.[73]

Because Tacitus's *Annales* contain many examples of the danger of openness and candor, we suspect irony when he reports candor going unpunished. In the wake of Sejanus's fall, the backlash that engulfed his associates prompted most people to pretend they had not been his friends. But the equestrian Marcus Terentius was unapologetic. He had been the friend of Sejanus, who was himself the friend of Caesar; it was more fitting for an equestrian to obey than to challenge the policies of his superiors; and his friendship with Sejanus had ended when Tiberius's did. Terentius escaped punishment. His accusers suffered exile or execution. Tacitus cannot have missed the irony that the only person saved by telling the truth in a brave speech *(constantia orationis)* was an associate of Sejanus.[74]

Although he admired their refusal to accommodate themselves to the expectations and tone set by the autocrat, Tacitus

did not give his highest praise to those who courted death through outspoken opposition. Whether what bothered Tacitus about these men was the jarring quality of their extreme dissonance or their failure to benefit the state in a more sustained way, he did not say. But it is clear that he reserved his highest admiration for those who managed to have dignified and honorable public careers despite the princeps. Doing so under Tiberius was very difficult—but not impossible.

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus was praised as dignified and wise because he so often managed to reduce the harm done by flatterers, and because he possessed enough moderation to stay on working terms with Tiberius. His case even led Tacitus to wonder whether fate and chance of birth control men's destinies, or whether their own decisions allow some men to find a safe course between dangerous insubordination and ugly servility.[75] In 17, Marcus Furius Camillus, the proconsular governor of Africa, revived his family's ancient reputation for military glory *(decus militiae)* by defeating the Numidian leader Tacfarinus. Tiberius praised him in the senate, and he was voted an honorary triumph which he lived to enjoy, Tacitus comments, because of his modest behavior.[76] We read of some others who also lived in a manner worthy of their great family and died peacefully.[77]

In the *Annales,* references to distinguished men in the reign of Tiberius who managed to avoid the extremes of base conformity and perilous honesty but still have careers of public service are few and not presented in much detail. To see clearly portrayed the career and record of the sort of man Tacitus most admired, one may turn to his own father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola (40-93), about whom Tacitus composed a *Vita.*[78]

The son of a senator from Gallia Narbonensis (the modern Provence), he had an impressive administrative and military career. His extensive military campaigns in Britain

occurred during the reign of the tyrannical Domitian (81-96), and Tacitus admired his ability to distinguish himself on behalf of the state without incurring the lethal wrath of the princeps.[79] When confronting the notoriously hot-headed Domitian in person, Agricola softened him with his prudence and moderation, and refrained from seeking renown and a swift end by open defiance and the useless assertion of liberty.[80] "Let those who habitually admire disobedience know that even under bad rulers there are great men, and that a decent regard for authority, if backed by hard work and military toughness, is even more praiseworthy than the death-seeking perilous course, of no use to the state, through which some became famous."[81] In short, Tacitus praised Agricola for his noble public service under difficult circumstances. Avoiding both craven compliance and ostentatious martyrdom, Agricola played his part with a seemliness worthy of his forebears. He might have lived longer but could not have lived better.[82]

5. CONCLUSION

With few exceptions, then, the Tiberian books of the *Annales* are as somber as the reign they chronicle. Tacitus was aware of this, and expressed regret over the tedious character of the ills he catalogued,[83] and in general over the narrow and inglorious scope of his project *(in arto et ingloriosus labor)*.[84] The times he chronicled were infected and dirty with servility *(infecta et adulatione sordida)*. But the historian had a moral purpose, to record the virtue of those who had measured up, and the disgrace of those who had fallen so short of the dignity of their family and order. The wicked might be deterred by the certainty of posthumous infamy.[85] Even when the books of historians are burned, it is folly to imagine that the power of today can snuff out the memory of the future. Quite the reverse, for repressed thought grows in prestige, and conquerors, together with those who behave as brutally as con-

querors, only achieve dishonor *(dedecus)* for themselves and renown for their victims.[86]

Besides its moral aim, Tacitus mentioned one other value of the work. Admitting that the dossier of minor events centered on the princeps makes tedious reading, Tacitus insisted that such a history is useful for examining "matters that seem trivial at first glance, from which the movements of great things often arise."[87] Here, the modern reader might anticipate a reference to patterns of group behavior that set in motion impersonal and potentially disruptive social forces. Persistent dishonorable behavior of the leading men might bring their entire order into disrepute. In turn, questions about the possible disjunction between reality and appearance in the leading order could easily provoke tremors of doubt about social hierarchy. In such a scenario, *decorum* would be not only a matter of the self-respect of a few score senators, it would also ultimately be linked to something elemental and tectonic in Roman society itself. Whether Tacitus thought along these lines is not clear. But he wrote that, since the balanced and mixed form of government is seldom found in practice, and is short-lived even when it is found, the prudent man will familiarize himself with the leading actors in whatever form of government happens to prevail currently: the rule of the best men, of the many, or, as in Tacitus's time, of the autocrat. For most people, the best way to learn how to behave effectively and honorably is to study the experience of others.[88]

Half a century ago Ronald Syme remarked that as "a form of government the principate was essentially equivocal, and the *nobilitas* was called to play a false role therein, forfeiting power but ostensibly retaining honour and prestige."[89] False the part might have been, but at least under a morally and psychologically steady princeps one could play it with some dignity. As de Tocqueville saw, weakness might compel one

to play a false part, but one who feigns approval of that false part is truly base. Under Tiberius, however, the quest for security or advancement led men to guess at, and conform to, his desires and expectations. They gradually attuned themselves to a standard far removed from any *persona* nature might assign or reason discern. It was Tacitus's somber genius to recognize that the danger of such attunement was that a man might become the person he pretended to be, thereby confirming the contemptuous judgment of Tiberius himself that the senators were "men fit to be slaves."[90]

NOTES

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 246. For their helpful comments on drafts of this essay, I am grateful to Bob Haynie, John Goyette, and Meghan Parker. I dedicate the article to Mark Morford, my teacher and friend.

2. *Cornelii Taciti Annalium ab excessu divi Augusti libri,* ed. C. D. Fisher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), 119-120. (Hereafter abbreviated *Annales*.) For comments on Tacitus's views within the context of Roman thought about luxury, see Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67-70. See also *Annales*, 92-95 for Tiberius's statement about decorous and moderate public mourning.

3. As Ronald Syme put it, "men and dynasties pass, but style abides." Ronald Syme, *Tacitus,* 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), Vol. 2, 624. Still worthwhile for understanding Tacitus's literary strategies are Einar Löfstedt, "On the Style of Tacitus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 38 (1948): 1-8, and Uwe Rademacher, *Die Bildkunst des Tacitus* (Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 1975). Francesca Santoro L'Hoir, *Tragedy, Rhetoric, and the Historiography of Tacitus'* Annales (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) draws attention to the influence of Greek drama upon Tacitus.

4. Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 349 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1942), 178: "Est enim actio quasi sermo corporis, quo magis menti congruens esse debet."

5. That Tacitus wrote for "elite males of senatorial and equestrian status," is demonstrated in S. H. Rutledge, "Trajan and Tacitus' Audience: Reader Reception of *Annals* 1-2," *Ramus* 27.1 (1998): 141.

6. Cicero's view of decorum occupies a place within a longer moral tradition that reached back at least as far as Panaetius of Rhodes (second century BC), whose own treatise, *On Duty*, was a main source for Cicero's *De officiis*. See the editorial introduction to *Cicero: On Duties,* ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), xix-xxi.

7. Cicero, *De officiis*, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 30 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1913), 182.

8. Cicero, *De officiis,* 14-16.

9. Cicero, *De officiis,* 98.

10. Cicero, *De officiis,* 97; see also Cicero, *De oratore*, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 348 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1942), 378, for another example of the convergence of theatrical and oratorical *decorum*.

11. Cicero, *De officiis,* 100.

12. Cicero, *De officiis,* 102-108. Still illuminating for a discussion of Cicero's place within the history of doctrines of natural law is Felix Flückiger, *Geschichte des Naturrechtes: Altertum und Frühmittelalter* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1954), 221-238.

13. Cicero, *De officiis,* 108.

14. "We may judge our activities by the measure of our own nature." Cicero, *De officiis,* 112. In connection with discerning what is right for oneself, Cicero mentions two more *personae* that we must play, one imposed by chance or circumstance, the other a matter of our own choice. See *De officiis,* 116-118; and for discussion see Christopher Gill, "Personhood and Personality: The Four-Personae Theory in Cicero, *De Officiis* 1," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6 (1988): 169-199.

15. Cicero, *De officiis,* 122 and 126-128.

16. Seneca, Letter 120 in *Epistola,* trans. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 77 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1925), 386 and 388. On this passage within a larger context see Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 163. See also Seneca, *De constantia sapientis,* Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 214 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1928), 102 and 104.

17. Pliny praises those who manifest *constantia*, *dignitas*, *verecundia*, or *decor* in word, deed and appearance; his disapproval attaches to their opposites. For a careful study of the letters see Stanley Hoffer, *The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1999).

18. See Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

19. See *Res gestae divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus*, ed. P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 34-36.

20. Tacitus, *Annales,* 3: "omnes exuta aequalitate iussa principis aspectare."

21. Tacitus, *Annales,* 121: "obsequium inde in principem et aemulandi amor validior quam poena ex legibus et metus."

22. Two examples from the reign of Tiberius should suffice to illustrate a characteristic that Tacitus attributes to the regime as a whole. When Tiberius speaks of free elections open to men of talent, Tacitus (*Annales,* 47) comments: "speciosa verbis, re inania aut subdola, quantoque maiore libertatis imagine tegebantur, tanto eruptura ad infensius servitium" ("things attractive in speech, but in fact meaningless or deceptive, and the more they were represented in the figure of freedom, the more they were preparing to break out into more dangerous subjection"). In a different context, Tacitus remarks (*Annales,* 122): "Sed Tiberius, vim principatus sibi firmans, imaginem antiquitatis senatui praebebat postulata provinciarum ad disquisitionem patrum mittendo." ("But Tiberius, while establishing the power of the principate in himself, was keeping up the image of the old senate by sending the demands of the provinces to be dealt with by the senators.")

23. For evidence and discussion see Syme, *Tacitus,* Vol. 1, 397-416.

24. Tacitus, *Annales,* 135-136. Note the turning point that occurs with the words "Tiberio mutati in deterius principatus initium ille annus attulit" ("that year brought for Tiberius the beginning of the principate's change for the worse") and "donec morte Drusi verterentur" ("until things changed with the death of Drusus").

25. Tacitus, *Annales,* 177: "Ceterum ex eo praerupta iam et urgens dominatio" ("But from that point on there was precipitate and acute despotism"). For another statement of the gradual disclosure of Tiberius's real character, see *Annales,* 211.

26. Tacitus, *Annales,* 3: "sed vetere atque insita Claudiae familiae super-

bia, multaque indicia saevitiae, quamquam premantur, erumpere. . . ; ne iis quidem annis quibus Rhodi specie secessus exul egerit aliud quam iram et simulationem et secretas libidines meditatum" ("but the old and innate arrogance of the Claudian family, together with many indications of cruelness, although repressed, burst forth. . . ; not even during the years he passed in exile on Rhodes under the cover of retirement was he meditating anything but anger and dissimulation and concealed lust"). Even Augustus acknowledged objectionable irregularities in Tiberius's deportment, dress, and habits; see *Annales,* 8: "Etenim Augustus paucis ante annis, cum Tiberio tribuniciam potestatem a patribus rursum postularet, quamquam honora oratione, quaedam de habitu cultuque et institutis eius ieceret quae velut excusando exprobraret." ("Even Augustus a few years earlier, when he was once again requesting from the senators the tribunician power for Tiberius, although speaking approvingly, let fall certain indications about his attitude, dress, and manners of which he disapproved, even though he was excusing them.")

27. Tacitus, *Annales,* 4: "Nihil de ea re Tiberius apud senatum disseruit: patris iussa simulabat." ("Tiberius discussed nothing of this with the senate: he pretended it was the father's command.") Again, for the murder of Sempronius Graccus in 14 Tiberius tried to shift blame from himself onto the proconsul of Africa. See *Annales,* 31: "Quidam non Roma eos milites, sed ab L. Asprenate pro consule Africae missos tradidere auctore Tiberio, qui famam caedis posse in Asprenatem verti frustra speraverat." ("Some have said that these soldiers were not sent from Rome, but by L. Asprenas, proconsul of Africa, at the urging of Tiberius, who had hoped in vain that the blame for the murder could be pinned on Asprenas.")

28. Tacitus, *Annales,* 5: ". . . tamquam vetere re publica et ambiguus imperandi: ne edictum quidem, quo patres in curiam vocabat, nisi tribuniciae potestatis praescriptione posuit sub Augusto acceptae. Verba edicti fuere pauca et sensu permodesto."

29. Tacitus, *Annales,* 5: "nusquam cunctabundus nisi cum in senatu loqueretur" ("never hesitant except when he was speaking in the senate").

30. Tacitus, *Annales,* 5: "Postea cognitum est ad introspiciendas etiam procerum voluntates inductam dubitationem: nam verba vultus in crimen detorquens recondebat." ("Afterwards it was recognized that the hesitation was also put on in order to observe the intentions of the leaders: for, twisting a look, he would store up insults.")

31. For example, Tacitus, *Annales,* 36 and 40-41.

32. Tacitus, *Annales,* 10.

33. Tacitus, *Annales,* 144, in relation to the slight of Lucius Calpurnius Piso, several years earlier: "Quae in praesens Tiberius civiliter habuit: sed in animo revolvente iras, etiam si impetus offensionis languerat, memoria valebat." ("And at the time, Tiberius took these things courteously: but in his mind, which ruminated over resentments, the memory was intense, even if its initial force had dissipated.")

34. Tacitus, *Annales,* 170.

35. Tacitus, *Annales,* 125.

36. Tacitus, *Annales,* 60: "Atque interim Libonem ornat praetura, convictibus adhibet, non vultu alienatus, non verbis commotior (adeo iram condiderat); cunctaque eius dicta factaque, cum prohibere posset, scire malebat." ("And meanwhile he granted Libo the praetorship, invited him often to parties, neither unfriendly in his appearance nor excited in speech [so completely he had concealed his anger]; and Tiberius could have halted all his words and deeds, but he preferred to know them.")

37. Tacitus, *Annales,* 60: "Mox libellos et auctores recitat Caesar ita moderans ne lenire neve asperare criminia videretur." ("Next Caesar read out the complaints and the accusors, controlling himself so that he seemed neither to soften nor harshen the charges.")

38. Tacitus, *Annales,* 112: "Solus et nullis voluptatibus avocatus maestam vigilantiam et malas curas exerceret." ("Alone and withdrawn from all pleasures he was engaged in gloomy vigilance and wicked plans.")

39. Tacitus, *Annales,* 165 and 170.

40. *Annales,* 173: "Nullam aeque Tiberius, ut rebatur, ex virtutibus suis quam dissimulationem diligebat: eo aegrius accepit recludi quae premeret." ("Tiberius, so he thought, liked none of his virtues as much as dissimulation: all the more angrily, then, he took the disclosing of the things he concealed.")

41. Tacitus, *Annales,* 44: "Renuit Tiberius, perinde divina humanaque obtegens." ("Tiberius refused, thus keeping hidden both things divine and things human.")

42. Tacitus, *Annales,* 181: "Tiberius tamen, ludibria seriis permiscere solitus." ("Tiberius, however, customarily mixed jests with serious matters.")

43. Tacitus, *Annales,* 143: "Proprium id Tiberio fuit scelera nuper reperta priscis verbis obtegere." ("It was characteristic of Tiberius to cover over recently invented crimes with long venerated formulas.")

44. Tacitus, *Annales,* 15: "Haec audita quamquam abstrusum et tristissima

quaeque maxime occultantem Tiberium perpulere." ("These things coming to his attention impressed him deeply, although he remained reserved and kept secret everything that was very sorrowful."); see also *Annales,* 44, where Tiberius gets angry enough to break his customary taciturnity, and *Annales,* 128: "prudens moderandi, si propria ira non impelleretur" ("skilled at observing moderation, if his own anger was not incited").

45. Tacitus, *Annales,* 208: "in patientia firmitudinem simulans" ("in suffering simulating good health") and 210: "Iam Tiberium corpus, iam vires, nondum dissimulatio deserebat." (Now his body was forsaking Tiberius, now his strength, but not yet the power of dissimulation.")

46. Tacitus, *Annales,* 30: "magis in speciem verbis adornata quam ut penitus sentire crederetur" ("more embellished with words for show than so that he might be believed to feel it in his inmost heart").

47. Tacitus, *Annales,* 9: "Plus in oratione tali dignitatis quam fidei erat; Tiberioque etiam in rebus quas non occuleret, seu natura sive adsuetudine, suspensa semper et obscura verba: tunc vero nitenti ut sensus suos penitus abderet, in incertum et ambiguum magis implicabantur." ("There was more grandeur in this sort of speech than credibility; either by nature or by custom, halting and unintelligible language was Tiberius's style even in things he was not trying to hide: but then, when he was striving to conceal his meaning entirely, it got even more wrapped up in uncertainty and obscurity.")

48. Tacitus, *Annales,*103: "Haud facile quis dispexerit illa in cognitione mentem principis: adeo vertit ac miscuit irae et clementiae signa." ("It was not easy for anyone to discern the mind of the princeps at this trial: so much did he interchange and mingle the signs of anger and clemency.") Also "Quod alii civile rebantur . . . quidam ad saevitiam trahebant." ("What some thought considerate . . . others took for cruelty.")

49. See note 30.

50. Tacitus, *Annales,* 78: "Tiberius cultu habituque eius lenibus verbis perstricto . . . increpuit." ("Tiberius remonstrated a bit in mild terms about his bearing and attire.")

51. Tacitus, *Annales,* 192. Although Tiberius believed Thrasyllus was a true oracle, Tacitus presents his real skill as that of reading Tiberius.

52. Tacitus, *Annales,* 132: "Mox Tiberium variis artibus devinxit adeo ut obscurum adversum alios sibi uni incautum intectumque efficeret." ("Soon he subdued Tiberius by various means, so much so that he made him—so covert toward others—open and sincere with himself alone.")

Also, "palam compositus pudor, intus summa apiscendi libido" ("outwardly all propriety, inwardly the greatest lust for acquisition").

53. Tacitus, *Annales,* 192: "Qualem diem Tiberius induisset, pari habitu, haud multum distantibus verbis." ("Whatever humor Tiberius put on, his attitude was the same, and his speech not very different"). See also *Annales,* 207 for the observation that Gaius had learned dissimulation through contact with Tiberius.

54. Tacitus, *Annales,* 91: "Angusta et lubrica oratio sub principe qui libertatem metuebat adulationem oderat."

55. Tacitus, *Annales,* 5: "Ruere in servitium consules, patres, eques. quanto quis inlustrior, tanto magis falsi ac festinantes, vultuque composito ne laeti excessu principis neu tristiores primordio, lacrimas gaudium, questus adulationem miscebant." For another example of false mourning, see the public response to the death of Tiberius's son, Drusus, in the year 23, *Annales,* 138-139: "Senatus populusque habitum ac voces dolentum simulatione magis quam libens induebat, domumque Germanici revirescere occulti laetabantur." ("The senate and the people put on the attitude and the tone of mourners insincerely rather than willingly, and they rejoiced secretly that the house of Germanicus was reviving.")

56. Tacitus, *Annales,* 9-10.

57. Tacitus, *Annales,* 116: "Dolabella Cornelius dum antire ceteros parat absurdam in adulationem progressus." ("Dolabella Cornelius, while trying to outdo the others, went forward with a ludicrous bit of flattery.") Quintius Haterius gained infamy in 22 (*Annales,* 122) through a "most disgustingly servile" proposal that the senate's resolution honoring Drusus should be recorded in gold letters. The same Haterius had narrowly escaped death in 14 (*Annales,* 10) when, shamefully groveling, he accidentally tackled Tiberius. In 34 (*Annales,* 195), the senate voted thanks to Tiberius for allowing Agrippina to die in exile instead of having her strangled.

58. Tacitus, *Annales,* 175.

59. Tacitus, *Annales,* 111.

60. Tacitus, *Annales,* 117-118.

61. Tacitus, *Annales,* 142: "[adulatio], quae moribus corruptis perinde anceps, si nulla et ubi nimia est" ("flattery, which, when mores have been ruined, is just as dangerous when there is none and when there is too much").

62. Tacitus, *Annales,* 8: "Ea sola species adulandi supererat."

63. Tacitus, *Annales,* 128-129.

64. Tacitus, *Annales,* 64. Tacitus presents Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso as standing up to Tiberius at *Annales,* 44, not so much because of republican sentiments as from a sense of his own worthiness to rule. That insubordination ran in the family; see *Annales,* 69. As for Gallus, Tacitus records another public disagreement with Tiberius that, perhaps inadvertently, penetrated to the very heart of rule (*Annales,* 64): "Eam sententiam altius penetrare et arcana imperii temptari." ("This motion penetrated more deeply and made an attempt at the secrets of the imperium.") Tiberius, however, managed to turn this to his own advantage.

65. Tacitus, *Annales,* 126: "Paulatim dehinc ab indecoris ad infesta transgrediebantur." ("After this they gradually passed over from shameful deeds to outrageous ones.")

66. Tacitus, *Annales,* 60-61.

67. Tacitus, *Annales,* 62: "Quorum auctoritates adulationesque rettuli ut sciretur vetus id in re publica malum." ("I have reported the motions and the flatteries of these men so that this old evil in the state might be recognized.")

68. Tacitus, *Annales,* 171-173.

69. Tacitus, *Annales,* 147 and 149. See also *Annales,* 149, where it emerges that even the property of those who anticipate a guilty verdict by suicide is subject to confiscation and division among the accusers. Also at *Annales,* 170, there is an accusation within an extended family.

70. Tacitus, *Annales,* 184.

71. Tacitus, *Annales,* 138-139; see note 55 above, which comments on the hypocrisy of the many. The rest of this chapter discusses Sejanus's effort to magnify Livia's hatred. In another instance during the year 32, Tacitus records that a mother was condemned and executed for weeping for her executed son (*Annales,* 186).

72. Tacitus, *Annales,* 144.

73. Tacitus, *Annales,* 151-152.

74. Tacitus, *Annales,* 185-186.

75. Tacitus, *Annales,* 143-144: "Hunc ego Lepidum temporibus illis gravem et sapientem virum fuisse comperior: nam pleraque ab saevis adulationibus aliorum in melius flexit. neque tamen temperamenti egebat, cum aequabili auctoritate et gratia apud Tiberium viguerit. unde dubitare cogor fato et sorte nascendi, ut cetera, ita principium inclinatio in hos,

offensio in illos, an sit aliquid in nostris consiliis liceatque inter abruptum contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter ambitione ac periculis vacuum." ("I am convinced that this Lepidus was a serious and wise man for those times: for he turned very many things arising from the cruel flatteries of others to better effect. Nor did he lack moderation, since he retained steady influence and esteem with Tiberius. Hence I am compelled to doubt whether, as with other things, the favor of leading men toward some and their disfavor toward others is from the fate and chance of birth, or whether it is something within our own purvue, and one has the freedom to pursue a course between severe autonomy and base servility that is also free from dangers."). His obituary in the year 34 (see *Annales,* 196), praises his moderation and wisdom, presenting him as a worthy member of a family rich in good citizens ("genus fecundum bonorum civium").

76. Tacitus, *Annales,* 74: "Quod Camillo ob modestiam vitae impune fuit." ("And this was safe for Camillus because of his unassuming conduct in life.")

77. Tacitus, *Annales,* 167, mentions Marcus Asinius Agrippa, a man "claris maioribus quam vetustis vitaque non degener" ("with distinguished rather than ancient ancestors, and not ignoble in his way of life"), who died in 27.

78. Tacitus, *Cornelii Taciti de vita Iulii Agricolae liber* (hereafter abbreviated as *De vita Agricolae*), ed. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Ogilvie, in *Cornelii Taciti Opera Minora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

79. Tacitus, *De vita Agricolae,* 29: "Ceterum uti militare nomen, grave inter otiosos, aliis virtutibus temperaret, tranquillitatem atque otium penitus hausit, cultu modicus, sermone facilis, uno aut altero amicorum comitatus, adeo ut plerique, quibus magnos viros per ambitionem aestimare mos est, viso aspectoque Agricola quaererent famam, pauci interpretarentur." ("Moreover, to moderate his military renown—which is imposing for civilians—with other virtues, he yielded completely to tranquility and leisure, dressing simply, conversing affably, accompanied by just one or two friends, so much so that most people, whose custom is to judge great men by their ostentation, having seen Agricola and scrutinized him, would wonder about his good repute, but few could comprehend it.")

80. Tacitus, *De vita Agricolae,* 30: "Domitiani vero natura praeceps in iram, et quo obscurior, eo inrevocabilior, moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia neque inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat." ("Now Domitian's nature was inclined to

anger—and the more disguised, the more implacable—nevertheless it was mollified by the guidance and judgment of Agricola, because he did not provoke public opinion or fate by arrogance and empty displays of personal liberty.")

81. Tacitus, *De vita Agricolae,* 30: "Sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt."

82. Tacitus, *De vita Agricolae,* 31: "Et ipse quidem, quamquam medio in spatio integrae aetatis ereptus, quantum ad gloriam, longissimum aevum peregit. Quippe et vera bona, quae in virtutibus sita sunt, impleverat, et consulari ac triumphalibus ornamentis praedito quid aliud adstruere fortuna poterat?" ("And he indeed, although snatched away at the midpoint of a complete life, he completed the longest possible course of life in regard to honor. Since, in fact, he had acquired the real goods which depend on virtues, what else could fortune add to someone who had received the distinctions of the consulship and several military triumphs?")

83. Tacitus, *Annales,* 185.

84. Tacitus, *Annales,* 149-150.

85. Tacitus, *Annales,* 126.

86. Tacitus, *Annales,* 152: "Quo magis socordiam eorum inridere libet qui praesenti potentia credunt extingui posse etiam sequentis aevi memoriam. nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere." ("One is disposed to laugh all the more at the folly of those who believe that, using their present power, they can extinguish the memory of the following generation. For on the contrary, when natural superiority is penalized, its influence flares up, and foreign kings or those who have acted with the same sort of cruelty have generated nothing but dishonor for themselves and renown for the others.")

87. Tacitus, *Annales,* 150: "illa primo aspectu levia ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur."

88. Tacitus, *Annales,*150.

89. Syme, *Tacitus,* Vol. 2, 573.

90. Tacitus, *Annales,* 126: "homines ad servitutem paratos."

Dionysus: The Therapeutic Mask

Richard B. Carter

Part I
Myths in General and the Myth of Dionysus in Particular

One of the best accounts of the essence of myth occurs in Jacob Klein's unpublished explanation of Aristotle's concept of coming-to-be, or generation. In relation to Nature's great cycles—the seasons, birth and death, and the like—Klein writes:

> The old myths tell this story over and over again. In fact, genesis is the very soul of any myth. To understand the world, the story of its genesis has to be told. To understand the gods, the study of their genesis has to be told. Cosmogony and Theogony are the primary subjects of any myth. To understand properly any event in human life, or character of a people or a city, this event and this character has always to be related, it seems, to its mythical origins. To tell the myth of something means to tell how this something came to be. An enterprise of this kind does not make much sense unless one relates everything ultimately to beginnings, which make any genesis possible. These are precisely the mythical origins. They contain, of necessity, these two elements: the Male and the Female. And however distant the sobriety of Aristotle is from the exuberance of those ancient tales, still the same aspect of the world as a chain or as cycles of generation dominates his thought.[1]

In accordance with Klein's account, I intend to uncover the thing itself of which the myths tell the origins, keeping in

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mind that the Greek word for the plot of any story or play was the word *mythos*.

The principal mythical roles of Dionysus are these:[2] He is the patron deity of the theater and the god of drunken revel. He is also the god of manic possession of women, who under his influence, butchered baby animals and their own infants while suckling the young of deer and lions, wore poisonous snakes around their waists under their clothing to prevent men from raping them while they lay senseless in the wake of their mad mountain revels. He was also known as *dendrites*—tree-like—and indeed we find representations of him as a post with a mask tied to it. In a different key, one ancient source tells us that Dionysus was identical with Hades, claiming that Dionysus is both the god of the dead and the god in whose honor processions of drunken revelers carry huge leather phalluses and sing filthy songs.[3]

Comparing the various collections of myths, we find eight distinct elements that describe the conception, birth, death, resurrection, and subsequent deeds of Dionysus.

> 1. He was the child of Zeus and the mortal Semele, a princess of the royal house of Thebes. Semele was destroyed when she looked at Zeus in his full glory, and, as she was being consumed in the flames, Zeus rescued the fetus from his mother's womb and inserted it into his own leg, where the child was nurtured and came to term. According to this myth, Dionysus is thus *twice-born*—once from the womb of his mortal mother, Semele, and again from the leg of his divine father, Zeus.
> 2. After Dionysus was born the second time, Zeus's jealous wife, Hera, set Titans upon the newborn babe, who tore it into countless fragments. The pieces were subsequently gathered together,

reassembled, and resuscitated by the Titan, Rhea, the mother of the newer gods.

3. Dionysus was then reared on Mt. Nysa by nymphs, among whom were three of special note: Erato, Bromie, and Bacche. He cultivated wine there, and then he subsequently traveled around the world teaching people how to plant vines and make wine. When people opposed his missionary efforts, his punishments were ghastly—for instance, he flayed some alive. For a period during these travels he was driven mad by the ever-jealous Hera, but he then regained his sanity.

4. Known as Bromius after the nymph Bromie who raised him on Mount Nysa, he led a large band of women through Asia and around the Mediterranean basin spreading vine-culture, wine-making, and wine-drinking. His attendants then were called Bacchae after his nurse-nymph, Bacche. Lycurgus, the king of Edonia, resisted the proselytizing of Dionysus. They fought, and the king drove Dionysus into the sea. Lycurgus then killed many of the Bacchae with an ox-goad. The vengeful Dionysus drove Lycurgus mad, so that he mistook his son for a grapevine, killed him with a pruning knife, and then pruned off his ears and nose. Lycurgus himself was later torn apart by wild horses.

5. Dionysus eventually made his way to his mother's city, Thebes. There, King Pentheus, his uncle, rejected him. For this insult, he was torn limb from limb by the Bacchae. His head was ripped from his body his own mother, Agave, who had joined with nearly all the Theban women in

following Dionysus into the mountains.
6. When women rejected the worship of Dionysus, their punishment was to be driven into delirium, so that they would tear their own nursing children limb from limb. Sometimes they would even devour the dismembered corpses, not recognizing the parts as belonging to their own infants.
7. One myth tells us that Dionysus married Ariadne of Crete after she had been abandoned by Theseus of Athens.
8. Other women who rejected his worship seem to have been punished by being made to kill and devour their own babies; but, when they repented, and when their menfolk and their kings accepted Dionysian worship, these women joined his joyful band of singers and dancers who continued to rend asunder fully grown lions and oxen and deer in the mountains where they held their revels. They are sometimes pictured as suckling the young of all these animals, and even the young of poisonous snakes.

This is enough to show that Dionysus is something of a protean figure. From the evidence of the myths, Dionysus was the god of wine and the god of the dead, of spring growth and of magic possession. He acquired other characteristics after the main myths had been created. For instance, he seems to have become the god of theater by association with the satyrs who worshipped him, and who were also thought to be the originators of play-acting. Homer imputes diametrically opposed qualities to Dionysus, calling him both "raging" (*mainomenoio,* Iliad 6.132) and "joy of mortals" (*charma brotoisin,* 14.325). Dionysus had his own oracle at Delphi, who was considered just as important as the oracle

of Apollo. Indeed, the Dionysian oracle may have been the original oracle of Delphi: Plutarch, himself a priest at Delphi, says that the oracle speaks *mainomonoi stomati,* with raging mouth, and this reference to Homer's "raging" may indicate that Dionysus is the divine power behind the oracle's pronouncements.

If we recall Klein's notion that myths are always about beginnings, this almost bewildering list of different attributes accruing to Dionysus forces us to ask, With the genesis of what in particular—that is, with the very first "pre-historic beginnings" of what—are the myths of Dionysus concerned? Modern attempts to address such questions are characteristically anthropological in nature. Ultimately, this viewpoint will not be sufficient to help us understand the originary significance of Dionysus. To show this, let me begin the investigation by explaining some of the things that Dionysus *did not* represent.

Part II
What Dionysus was not

In his Dionysus: *Myth and Cult,*[4] Walter Otto critiques what seem to be the two principal schools of interpreting ancient myths in relatively modern times: the anthropological school and the philological school. The first group uses the methodologies developed by academic anthropology starting in the late nineteenth century. The second group is comprised of literary analysts who are also classics scholars. We can gain some insight into what Dionysus is not by listening to Otto's criticism. Discussing one of the leaders of the philological school, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf,[5] Otto says:

> His attacks on the views and methods of the "anthropologists" were so sharp and, indeed, frequently so bitterly scornful that we had the right to expect to find in his own

> presentation an entirely different answer to the basic questions involved. But we were disappointed. It became clear that the philological school, for which he could speak as a legitimate representative, actually agrees completely—in all its crucial points—with its opponents. Both apply the biological concept of evolution in exactly the same way.[6]

Otto then goes on to explain what he means by the expression, "the biological concept of evolution."

> Just as biology thought it was justified in believing that a line of constant development leads from the lowest to the highest organisms, so these two schools also place so-called "simple" concepts at the beginning of an evolution of religious thought out of which are to grow, through gradual change, the forms which the great deities assume at their peak. To be sure, in the course of time biology itself had to become a little more modest and had to acknowledge sudden new creations where it had formerly seen only continuous processes. Yet this is not the crucial objection to the methods used in our study of religion. When biology talked of evolution, it always put an organism at the beginning—an organism which still had to have, in every instance, no matter how simple it was thought to be, the main characteristic of an organism: it had to be a self-established whole. Only that which is alive is capable of developing. But in the dialectic advanced by the study of religion, evolution does not proceed from a simple form of life to a more complex and higher form but from the Lifeless to the Alive. For the elements of faith which this study considers primal are nothing but conceptual systems from which life is completely lacking.[7]

Otto then gives a striking example of the character of the sort of thinking he is criticizing, in which the analysts attempt to base a vital religious belief on an empty concept:

In origin, the god Hermes is supposed to have been nothing more than a protector, and the stone pillars and heaps of stones in front of farm houses point to his presence. But all the features which define his character—the paradox of his guiding and his leading astray, the sudden giving and taking away, the wisdom and cunning, the spirit of propitious love, the witchery of twilight, the weirdness of night and death—this diverse whole, which is inexhaustible and yet nowhere denies the unity of its being, is supposed to be only a complex of ideas which had gradually developed from the way of life of the worshippers, from their wishes and inclinations, ideas enriched by the love of story telling.

For the primal and solely true belief, there is left, according to Wilamowitz, only the thought of a protecting and helping god, in short, the idea of an X which lends assistance but which has no other properties except, perhaps, the power necessary for help.

At the beginning of the process called evolution there is, then, a mere Nothingness, and the concept of evolution has consequently lost its meaning. For, a god like the one assumed here has no real substance, and that which has no essence is nothing. . . . That which should be respected as the most sacred object of belief turns out to be "not there" the first time it is tested, and the objection which Wilamowitz himself raised against Usener's[8] theory—"no man prays to a concept"—applies to Wilamowitz's theory as well. . . .

As for the "Vegetation Deity," the "Death God," and similar generalities into which we now like to dissipate living deities as if we had in them the primal concepts of religious consciousness—these too are nothing but lifeless ideas. How could they ever have fulfilled the demands of devotion, lifted up the spirit, elicited the powerful forms of cultus? No life proceeds from a concept, and if the great forms of the gods, which could motivate the creative spirit of a culture of highest genius,

> are to be understood historically, then there would be no more unproductive application imaginable than this.[9]

One final quotation from Otto reveals the reason why the philological and anthropological approaches are insufficient for understanding the essence of a god or for entering the realm in which such a being has its life:

> [O]ur fragmented, mechanistic thinking knows nothing of such realms of Being, nothing of their unity. How, then, could it understand their divinity? It examines belief in deity with an astounding naiveté, dissipating its forms only to place them together again artificially to fit the pattern of a historical process. . . . That it is suspiciously like our dynamic way of thought is a serious charge against it.[10]

In short, human begins are not so constructed, nor have they ever been so constructed, that they could worship anything like the pallid verbal constructs described as deities by the anthropological school and the philological school. The essence of Dionysus *is not* an empty concept.

Part III
What Dionysus might have been to some of his ancient followers

The evolutionary, synthetic approaches used by modern physics and biology does not and cannot explain the belief in deities who are almost always characterized by a large number of mutually contradictory powers. Otto insists that it is precisely the inability of an evolutionary view of religion to construct a deity with numerous conflicting powers that most strongly justifies rejecting the evolutionary accounts of the anthropological and philological schools of interpreting religion. How could the same primary concept, such as a power signified by a pile of rocks on the roadside, grow into

a great god by the gradual addition of powers that were mutually contradictory to one another? On what grounds could a people choose to relate contradictory elements in order to construct a synthetic whole? To Otto, the most outstanding evidence that the ancients believed in gods as truly existing substances of some sort—rather than as unconsciously synthesized psychological projections of fears and hopes—was precisely that one and the same deity *did have* so many conflicting powers. The Hermes of the ancients did not grow into Hermes gradually. On the contrary, there first had to be a belief in a single, truly existent deity. Only an existing deity could be the ground a diverse collection of mutually conflicting attributes. Hermes was not built up out of his many different qualities; rather, he was the vessel into which the attributes could be poured, the container that could hold a true mixture of the attributes within its substantial unity.

But what are we to think about these different, often contradictory, powers and attributes? Are they merely different facets of one and the same god, as though the divinity were a gem that revealed different colors depending of the angle of the incident light? Is Dionysus the baby-killer merely another manifestation of the same Dionysus who is also the giver of joy to mortals? If so, it would seem to follow that the ultimate meaning of *baby-killer* is identical to the ultimate meaning of *giver of joy to mortals*. And this would seem to mean that Dionysus was conceived by his most fervent votaries as being *both of these identically* in his inmost essence. In the context of psychological anthropology, the consequence of these considerations would imply that the human psyche is constructed in such a way that it takes deep delight in the most ghastly of butcheries; that the horrifying rituals of child-murder answer a deep need in the human soul; and that this need is at root identical with the tender love of

a mother for her child.

But is this true? Are nurturing and destroying really only "symbolic" expressions of a single underlying unity? If so, then the absence or presence of such manifestations are must be merely different modes of expression, different symbolic representations of an essence in which there is no fundamental distinction. In this view, however, the issue of whether one mode of expression or another comes to the fore becomes merely a cultural and historical matter, not a psychological or anthropological one, since the structure of the psyche is not reflected in the mode of expression. The appearance of different symbols is purely relative to time and place.

Moreover, this view of symbolic expression does not address the question, Does every in the psyche have its own particular expression? Or are we to think that one and the same thing in the psyche can have distinctly different symbolic expressions? If so, we find ourselves committed to an anthropology in which all the expressions of inner drives or impulses would be theoretically reducible to a single drive or impulse.

Inasmuch as Otto appears to hold this view of symbolic relativism—for he never even raises this rather obvious problem—it seems that he may have agreed fundamentally with the cultural anthropologists he attacked so forcefully.

In any case, the approaches of the philologists and the anthropologists are insufficient for us. Let us begin, instead, by approaching the myths directly. Since drunkenness is deeply associated with the cult of Dionysus, we will begin our own analysis of this question by asking about the relationship between drinking and the worship of Dionysus.

Part IV
Dionysus and drunkenness

Different levels of intoxication give rise to different degrees

of visual impairment. The sober person sees things clearly. Moderate inebriation leads to distorted vision. In this condition, a person sees just what he sees when sober, but with all sorts of errors, such as double vision and shaky vision. Extreme intoxication, however, induces delusions. In this condition, a person sees things that are not there, experiences hallucinations, and falls into delirium. Delirium, the result of extreme drunkenness, was Dionysus's punishment for the women who refused to worship him. His proper votaries, however, were only moderately drunk, and in this state, liberated a bit from the strictures of sobriety, they were lighthearted and joyful.

It might seem at first glance that moderate drunkenness is a mean between sobriety and delirium, but this is not the case. Delirium withdraws a person entirely from the world of shared experience that characterizes sobriety and moderate intoxication. Hence, moderate drunkenness is not a mean between the two extremes: on the contrary, it groups itself together with its cousin sobriety. Nevertheless, we tend place people into one of three categories in relation to their state of inebriation: the sober, the moderately drunk, and the delirious.

Now what if we ask, How drunk must a worshipper of Dionysus be in order to perceive one and the same god as being both a baby-killer and a bringer of joy to mortals? Attitudes toward this question would differ depending on the category of the person hearing it. The sober, for whom the contradiction is anathema, would think that only a delirious person could imagine such blasphemies. The delirious, for whom the contradiction is not a difficulty, would think that only a blind person could raise such a doubt. And the moderately drunk—who have loosened the bonds of sobriety enough to entertain the question but, not being delirious, have

not settled the matter—would be regarded negatively by both the other groups. The sober person regards even the moderately drunk person as addled for not keeping the distinctions clear, whereas the delirious person regards him as cloddish for breaking up an obvious unity. Thus, the moderately drunk seem to be opposed in different ways to the other two groups. To the moderately drunk, on the other hand, both of the other groups appear to be delirious: the sober because in their literalness they can make nothing of anything; the delirious because in their associative fugue they make anything of nothing at all. Both extremes are mistaken in not making the right things of the right things.

The attitude of the moderately drunk, therefore, is open to the possibility of *transformation,* to the possibility that distinctions might become unities or vice versa. Hence the importance in the cult of Dionysus of the image of the *serpent,* which remains what it is although it continually sheds its own form. But does this idea come too close to imputing to the votaries of Dionysus the empty abstraction of the philologists and anthropologists, namely, the idea that Dionysus is the single, constant entity underlying the many symbolic manifestations he throws off, just as the snake is the single, constant entity underlying the many skins it throws off?

Part V
The Masks of Dionysus

Fortunately, another Dionysus steps forward to block this line of thought. Dionysus of the theater was surely a master of images, and so he certainly knew what any child dressing up in costume knows—that the essence of an image is to present itself as just what it is not. The serpent's shed skins need not be interpreted as different manifestations thrown off by a single, constant entity; they could instead be *the remnants of what the serpent is not.* Of course, this would mean that each

skin showed the serpent as what it was not even while the serpent was wearing it. Or, translating this idea into the realm of theater, the different aspects of Dionysus, each one an image left behind after a transformation, are just so many *masks,* just so many presentations of what he is not. If this is the case, then one of the central teachings of the cult of Dionysus must be this: *To unmask is not to know.*

Dionysus's different masks, then, cannot be merely disguises. They cannot be coverings worn by a single, self-same being of false fronts intended to hide the identity of a single, self-same being from onlookers. And yet, isn't that what masks are? Perhaps not. Perhaps we need to think more radically about the concept of a mask.

Masks are essentially superficial. They belong in the realm of externalities, of surfaces, of things-as-they-present themselves. Curiously enough, this makes them similar to solid bodies, which likewise manifest themselves to us as "all surface." If we carve away the surface of a wooden block, for instance, we reveal a new solid that presents itself to us in a new way. But the new solid was not "contained by" the original one, except perhaps in a metaphorical sense. This point may be easier to grasp by means of a negative example. A box with another box fitting snugly inside it is not a solid. That is why there is room in it for the second box. Solids, on the contrary, do not have space for containment within them, and thus they cannot contain other solids. Nor do they contain some sort of originary object that remains the same through every alteration of surface. Each solid has only one surface, each surface is the surface of only one solid, and two different solids have two different surfaces. Similarly, each mask, because of its essential superficiality, cannot mask another mask, let alone some originary object that remains the same through every change of mask.

The multiple masks of Dionysus, then, cannot be thought

of as containing one another; they are not a set of nested boxes in which the outermost box conceals those within. Each mask presents itself as a distinctly different thing with an identity of its own, just as the carved wooden block presents itself as distinctly different from the block from which it was carved. Nor do his masks contain some originary being that remains the same through transformations of the masks, any more than solids contain originary objects. Consequently, *the masks of Dionysus are not disguises:* nothing is concealed within them, neither other masks nor an originary being. So trying to penetrate his masks in order to unmask a wearer is clearly a pointless task. It may not be quite so clear at this point that this task is also perilous.

Part VI
Masks, Shame, Orgies, and Horror

If we continue to view a mask as a sort of disguise, we continue to think of it as a sort of magic shield of invisibility, a ring of Gyges. Wearing a mask as a disguise seems to be a way of hiding one's identity, of concealing what one really is with a surface that presents what one really is not. The wearer of a disguise seems unaccountable for his actions, and hence free to do things that he would be ashamed to acknowledge in his own person. But since, as we have seen, a mask is not in fact a disguise, we should expect that the attempt to hide one's identity with a mask should fail, should show itself as impossible in some way. And so it does: the unaccountable masked person is not at all the same as the unmasked person. The one does things that the other will not do. The one has shame, the other does not. It is simply a mistake to think that the masked person is somehow identical with the unmasked one. Looking aside from this error for the time being, however, we can see that the notion of a mask understood as a disguise raises the issue of shame, and this brings us to another central aspect of Dionysus and of his cult: the orgy.

The word orgy comes from the Greek *orgia,* which is related to the word *ergon,* a deed, a task, or something accomplished. In classical usage, an orgy is not a celebration of wildly licentious sexual abandon—this meaning appears in English only in the seventeenth century—but rather an enjoined task, specifically of a religious character. It refers to religious rites such as the rites of Demeter, of Orpheus, and, most frequently, the rites of Dionysus. An orgiastic act, then, is like that part of a religious service in which every word and gesture of the officiating priest is ordained by preset ritual—as opposed to, say, a sermon, in which the officiating minister can speak in his own name.

Another example of an orgiastic act in classical times was the presentation of a play by actors, in which the speeches had been ordained by the play's author and—as we know was the case with the actors of Dionysus's theater—the masks worn by the actors were ordained by tradition. The orgies of the cult-worshippers of Dionysus dramatize—that is, act out in prescribed word and deed—the great myths of the deity. The drama is portrayed by masked actors who are precisely what their masks show them to be, and who can be so because all their speeches and actions are prescribed to be exactly the speeches and actions belonging to the mask. Conversely, at the same time, the actors' masks are precisely the surfaces appropriate to them in their character as worshippers of Dionysus in the orgiastic performance. And this relationship is very strict: thus, no single actor presents two different characters with the same mask or the same character with two different masks. (If the latter should happen, as with Oedipus before and after he blinds himself, it indicates that the character has changed radically.)

These characteristics of orgiastic performance teach us about the nature of Dionysus, the god of play-acting. His

manifestations, on the one hand, as the god of baby-killing and, on the other hand, as the god who brings joy to mortals must not be understood as two different masks of the self-same deity. The dreadful mask of the baby-killer, the amiable mask of the joy-giver—these indicate simply that masks exist. They do not reveal any persisting entity behind the masks. Moreover, the plays that embody the orgiastic tradition tell us that our insistence on trying to unmask the non-existent entity behind the mask is not just pointless, but dangerous. And indeed, that is what we should expect, since all attempts to put mistaken beliefs into practice can only meet with tragic consequences. In the plays, the raving characters represent those who try to unmask others. Agave—who claimed that Semele had become pregnant with Dionysus by a mortal rather than by Zeus—attempted to unmask Semele as a liar. Pentheus—who was certain that the rites of Dionysus were wild, unsanctioned, and licentious rather than prescribed religious performances—tried to unmask Dionysus himself. Their delirium is a symptom, as we saw earlier, that they have left the realm of shared experience. The proper votaries of Dionysus do not rave; madness belongs to those who are outside communal awareness, and thus outside of the celebration—as Euripides saw so clearly. And the punishment for the attempt to unmask is terrible: first, it leads to raving, since the person making the attempt is trying the impossible, namely, to make something out of nothing by reducing two different masks to expressions of one nonexistent entity; second the raving leads to self-destruction as the person tries to act on the basis of delusion. Thus Agave is led to dismember her own son and Pentheus is compelled to dive headlong into the bevy of Bacchae who will tear him apart. The attempt to unmask comes to grief, because unmasking is impossible.

This is what the myths of Dionysus are trying to tell us: *We human beings are masked.* The baby-killer is a mask just as much as the nurse or mother is a mask. If the nurse or mother mask is transformed into the baby-killer mask, this is not because the bloodier mask is another version of the more pleasing one, and certainly not because it is the true being concealed by the pleasing mask. On the contrary, the bloody mask is the consequence of trying to unmask at all. The attempt to unmask is the cause of the bloody mask that is found "underneath" the pleasant mask. The lesson of the dreadful myths of Dionysus is that, as we tear off our masks, each successive mask will be a bloodier, more horrifying result of the attempt to tear off the previous mask. On this view, Otto was right inasmuch as he thought that the various contradictory aspects of Dionysus point toward a sort of unity, but he was wrong in believing this unity to be a substance of some kind. The masks of Dionysus point toward a unity in the sense that they show us the self-same process repeating itself in the successively more horrifying masks that come into being from each previous attempt to unmask.

We can relate this insight to our daily lives in this way: In contemporary terms, we describe the attempt to unmask in various ways—to "find ourselves," to "act on our true feelings," to "be our authentic selves," and so on. The myths of Dionysus teach us, however, that we are masked actors in an orgiastic performance. The grief we suffer for rejecting this insight, and for trying to unmask ourselves in spite of it, is that we flay our own faces in the attempt to unmask ourselves. By tearing off our mask, we rend the flesh, leaving a bloody layer of pulp that had previously been protected by the mask. The original face, the mask, was not disguising the horror that appears after removal; the horror comes into existence only as a result of the attempt to unmask.

Part VII
The therapeutic mask

In what we have said up to this point, there are some indications that moderate drunkenness, with its openness to transformation, might be preferable to the anti-Dionysian literalness of absolute sobriety and the anti-Dionysian madness of delirium. What does this tell us about everyday existence? What might be the analogue of moderate drunkenness in our daily lives? What would it mean to live in such a way that we are neither utterly sober nor intoxicated to the point of delusion? Here we will benefit from two other aspects of the deity we are studying: Dionysus as the god of marvels and Dionysus as the god of the dead.

As the patron of theater, Dionysus is the god of the marvelous, the miraculous, and the wonderful. He is in the first instance, then, the patron of comedy, the genre in which a marvelous turn of events—such as the appearance of a *deus ex machina* or an unexpected savior or a startling revelation—brings about a change from imminent bad fortune to good fortune. This last consideration also shows the link between comedy and tragedy: if the marvel does not occur, imminent bad fortune comes to pass. And this too is wonderful in a different way: we wonder why the marvel did not occur, why the bad fortune was not averted, why the suffering had to be. Dionysus is in the second instance, then, also the patron of tragedy.

For the moment, we are going to set aside Dionysus as the patron of comedy and tragedy to investigate yet another side of the god. As we saw very early on, Dionysus was also identified with Hades, the god of the dead, and was worshipped by drunken revelers carrying leather phalluses while singing lewd songs. The connections among the ghosts of the dead, leather phalluses, and filthy songs will reveal one more

aspect of Dionysus to us, which will, in combination with Dionysus's role as the god of theater, teach us the final lesson that can be drawn from the myths of Dionysus.

We begin by asking, What do the leather phalluses and filthy songs have to do with the worship of the god of the dead?

We know from many sources that in Athens in early spring, during the month Anthesterion, a three-day festival of flowers included two days of Dionysian merry-making followed by a third day, called the *Chutroi,* the feast of pots, a festival of the dead at the end of which ghosts were exhorted to leave the city.[11] But, during this very somber third day, comedies—represented in parade as outsized phalluses and dirty songs—were presented. It appears that the Athenians regarded theater performance as suitable either for entertaining the benevolent ghosts, or for distracting the malevolent ghosts, who walked abroad during the festival. In either case, Dionysus the god of theater was the appropriate deity for laying ghosts to rest. Dionysus thus begins to come to light as the god of rest, as the deity who blesses leisure. And this is not very surprising. After all, are not drinking and theater both acts of leisure? Perhaps the most all-encompassing of Dionysus's aspects is that he is the god of leisure.

But leisure presupposes trust. No one can rest comfortably without trusting in a multitude of protective guardians and helpers, from family members to neighbors to policemen to public service providers to soldiers. When we are made to question this trust—when one of these protective figures violates our trust—our sense of complacency is disturbed, and our ability to experience leisure evaporates. Violation of trust is, therefore, the supreme sin. It undermines the faith that humans need to feel safe in their own lives. Perhaps this is why Dante, in the *Divine Comedy,* places Brutus, Cassius, and

Judas—exemplars of treachery—in the gnashing jaws of Satan himself—also a traitor—at the heart of Hell, which is the Christian version of Hades. If violation of trust is the destruction of faith and the leisure that depends on it, Dionysus the god of leisure must be opposed in all ways to treachery. He must be the guardian of guardianship and of all forms of protective care. Indeed, the female worshippers of Dionysus were called by the honorific title *tithēnai,* that is, nurses. The worship of Dionysus involves nurture and guardianship, without which leisure is impossible.

As we said, theater is also a leisure activity. Hence we should also expect it to relate in some way to nurture and guardianship. This relationship is found in the realm of sight: theater cultivates and civilizes vision for sake of increasing trust, and thus securing leisure. The epitome of self-involved vision is solitary dreaming. In our dreams we are drawn into a self-contained world into which intrude only phantoms from our shared, waking life. Theater borrows these intruders, as it were, and introduces them to the companions of our shared life for their approval or disapproval. Theater civilizes our dreams by teaching us to distinguish between things that belong only to our solitary reverie and those that belong to our shared life with others. In doing so, it transforms our self-contained consciousness into shared, civil consciousness.

This civil consciousness is conscience. Conscienceless theater is anti-theater. Conscienceless theater tries to undo the transformation of our dreams by tearing off what seems to be their civil mask, and recklessly presenting our solitary consciousness to the prying eyes of strangers. Conscienceless, unmasking, theater is pornographic theater. It demands of its spectators that they publicly unmask and share all their dreams—the more private the better. But we have seen the consequences of the attempt to unmask, and those conse-

quences can be expected to occur if unmasking theater is not checked: waking life will become a nightmare. Dionysus the god of theater reminds us that conscience, the mask of consciousness, is also its nurturer and its guardian.

Dionysus is, therefore, the guardian deity of civilized consciousness. His dual realm is the underworld of solitary dreaming together with the portion of it that can be seen in civil consciousness. Human beings see the light of day only when they are masked. It is only as masked that we humans see the true light of day. Unmasked, we live in nightmare. Without our masks, we are as insubstantial as dreams; we are phantoms whose thinness is proved by the fact that they cannot withstand the light of day. Ultimately, then, the mask of Dionysus is the mask of conscience, the mask that allows some of our dreaming visions to be seen communally in the light of day. Dionysus, finally, is the god of that which is properly visible, the god of the properly shared, the god of civility.

NOTES

1. Unfortunately, the source of this quotation—most probably one of Klein's many lectures delivered at St. John's College—is not known.

2. The stories of the Greek Gods are described in exhaustive detail in Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths,* 2 vols. (New York: Penguin, 1960).

3. Heraclitus, Fragment 15. See Heraclitus, *Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 17.

4. Walter Otto, *Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus* (Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1933). References in these notes will be to the English translation by Robert B. Palmer, *Dionysus: Myth and Cul*t (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965).

5. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf (1848-1931) was an expert on the literature of ancient Greece. He championed the notion that surviving an-

cient manuscripts, besides being objects of literary history, could also be mined for biographical, political, and general historical information.

6. Otto, *Dionysus,* 8.

7. Otto, *Dionysus*, 8-9.

8. Hermann Usener (1834-1905) was a philologist and historian of religion, and a teacher of Wilamowitz. The statement made here seems to be Wilamowitz's version of something Usener used to say, not a quotation from a publication.

9. Otto, *Dionysus,* 9-11.

10. Otto, *Dionysus,* 11.

11. See, for instance, Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War,* 2.15, and Aristophanes, *Acharnians,* 1076.

Fields and Particles and Being

Dylan Casey

1 Introduction

Particles and fields, broadly speaking, describe two basic accounts of what the world is made of. The particle is the quintessential ball, grain of sand, or individual. It contains the notion of individuation—the very criterion of distinguishing this from that. The field is an expanse, a continuous entity that occupies space, has shape, contour, and variation, but these qualities are always reflected back onto the field itself. The rolling, wheat-covered hills comprise a field. These two options correspond to two claims about the world in general: that it is discrete, like particles, or continuous, like fields. As with all good arguments, there are respectable proponents on both sides, each offering a little twist on the common theme.

For example, Lucretius, on the face of it, is a particle guy. Accordingly, he writes:

> All nature, then, as it is in itself, consists of two things; for there are bodies and the void in which they are located and through which they move in different directions.[1]

The world is full of a variety of fundamental particles zipping around in an otherwise empty container, colliding with one another making all that we see. I should mention that there is the possibility of intrinsic self-motion—the swerve—of these particles (or at least one of them) in addition to the motion imparted by collisions, but that would lead to a different lecture.

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Newton, more or less, is also a particle guy. For him, light is corpuscular—a view that might be considered prescient given the photonic understanding of light that appeared over two centuries following his work. The action-at-a-distance interpretation of his gravitational theory also implies a particle view of the world in which each particle acts on the others, not just through collision, but also directly and instantaneously. In the end, action at a distance is a refinement of the Lucretian world of colliding particles to account for remote actions like magnetism and gravity.

I should note that Newton had grave misgivings about action at a distance:

> That one body may act upon another at a distance through a vacuum without the mediation of anything else, by and through which their action and force may be conveyed from one another, is to me so great an absurdity that, I believe, no man who has in philosophic matters a competent faculty of thinking could ever fall into it.[2]

Roughly in the field camp, Descartes gives us the plenum. He insists that the world be full and continuous. There are no essential entities, but rather amorphous extension combined with swirling vortices. Descartes expected the world to be a self-contained whole—motion and extension together—though he might have conceded that the ball needs to start rolling at some point.

Also standing in the field camp, in his own way, is Leibniz. His world is full as well, but his monads are discrete, essential entities colliding in a motion ultimately governed from the outside by God. While agreeing with Descartes about the necessary fullness of the world, Leibniz takes issue with Descartes's inability to account for individuation. The monads go some way toward keeping the notion of individual entities in a full world.

Obviously, the preceding accounts are just sketches of the ideas of the authors. And I do not intend to give the impres-

sion that all particle views and all field views are the same. They're not. But all particle views emphasize certain features and address certain questions in common, as do all field views. For the particle guys, the emphasis is on distinction and difference. Their ultimate standpoint is that there must be, somewhere, essential differences that are ineradicable, maybe even eternal. There is something naturally attractive about this view. One of the manifest features of the world is the distinction between this and that. The individuation that underlies the simple act of counting presumes boundaries between things as a precondition for counting them. Furthermore, we break up individual things into smaller individuals all the time, and many of them have natural boundaries. Like a ball or a grain of sand, such things maintain their integrity over time. Extrapolating to smaller pieces and to elementary particles is a straightforward exercise of the intellect: the smallest things ought to embody (or even exemplify) the distinctions that are manifest to us everyday.

If individuation is a common feature of particle views, then the void is a common problem. The void seems to be an amorphous nothing that functions as a container for everything that exists—and, of course, speaking of nothing is difficult. Similarly, the genuine separation of individual entities that characterizes particle theories gives rise to the problem of action at a distance. There are certainly phenomena, like magnetism, in which it is difficult to explain how separated individuals interact with one another when action between those individuals isn't easily attributable to simple collision. If you dispense with the void, you are left asking what fills it up.

For the field guys like Descartes and Leibniz, the emphasis is on wholeness and continuity—on the fullness and completeness of the universe. This emphasis on oneness doesn't seem incidental. Rather, it seems fundamental to scientific activity to assume a whole with respect to which measure-

ments are made. For measuring to work at all, one needs a whole. Once the whole is assumed, however, the problem of distinction and identity is ever-present. One is left wondering about the cause of differences between individuals, or questioning whether such differences aren't necessarily illusions. This is particularly true of Leibniz. By filling the universe with monads, he creates the appearance of individuality that is characteristic of the particle view. Since the monads fill the world, it seems that it might be possible to sidestep the void. But in the end, the monads form a whole in which their independence is utterly illusory. Rather, each monad is a mirror of the whole universe through its internal connection with everything else in the universe.

Here is an image of a physical system that highlights these problems and tensions: two conducting spheres, each hanging from a string, each holding some net negative charge. Since like charges repel and the two spheres are relatively close to one another, they push each other away. We can tell this is happening because the strings from which the spheres hang are neither parallel nor plumb, but angled away from each other. If we push on one of the spheres, we see the other move away, and if we move one sphere around, the other moves as well. Now this is not an everyday sort of observation. We don't usually have charged spheres hanging around near us. But, it isn't difficult to arrange and, nowadays, isn't likely to surprise many people. It's so easy, in fact, that we do very similar demonstrations in our Junior Laboratory classes with pith balls hanging from threads. An initial account of this phenomenon might go like this: charges exert electromagnetic force on each other and, since the charges are confined to the spheres, that force overcomes the uniform downward tendency of the spheres due to gravitation. The relative angle of the strings reflects the net force acting on the spheres.

This system of hanging charged bodies incorporates the

most important questions about fields and particles, about wholes and parts, about the continuous and the discrete. What is happening between these spheres? This is, in short, the field question. Second, how do I understand these spheres themselves? This is, in short, the particle question.

2 Classical Fields

Although Descartes and Leibniz laid the foundations for field theory with their emphasis on continuity and the fullness of the universe, it was the work of Michael Faraday that marked the beginning of our modern notion of the field. During his research into the nature of electricity and magnetism, he coined the term *field* to refer to the interstitial action between charged parts of matter and between magnetized parts of matter. In his experiments he had located and measured charges, confirmed the discreteness of charge, and demonstrated that changing magnetic forces induce electric currents in nearby wires. These electric and magnetic forces could penetrate matter and persist in a vacuum. The effects of charges on one another, as well as the effects of magnetism and electromagnetic induction, seemed like instances of action at a distance, and all of them could be described by contemporary mathematical formulations.

Faraday didn't buy it. For him, something had to travel between the charges and between the magnetic poles. Ultimately, the world had to be full, and action couldn't happen without touching. Although one might call this a metaphysical predisposition on Faraday's part, he nevertheless searched tirelessly for the smoking gun that would reveal the presence of a field as the medium through which separated pieces of charged matter could touch. First of all, he considered the time required for electrical action to occur as evidence of the presence of a field. Using a very long wire, he could measure how long it took for electricity to travel through a circuit. The

fact that such action was measurably non-instantaneous revealed that there was a moment when the action of one charged particle was "emitted" but not yet felt by another charge. If the whole long electrical interaction takes any time at all, the smallest communication of action must also take time. At some moment, therefore, the action was somewhere in between the two charges.

For Faraday, this amounted to direct evidence against an action-at-a-distance account of electrical and magnetic force. The action between the charges must be contained within a field, within a continuous entity that was not confined by a particle of matter. The action of one charge on another had to occur through time and through space, of course, but it needn't itself be particle-like in nature. By hypothesizing the existence of the field, Faraday imagined a new type of substance in the world.

In holding this view, Faraday put himself at odds with a well established camp of believers in action at a distance who denied the necessity of a continuity of action from here to there. In their minds, each bit of charge acted directly on every other bit of charge. This notion was similar to Newton's account of gravity, in which each bit of matter exerted an instantaneous gravitational pull on every other bit of matter, with the strength of that force decreasing as the square of the distance between the bits.

(As an aside—and this probably reveals my own disposition on the subject—I would note that the sensitivity to distance in action-at-a-distance theories is puzzling at the outset, if action is supposed to take place entirely between one particle and another. How do the particles sense the distance between them in order to regulate the force? Even if the information took no time to propagate, which creates a new problem concerning instantaneous transmission of anything, this sort of action at a distance still requires a radical sensitivity of each part to the global arrangement. It cannot be the

case that the action is determined by only the two bits in which we happen to be interested; each part must know where every other part is within a larger context. In a funny way, action at a distance presumes a radical wholeness of all things due to the instantaneous activity of the putative parts upon each other.)

Faraday's field idea reaches fruition in James Clerk Maxwell's reformulation that is eventually embodied in his equations for the electromagnetic field. Maxwell adds mathematical clarity and refinement to Faraday's initial notions of the field. Among his greatest clarifications was rendering Faraday's field as a mathematical quantity whose value depends upon spatial locations. This is how the field is continuous: it has a value at all points in space. Temperature is a good and typical example of a field. Each point in the room has a temperature and the mathematical function in three spatial directions that describes the temperature is called the temperature field.

Maxwell's account of electromagnetism invokes electrical and magnetic fields that persist throughout all space. If we return to our two hanging charged spheres, Maxwell would say that there is an electrostatic field—electrostatic because we don't have to account for any magnetism in this system—between the two spheres and that the field is described by a field strength at each point between the spheres. It's worth noting that the mathematical form of an electrostatic field is richer and more complicated than a temperature field. For instance, the electrostatic field is represented mathematically at each point in between the spheres by three components corresponding to the field strength in each of three spatial directions. And each of those components depends on three coordinates of position as well. That makes it what is called a *vector field,* but it's still a field, which is to say, an extended whole in between two things. (The simpler temperature field would be called a *scalar field,* since each point is

represented by a number and not a vector.)

Following Maxwell, we can refine the system of our hanging spheres in this way: The spheres are aggregates of charge and the force between them is the action of a connecting electromagnetic field. Each charge is the source of an electromagnetic field that pushes the other. In this way of seeing things, the world consists of particles floating on an ether sea in which the motions of the particles touch off waves of force that act on other particles.

This, in large part, is the ontology of classical fields: there are, on the one hand, particles that are sources and recipients of disturbance, and, on the other hand, fields which communicate the disturbance between the sources. And one of the most amazing aspects of Maxwell's theory is the consequence that these disturbances become the manifestation of light. Light itself is revealed as electromagnetic action born out of the motion of charges.

This unifying character of the field, its ability to communicate action between charges, was a wonder to Maxwell. Here is just a taste of his enthusiasm from his article "On Action at a Distance":

> The vast interplanetary and interstellar regions will no longer be regarded as waste places in the universe, which the Creator has not seen fit to fill with the symbols of the manifold order of His kingdom. We shall find them to be already full of this wonderful medium; so full, that no human power can remove it from the smallest portion of space, or produce the slightest flaw in its infinite continuity. It extends unbroken from star to star; and when a molecule of hydrogen vibrates in the dog-star, the medium receives the impulses of these vibrations; and after carrying them in its immense bosom for three years, delivers them in due course, regular order, and full tale into the spectroscope of Mr. Huggins, at Tulse Hill.[3]

Now stipulating a field as a new kind of entity that acts as the mediator of action between particles doesn't settle the discreteness/continuity problem. What is a field anyway? Is

it like water connecting one shore to another in such a way that the waves from a dropped stone lap upon the other side, dislodging stones there? This is exactly the sort of image that comes to mind when we think about point charges moving in the continuous field that propagates vibrations at the speed of light. If this is the case, then what is the field made of? Does it have parts, as water surely does? Is it composed of particles? If it is, what holds those particles together? Some of these questions arise from the very notion of extension. It is difficult to see how any extended thing can exist without being made up of "sub-things." Any successful account of things will need to address these questions about extension and its sub-structure.

On the other hand, what is a particle? Where are its boundaries? How is it distinguished from the force field of which it is the source? Where would one cross from charge to field? These questions of crossing and transformation from one thing to another are at the root of discreteness, difference, and individuality. Looking for an elementary particle is looking for a fundamental "this" that is clearly distinguishable from some different "that."

Behind all these questions lurk the nagging problems I mentioned at the outset: the problems associated with the attempt to come to terms with the distinctions between continuity and discreteness. A satisfying understanding of fields and particles ought to reveal some resolution of the tensions between these two accounts of world. To obviate the need for the void, we need a full universe. To articulate identity, we need ways of isolating individuals from the whole while maintaining connections so that we still have a whole. Maxwell's field theory is looks like marbles and goo: the particles—the marbles—are point sources of mass and charge; the field—the goo—sticks all the particles together, communicating their separate actions to one another.

3 Quantum Field Theory

While Faraday and Maxwell pioneered the notion of the field, its ultimate expression is found in modern quantum field theory, which represents our best current account of the structure of all matter. This account is called the Standard Model. If the name evokes for you a simultaneous sense of elevation and dreariness, you feel much the same way as most particle physicists, for whom the Standard Model is both a triumph and an affliction.

In the Standard Model, the world contains elementary particles like *electrons, neutrinos,* and *up quarks,* which interact with one another by means of four forces: the *electromagnetic force,* which holds together everything from atoms to asteroids, and is the mediator of all chemical interactions; the *strong force,* which holds together the nuclei of atoms; the *weak force,* which doesn't hold together anything, but mediates some forms of radioactive decay; and the *gravitational force,* which holds together planets, stars, solar systems, galaxies, and so on. Gravitation doesn't really fit in the Standard Model very well right now. This is regarded as an acceptable dilemma, because particle physicists still need jobs in this struggling economy.

The Standard Model contains sub-theories associated with each of the forces. The part dealing only with electromagnetism is called QED, an acronym for "quantum electrodynamics." The part dealing with the strong force is called QCD, for "quantum chromodynamics." The part dealing with the weak force is an extension of QED called the "electroweak" theory. All of these are quantum field theories and anytime you hear or read things like "quark," "lepton," "QED," "W and Z Boson," or "Higgs Boson" you've wandered into the land of quantum field theory.

It is completely uncontroversial that quantum field theories are the most successful accounts ever devised about the

structure of the world. By "successful" I simply mean that they are the most precise accounts verified by experiment. Calculations of phenomena based on the Standard Model agree more closely with our best measurements than any other physical theories that we have. The best example of this is the value of something called "the fine-structure constant," which is a number that characterizes the strength of electromagnetic interactions. The quantum-theoretical value of this number agrees with the physical measurement to 10 decimal places—better than one part in one billion. As an experimentalist, I would like to point out that it is a pretty wicked measurement that has an uncertainty of one part in a billion!

Now, quantum field theory is kind of a crazy thing to try to cover in my remaining time. To do so succinctly, I would have to present you with some challenging, but extremely beautiful mathematics. But rather than try your patience in that way, I'll attempt to describe as much of the theory as I can in plain English. I've provided a short annotated bibliography for those of you who would like to study some of the details in more depth.

For now, I'm going to try to present some of the salient points of quantum field theory and talk a bit about what it requires us to think about the world. So let's begin with this question: What do we buy when we buy a quantum field theory?

3.1 Relativity and Quantum Mechanics

First and foremost, quantum field theory is a complete synthesis of special relativity and quantum mechanics that attempts to account for the physics of the entire universe. Because it incorporates special relativity, quantum field theory is "relativistically invariant," which means that all the results of all calculations remain unchanged under a Lorentz transformation. This tells us that two identical experiments will get the same results even if one lab was here on earth

while the other was hurtling through space at nearly the speed of light. A physicist would say "all the physics in two systems is the same regardless of the relative speed between them." For our purposes, there are two salient consequences of this fact:

> 1. All positions and times are determined relative to each other. There is no absolute now and then, no absolute here and there. And there is no simultaneity.
> 2. Mass and motion are aspects of the same thing—energy. Mass and motion can be converted into each other and, together, they embody the total energy of the system. Energy rules.

Quantum field theories also encapsulate all of the ideas of quantum mechanics. Maxwell's account of a world of charges communicating motion through vibrations in a field fails miserably in its attempts to account for the structure of the atom. Quantum mechanics solves those problems, but it entails certain consequences. For one thing, fundamental quantities like energy and angular momentum are discrete, which means that they come in little units that are the smallest amounts possible; or, as the physicists say, these properties are quantized. For another thing, certain quantities, like position and momentum, don't admit of being determined simultaneously. (This is the famous Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle). Third, the fundamental quantity in a quantum mechanical system is called a "state," which has a configuration that depends upon how it is selected. And fourth, all predictions are made in terms of likelihoods and probabilities—not because we are making estimates about large numbers of objects like, for example, the number of molecules in a container of gas, but because nothing in the quantum world is determinate. Probability is intrinsic and goes all the way down to the states, which are themselves sums of a number of possibilities.

3.2 The Lagrangian and Minimization

In any serious discussion about quantum field theory you'll very quickly run into the term "Lagrangian." Joseph Louis Lagrange was an eighteenth-century mathematician who developed the calculus of variations, in which differential equations are solved by taking into account the possible constraints on the internal parameters to determine a global solution. In physics, the term "Lagrangian" refers to a mathematical relation describing the dynamics of a system. First, you write an equation that describes the internal dynamics of the system fully, and then you integrate it over the whole time during which the system is in motion, thus producing an expression for the total action of the system. If you then minimize that expression (that is, find the least possible action that the system could possibly have used to get from its starting state to its ending state), you produce a differential equation expressing that least possible action terms of the Lagrangian. Classical mechanics and electrodynamics can be formulated in terms of minimizing action in cases for which the Lagrangian can be identified as the difference between the system's kinetic energy and its potential energy.

As an example, consider the path of a projectile under the influence of gravity—a potato, perhaps, launched from a potato cannon. Such a contraption looks pretty much like a cannon made of PVC pipe. To load it, the potato is pushed down the muzzle to the edge of the firing chamber. Propulsion is provided by igniting aerosol hair spray in the combustion chamber using a sparking device. (I, myself, through trial and error, have found that Aquanet® provides the biggest kick per dose by far.) The kinetic energy of the potato is given by its mass and speed, the latter of which depends upon position and time. The potential energy of the potato is given by its mass, the constant force of gravity, and its height, which also depends upon position and time. The Lagrangian function

would be the difference between the function for kinetic energy and the function for potential energy. Now, in principle there are many possible paths between the starting point and the landing point for the potato, each with its own action. For instance, it could travel in a parabola. Or, it could fly up for a while and do a few loop-the-loops before landing. Each of these paths has an associated action given by adding up the difference between the kinetic energy and the potential energy at all the points along the path. In the end, the path corresponding to the physical path—the path actually traced out by the potato—is the one with the least total action.

One can perform a similar calculation in classical electrodynamics considering the motion and configuration of charged spheres or even of electrons. Considering their total kinetic and potential energies, the principle of least action stipulates that their configurations and motions will always be such that the action is minimized. All of the dynamics of the system is contained in the Lagrangian, and all calculations regarding the system would ultimately go back to that Lagrangian. Minimizing the action allows us to pick out which arrangement of dynamics will be followed by actual physical objects.

In quantum field theory, there are two important twists on this classical principle. First, the Lagrangian is not in any simple way the difference between the kinetic energy and the potential energy; it is mathematically much more complicated than that. Second, the dependent quantities are field configurations, not paths. In classical formulations the minimization of the action is obtained by considering different paths through spacetime, as in my potato example. In quantum field theory, the minimization is obtained by considering different field arrangements.

I don't have time to say more about least action here. But I do want to emphasize that the Lagrangian is the key to the physics of any system. For instance, when physicists speak

of invariances under transformation (as they do in regard to special relativity), they are implicitly saying, "the Lagrangian doesn't change under that transformation." This amounts to the claim that the Lagrangian contains all possible information about the system. In other words, the Lagrangian "holds all the physics."

3.3 Quantum Fields

So, as a structural matter, when you buy quantum field theory, you are buying quantum mechanics, special relativity, and least-action principles formulated in terms of a Lagrangian function. Now for the fields. In quantum field theory, all of the fundamental entities are space-permeating fields which are themselves physically manifest as discrete quanta. These fields is not made of anything else. They are their own entities, just as the fields of Maxwell and Faraday were their own entities. The quanta of these fields are the so-called elementary particles, but the fields are prior to, and necessary for, the existence of the particles. The particles are resonances, modes of the field. Crudely put, the particles are vibrations. All quantum mechanical entities are vibrations.

You can never touch a quantum field per se—it becomes manifest only when there is a discrete interaction. Bumping up against a quantum field means bumping up against a quantum of that field. Now there are two classes of fields—matter fields and interaction fields, the latter also known as force fields. A good example of an interaction field is the electromagnetic field, whose quanta are photons of light. A good example of a matter field is an electron field, whose quanta are—you guessed it—electrons. A less familiar example of an interaction field would be the strong nuclear field, whose quanta are gluons (eight of them) that connect to quark fields whose quanta are up and down quarks.

The earlier image of the two charged spheres can be refined a bit to reflect these fields. In Maxwell's case, each

sphere is a bundle of charge and the force that angles the support strings is communicated by the electromagnetic field joining the charges. In the electron field, for instance, each sphere is rendered as an individual electron, itself a quantum of an electron field, and the electromagnetic force between the two electrons is rendered as a photon, the quantum of the electromagnetic field. The angle of the strings represents the exchange of photons between the electrons.

Now, this is a bit of a conundrum, and you may well feel like I've pulled a fast one. It's quantum *field* theory, after all, not quantum *particle* theory. How exactly did this particle-rabbit get pulled out of that field-hat? The short answer (and really the long answer too) is that the particles and fields come together. In a quantum field, the quanta, the particles, are the manifestation of the fields. There is no getting around this stipulation in quantum field theory. The particles arise out of the quantization of the field. The field holds all the possibilities—that is to say, all the energy—for the particles.

The particles are the manifestation of the field. In this way quantum field theory makes a choice that Maxwell's field theory does not. Maxwell's theory has point sources that are distinct from fields—charges that are independent of the forces between them. In quantum field theory there is no distinction of this sort between source and force. Both are rooted in continuous fields which become manifest as particles.

There are a few features of quantum fields that are worth emphasizing:

1. The particle types associated with each field are the same everywhere. All electrons, for instance, are the same, because they are all quanta of the same field.
2. The field endures, but particles can come and go, transforming one into the other. There are constraints to the transformations, but, as a general rule, "anything that can happen, will happen." As

in ordinary quantum mechanics, probabilities for transformations can be assigned, but any given transformation is undetermined. I can tell you the possible final states for the decay of a muon and on average how long it will take to decay, but I can't tell you when it will happen. No one can.

The available possibilities for transformation increase dramatically with increased energy. As a typical example: colliding a high-speed (and therefore high-energy) electron and positron, one might easily end up with showers of particles containing ten pi mesons, a proton, and an antiproton.[4] Together, those particles weigh thirty-thousand times more than the original electron and positron. So mass is not conserved, but rearranged with the available energy. This is a direct consequence of special relativity.

Such a collision is also a genuine transformation. The particles that resulted from the collision of the electron and the positron just mentioned were not hidden inside the electron and the positron, just waiting to be unleashed by the force of the collision. The electron and positron *disappear* and the available energy in the fields becomes manifest as the particles of the final state. I also can't tell you which final state particles will appear in a given collision any more than I can tell you when a muon will decay. The best I can do is outline the possibilities.

A corollary is that impossible transformations don't happen. For all experimental purposes, the muon is a heavy electron—all of its quantum numbers are the same as an electron, except that it's two hundred times heavier. And, it spontaneously decays into an electron plus some other particles.

> The electron never decays. It is the end of the line. The only account of this I know is that there is no where for the electron to go, because there is no smaller package in which energy prefers to manifest itself.
>
> 3. The quanta don't constitute the field. The field is not made up of quanta. The electromagnetic field does not contain photons. It is not a bag of marbles, nor a stack of blocks. The field has its own motions, its own resonances, and these are photons of various energies. Physicists use the analogy of the vibrating string to try to explain this fact: Just as a vibrating string has its overlapping series of normal modes, the up quark, the down quark, and the Z boson are all resonances in an underlying, undulating field.
>
> 4. For quantum fields, all interactions are point-like, occurring at a specific point in space-time and involving specific combinations of field quanta. In other words, all interactions are discrete. Every interaction is broken down into individual interactions between individual quanta. And these quanta are manifestations of the energy present in the underlying continuous field.

4 Interactions and Local Symmetry

So, what's the big picture? We have a world filled with fields, all of which are manifest only by particles, all interacting with one another. But what does "interaction" mean? How are these fields/particles related to their interactions? Considering this brings us to the notion of invariance, the notion that despite the appearance of change, things stay the same. Physicists apply invariances by insisting that "the physics" of a system doesn't change under certain transformations. The use of invariances (and the related notion of conservation) has a

long history in physics, and in the sciences generally. One might consider the story of physics as the search for the true invariances within the world.

This is the idea that Huygens leverages in "Motions of Colliding Bodies," which we read here at St. John's in the Junior Laboratory. In that work, Huygens considers two balls colliding with one another, and he works out the general kinematics of hard collisions. Here is the beginning of the proof of his first proposition. (I've made minor edits that obviate the mathematical proportions and variables):

Figure from Proposition 1 of Huygens's
Motion of Colliding Bodies

> Imagine that a boat near a bank is carried along by the current, so close to the bank that a passenger standing in it can stretch out his hand to a friend standing on the bank. Let the passenger hold in his hands . . . two equal bodies . . . suspended on strings, and . . . by bringing together his two hands with equal motions, understood in relation to himself and the boat, until they touch, he thus makes the two balls collide with equal speeds. The balls, therefore, must necessarily rebound from their mutual contact with equal speeds . . . in relation to the passenger and the boat. Moreover, suppose that in the same time the boat is carried to the left with . . . the same speed with which the left hand . . . was carried toward the right. It is therefore clear that the passengers [left] hand has remained motionless in relation to the bank and to his friend, but that [his right hand], in relation to the same friend was moved with [double the] speed. . . . Therefore, if the friend on the bank is supposed to have grasped, with his own [right hand], the passengers [left hand], together with the end of the string which supports [one ball], but with his other [left hand] the passengers [right

> hand], which holds the string from which [the other ball] hangs, it is apparent that while the passenger makes [the two] balls strike one another with a speed equal in relation to himself and the boat, the friend on the bank, in the same time, shoved [one ball against the other ball, one at rest and the other with a speed double that of the boat] in relation to the bank and to himself. And it is evident, however, that as for the passenger, who, as was said, makes the two balls move, it makes no difference that his friend on the bank has taken his hands and the ends of the strings, since he only accompanies their movement and doesn't hinder them at all. For the same reason, the friend on the bank who makes [one ball] move toward the [motionless ball] is not disturbed at all by the fact that the passenger has joined hands with him.[5]

Huygens determines the laws of collision by requiring that the collision itself remain the same, even if it may seem different to different viewers. Even though different viewers would obtain different results for the speeds and directions of the colliding bodies, Huygens presumes that all such views would be ultimately commensurable, and that they could be transformed into one another if we know the parameters of the transformation. Indeed, this difference is plain, since the passenger on the boat moves his arms at the same speed, while his friend on the shore keeps one arm still and the other rushes along at twice the speed of the boat. The leverage Huygens has in this analysis is the presumption that the collision for the passenger and the collision for his shore-bound friend are one and the same; indeed, it certainly seems that there is only one collision, not two. Huygens reinforces our presumption about this by having them touch hands in such a way that the hands are in the same place, with the same motion, but neither pair disturbs the other. The difference in relative speed between the observers—that is, between the passenger and his friend on the shore—cannot make a genuine difference to the physical laws involved, because then there would be two collisions rather than one. Any distinction between the two observers must be accounted for by a trans-

formation that may render the component details different, but must leave the collision alone. Huygens's assumption of invariance preserves the identity of the collision as a single event, and this identity consists of a single interaction in a particular place at a particular time.

The sort of leverage Huygens employs is very powerful and is used over and over in physics. As an intellectual activity, it presumes that, in some articulable way, the world is unchanging and that distinctions are variations that fill up that unchanging whole. This is sensible and reasonable. In fact, it is rational in an explicit way. The shapes of the parts and the distinctions among them are measured with respect to the whole. Physics articulates difference by means of ratio, that is, by means of comparison. One might well say that the root activity of all physics is the art of comparison: the physicist hunts for invariances in order to articulate distinctions that make a genuine difference.

There are many sorts of invariances in physics. For instance, there is invariance with respect to translations in location or time. The criterion of such an invariance is that the equation describing the dynamics of the system, namely, the Lagrangian, is unchanged after some transformation. If we say, to give an example, "the physics of this system is invariant with respect to translations in location," we mean that if any increment is added to the variable for location in the Lagrangian, when we work out the algebra, the new Lagrangian simplifies back into the original one.

Now this kind of invariance has a very special consequence. If a Lagrangian has an invariance, there is an associated conserved quantity and vice versa. In other words, if the physics has an invariance something is conserved, and if something is conserved there is an invariance. So space-translation invariance (invariance with respect to increments in spatial locations, also called space-translation symmetry) implies conservation of momentum. Time-translation invariance

(invariance with respect to increments in time, also called time-translation symmetry) implies conservation of energy.[6] The reverse is also true: momentum conservation implies space-translation symmetry and energy conservation implies time-translation symmetry. Conservation principles turn out, therefore, to indicate symmetries in the physical world. Momentum conservation points at a fundamental homogeneity in the universe: *here* and *there* aren't different from the perspective of physical laws. Similarly, energy conservation indicates the same thing about time: *now* and *then* aren't different from the standpoint of physical laws.

These symmetries are not restricted to kinematical quantities, like momentum, associated with the motion of physical objects. They can also be associate with the state functions of quantum field objects; that is to say, there can be internal symmetries in the different quantum fields and in the particular quanta that belong to them. One such internal symmetry is called *phase symmetry.* In quantum mechanics, all the states of any system have an associated phase, because the mathematical descriptions of the states are very complex wave functions, and every wave has a phase. Now phase isn't a very complicated idea; it's just the marker of a repeating motion. Imagine sitting in a boat on a lake as a wave passes underneath, lifting and lowering the boat (and you with it) over and over. If you were next to a dock, you might go from looking at the barnacles under the dock while the boat is in the wave's trough to looking over and across the dock at your neighbor's yacht while the boat is riding at the wave's crest. And you would repeat this up-and-down trip with every complete cycle of the wave beneath your boat. This repeated up-and-down motion is circular in nature: you go up a certain height from trough to crest, then down again through the same distance, then up again, and so on. You could even track your relative position on the wave by marking out your position on the up and down cycle on the face of a clock, so that

one turn around the clock corresponds to one cycle of up-and-down motion. Assigning your highest point above the dock to the twelve-o'clock mark, you'd descend to dock level at quarter past, bottom out at half past, ascend to dock level again at quarter to, and return to your highest point again when the hand returns to noon. (Notice that you can choose any point in the up-and-down motion to be the start of the phase. You can assign the twelve-o'clock mark to the lowest point of the motion, or to the point that is level with the dock if you wish. Your boat will always be back at the same place when the hand goes all the way around.) These points on the clock, as well as all those in between, mark your *phase,* which is the clock position that corresponds to your height at any moment within one cycle of the wave's motion.

Now consider your neighbor's yacht on the other side of the dock. Assuming that the wave lifts your boat first, travels under the dock, and then lifts your neighbor's boat, his boat will also rise and fall. And depending on the phase of each boat—that is, depending on the location of each boat in the wave's cycle—the relative motion of the two boats will be different. If the boats are *in phase,* then both of them will go up and down together. If the boats are completely *out of phase,* and your boat will be at its highest point when your neighbor's is at its lowest point.

Quantum states are a bit like these boats, each moving up and down, each having its own phase, akin to a hand sweeping around the face of a clock. (As a technical matter, this phase is part of the complex number-value of a quantum mechanical wave function.) And, just as the starting point of the phase doesn't matter for the boats, it also doesn't matter for the quantum state. No measurement can reveal the absolute value of the phase. In the end, only differences in phase between systems can ever be revealed experimentally. This is akin to being able to know only the difference in the relative heights of your boat and your neighbor's, but not being able

to know his height or your height absolutely. (Presumably, this means that there is no reference point analogous to "sea level" in the world of quantum fields. On the other hand, we could be wrong in thinking that "sea level" is a useful reference point.)

Now, let's consider some possible symmetries associated with phase. One possibility would be to demand that physics doesn't change if all the phases in the whole universe are modified by the same amount. This amounts to saying that the results of my experiments won't change if every internal clock is modified by the same amount. Imagine moving all the start times for all the clocks by the same amount. (This is done mathematically by multiplying every state by the same value.) Such a property would be a global symmetry that reflected a global invariance. Global symmetry (or global invariance; we will use the terms interchangeably, since one implies the other) is good because it establishes a closed system. For instance, it would be very nice if charge were globally invariant: that would mean that charge is conserved, and that would be reflected in no net change of charge in the universe at all. Conversely, global invariance is bad because the closed system that it establishes is necessarily the entire universe, not just the one point in the universe where an interaction occurs. Global invariance over-constrains the physics by tying the activity of the system at any given point to the activities happening at all other points; it implies that every point in the universe is instantaneously sensitive to all the others. The problem with global invariance is that the arbitrariness of the phase for each state isn't preserved; that is, it doesn't allow me to arbitrarily decide where to start my phase clock. Under global invariance, I am able to set the clock arbitrarily for one state, but doing so fixes the phase for all other states—instantaneously, everywhere. This is just the kind of action at a distance to which Faraday objected, because it makes the entire the uni-

verse one gigantic causal connection.

A better alternative, which neither violates special relativity nor implies action at a distance, is local invariance or local symmetry. Mathematically, this means that the physics doesn't change if states are modified depending on their position in space-time. On the one hand, local invariance is an even stronger restriction than global invariance, because we are requiring the physics to be the same regardless of location—something that global invariance does not require. On the other hand, local invariance liberates states from the tyranny of the whole universe, subjecting them instead to the less all-encompassing tyranny of their space-time locations.

Being tied to conservation, invariance is a whole-defining or system-defining feature. Conserving momentum and energy, for instance, is a fundamental criterion for having a closed system at all. A ball rolling across a table slows down and stops due to friction. Such a system is non-conservative—the momentum at the beginning is not equal to the momentum at the end. Friction is like a sinkhole into which flows all the energy and momentum of the ball. In the end, non-conservative systems leak. The most basic ambition of fundamental physics is an account of the world with no leaking. Any description of a fundamental system will need to exhibit global invariance as a precondition for being satisfactory, but it's really too coarse a requirement because it forces us to look at the whole universe every time we want to look at an interaction. Local invariance actually does more for us, because it implies integrity in the parts that make up the whole, and it requires a whole system at each space-time point.

Now you don't get local symmetry requirements for nothing; there are consequences to be met. To illustrate them, consider a single free electron. Such a particle would be one quantum of an electron field. It would be characterized by having a particular momentum and energy. As a quantum

state, this electron can have any phase at all—the hand on the clock can be at any location. Now, stipulating global phase invariance implies that the charge of this electron is conserved in the universe. And since my system has only one charge, my physics will be constrained always to have a total of one net charge in the universe. Now, if you go through the mathematics, you'll find that the Lagrangian for the free election, which determines its physics, won't be invariant under a local phase transformation—that is, the physics won't exhibit local symmetry. However, you can make the system be locally invariant by adding two terms to the Lagrangian, one term that corresponds to the electromagnetic field and its quantum, the photon, and another term that corresponds to the point coupling between the two fields. The upshot is that making phase locally invariant requires that there be both electrons and photons—and consequently both electron fields and electromagnetic fields—in the world, together with all their mutual interactions.

This sort of local phase symmetry is the underlying feature of all the quantum field theories comprising the Standard Model. Indeed, each force is associated directly with an underlying local symmetry that individuates both the quanta of the matter fields and the quanta of the force fields and joins them in a local interaction. Local symmetry operates much like Huygens's assumption that there is a single collision to which the parts can be related: the interactions among field quanta become the primary source of connection and unification. So the electron and photon always and only come together as a single interaction called a *vertex.* This example belongs to the theory of quantum electrodynamics—the oldest of the quantum field theories. The other parts of the Standard Model include different interactions. QCD has quark-gluon vertices, electroweak theory has neutrino-W boson vertices. Each kind of vertex is characteristic of the type of interaction.

This move from global to local invariance makes quantum field theories philosophically satisfying in a way that older physical theories are not. As I've said, part of the problem with global invariance is that it smacks of action at a distance and feels like an imposed constraint. Such an invariance amounts to a box for the activity inside, a box that is affected in no way by the motions inside it. In this containerized world, the problems of relating parts and wholes never come up. Generating these boxes in order to gain leverage on understanding physical systems has long been a feature of fundamental physics. On the other hand, part of the intellectual trajectory of fundamental physics has been to search immediately for ways to remove external constraints once they have been characterized. This describes the reductionist activity of physics, epitomized by looking for new particles beneath the peeled-back skin of the current crop of fundamental particles. First there were molecules, then atoms, then electrons and nuclei, then protons and neutrons, and now there are quarks—and we're just waiting for the next step down in size.

Here lies the central difficulty of any kind of foundationalism: as we uncover the foundations we also experience the disquieting realization that the foundations must rest on something else. The solution to this problem, both physically and philosophically, is to sort out a whole that is internally constrained so as to allow individuation; to show how the internal characteristics serve to constrain the thing as a thing. This is the effect of local invariance. In this sort of foundation, there can be fundamental things that are not marble-like particles, but intrinsically active quantum mechanical states.

Furthermore, any account of the fundamental things that includes individuation must also account for the way a connection is made to the rest of the world. Locally symmetric quantum field theories provide an example of an account in which the part maintains integrity while also being inextri-

cably embedded within the whole. The solution in quantum field theory is that the individual parts must interact with one another in forming a dynamic whole. We see in quantum field theory the ontological reflection of the necessary characteristics of self-constraint: internal variability and the fundamental coexistence of things unified by their interactions. Indeed, in the end, the truly fundamental thing may in fact be the interaction.

The structure of quantum field theories with local invariance provides individuation through local symmetry requirements, but requires interactions between localities if we are to preserve the invariances essential to wholeness. The invariances are conditions of intelligibility and conditions of individuation; there is no distinction possible without wholeness. Wholeness without distinction is possible, though completely amorphous. Individuation, however, isn't possible without appealing to something within which the individual lies. Quantum field theories incorporate this relation into their very structure through local invariance.[7]

5 Things, fundamental and otherwise

Are electrons and electron fields fundamental entities? Is one properly prior to the other? There are at least two ways to answer this question: an answer from within the account and answer from outside the account.

Let's try to answer from within the account first. The activity of science is generally very pragmatic, and the starting point is to assume the essential integrity of the objects at the scale under consideration. Thus, the fact that all the atoms and molecules in the baseball are constantly in motion does not bear on considering the baseball a thing that has its own properties—its own weight, shape, and so on. At this scale of examination, the baseball is the integral thing, the individuated thing, to which we pay attention. Why? The individuation of the baseball is, among other things, manifest by invariances

of its motion with respect to other things in the world. For the physicist (and the baseball player), the baseball's collective motion individuates it. The physicist considers it a whole by ignoring the possibility that there may be tiny pieces flying off of it or being absorbed into it. If we looked at a larger scale, say the motion of the earth, we would ignore the motion of the baseball. Similarly, if we looked on a smaller scale, say the motion of an electron around a hydrogen atom attached to one of the organic molecules in the leather of the baseball, we would ignore the motion of the whole ball. This notion of scale and relative individuation is natural in physics, and is part of the pragmatic nature of the activity. And when I say that we ignore some of the motions, I don't mean to imply that we are choosing to make some sort of approximation for the sake of convenience. I mean to say that ignoring such motions is the same as looking for the invariances that are the signs of actual things.

So answering the question *What is fundamental?* from within quantum field theory yields this result: the fields and the quanta are certainly elementary, and priority is given to the fields, even though it is only as quanta that fields ever manifest themselves.

Now let's try to answer the question from outside of the account. Here we have to wonder whether the inside answer can't be undermined by seeing the situation from a wider perspective. One way to adopt that perspective would be to revise the question slightly: Are fields and particles really fundamental—as in "at the bottom of things"—or will the unitary electron of today's physicists become a composite like a water molecule for tomorrow's physicists?

To the extent that electrons are simply smaller that water molecules and are constituents in making, say, a hydrogen atom, it is natural to consider electrons elementary in comparison to hydrogen atoms. In some ways, it's the same as saying that hydrogen atoms have electrons inside them, therefore

electrons must be more elementary than hydrogen atoms. On the other hand, the deep result of local symmetry in quantum field theory is that the constituents and their interactions are naturally and irrevocably coexistent as a condition for having a coherent whole. Such a whole is now a coherent activity of parts with internal invariances characteristic of those parts. This criterion applies to water molecules, baseballs, and oak trees as much as it does to electrons and photons, and this makes us wonder whether the electron is really fundamental in relation to the water molecule. The elementary bit of water doesn't naturally seem to be an electron, but rather a water molecule. The action of the water arises out of the interactions of its constituent parts, each of which has its own activity—which is to say, a proper activity bound up with certain invariances. Furthermore, the characteristic sizes and distances of interactions within liquid water are given by the water molecule, not by the electrons that make up that molecule. Indeed, it isn't at all clear that the integrity of the electron and the water molecule—the feature by which I individuate them from each other and call them different things—isn't essentially the same. Each is a zone of stability surrounding amorphous activity. Distinction itself, particleness, arises out of this amorphous activity in the form of stability of activity characterized by an insensitivity to internal activity.

The question of whether the electron has substructure in the way that an atom has substructure is, as my undergraduate advisor in physics said to me years ago, "a research project." For now, the electron is a best candidate for a fundamental or elementary particle. But it cannot be regarded as a building block, as something subsisting by itself that can be stacked with others like it to construct something larger, like a brick. On the contrary, quantum field theory tells us that electrons are parts of a self-constrained world in which their individual existence always arises out of, and within, a whole. There is no "fundamental particle" apart from a "fundamental field."

NOTES

1. Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* Book I, lines 419-421.

2. Isaac Newton, letter to Richard Bently, 25 February 1693.

3. James Clerk Maxwell, "On Action at a Distance," in The Scientific Papers of James Clerk Maxwell, ed. W. D. Niven, 2 vols. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1890), Vol. 2, 322.

4. This particular numerical example is borrowed from the beginning of Frank Wilczek, *The Lightness of Being: Mass, Ether, and the Unification of Forces* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

5. The entire text is available online here:

http://www.princeton.edu/~hos/mike/texts/huygens/impact/huyimpct.html

6. This deep result is called Noether's Theorem after the prolific German mathematician Amalie Emmy Noether (1882-1935).

7. For the experts: I know that I've left out renormalization and that it bears on the question of individuation. There is only so much I can fit into such a small space.

Appendix:
Annotated Bibliography for Further Reading

I. J. R. Aitchison. "Nothing's Plenty: The Vacuum in Quantum Field Theory." *Contemporary Physics* 26 (1985): 333-391. A fine, detailed discussion of the vacuum in quantum field theory.

P. W. Anderson. "More is Different." *Science* 177 (1972): 393-396. A famous article arguing that fundamental structure doesn't correspond to scale.

Sunny Auyang. *How is Quantum Field Theory Possible?* London: Oxford University Press, 1995. A serious philosophical encounter with quantum field theory.

William Berkson. *Fields of Force: The Development of a World View from Faraday to Einstein.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974. A history of the idea of the field, focussing on classical fields, with an attention to philosophical ideas.

I. J. R. Aitchison and A. J. G Hey. *Gauge Theories in Particle Physics: A Practical Introduction.* Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2012. A first-rate graduate-level quantum field theory text, focussed on the Standard Model.

Robert B. Laughlin and David Pines. "The Theory of Everything." *Pro-*

ceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 97 (2000): 27-32. In line with P. W. Anderson's article and containing many physical examples.

Bruce Schumm. *Deep Down Things: The Breathtaking Beauty of Particle Physics*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. A thoughtful, detailed presentation of the Standard Model, emphasizing symmetry issues.

Steven Weinberg. "The Search for Unity: Notes for a History of Quantum Field Theory." *Daedalus* 106.4 (1977):17-35. A excellent overview of the problems and solutions in QFT, set in a historical progression.

Steven Weinberg. "Newtonianism, Reductionism, and the Art of Congressional Testimony." *Nature,* 330 (1987):433-437. A discussion of what is meant by "fundamental physics."

Frank Wilczek. *The Lightness of Being: Mass, Ether, and the Unification of Forces.* New York: Basic Books, 2010. A popular science book, well-written, that emphasizes mass and QCD.

The articles by Anderson, Laughlin and Pines, and Weinberg's "Newtonianism" are all included in the recent collection *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science,* ed. Mark A. Bedau and Paul Humphreys. Boston: MIT Press, 2008.

Miracles and Belief

Joseph Cohen

Is belief in miracles compatible with a scientific understanding of the world?[1]

The idea for this lecture grew out of a philosophy tutorial in which the assignment for one meeting was to read and discuss two philosophic arguments on the topic of miracles. They were the chapter entitled "Miracles" in Baruch Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (1687) and the chapter entitled "Of Miracles" in David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748).

I asked the class to consider whether the arguments of Spinoza and Hume constituted a refutation of the possibility of miracles, and if so, in what way such a refutation might affect a belief in divine providence, or religious belief in general.

The students found these questions provocative and challenging, but were also troubled and perplexed by them. Why should the presumed impossibility of miracles occasion such difficulties? I propose this suggestion.

Let us assume as an appropriate and accurate starting point that miracles are understood to be: (1) phenomena which are contrary to and cannot be explained by the established laws of nature; and (2) caused by the intentional acts of a Divine Agent.

Since the existence of miracles implies the existence of a God who is their cause, an argument against the possibility

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of miracles further implies either the non-existence of this God, or the absence in God of the attribute of providential care and concern for particular individuals or peoples. It is only by virtue of possessing this attribute that God would be presumed to produce the intentional acts called miracles. Therefore, to the extent that an argument against miracles is persuasive, this would diminish the degree of certainty of a belief in the existence of such a God or in God's providential care and concern.

Among the students who said they found persuasive and worthy of acceptance the two philosophic arguments against miracles, some volunteered that although they agreed that the arguments were persuasive, they did not want to or were not able to relinquish their belief in a providential God. Their feelings and their faith committed them to this belief. Their position seemed to be either that there was no real inconsistency in holding these apparently opposed convictions, or that the inconsistency didn't bother them.

The aim of this lecture is to explore further these questions and various responses to them. It has two parts: Part I: Spinoza and Hume, and Part II: C. S. Lewis and Francis Collins.

Part I: Spinoza and Hume

Spinoza

To place Spinoza's discussion of miracles (Chapter 6) in the context of the larger aims of his *Treatise,* it will be useful to comment briefly on what precedes that discussion.

The peculiarly hyphenated title, *Theological-Political Treatise,* makes us wonder what the connection of theology and politics might be. On the title page, there is a subtitle that summarizes Spinoza's overall aim:

> Containing some dissertations by which it is shown not only that the freedom of philosophizing can be granted while saving piety and the peace of the republic, but that it

> cannot be removed unless along with that very piety and peace of the republic.

The *Treatise* is thus presented as a work of political philosophy, whose aim is to show how freedom, piety and peace are necessarily interconnected within the framework of that form of political organization known as a republic. Its argument as a whole can be divided into two parts, the theological and the political. In order to achieve the aims of the political part, Spinoza must first confront and overcome the claims of the theologians and of the sacred texts from which they claim their authority.

In the Preface, Spinoza reveals his motive for writing, describes and denounces the pervasive evils produced by superstition and prejudice, and sketches the main themes and plan of organization of the *Treatise.*

The first sentence of the Preface, and hence of the *Treatise,* declares:

> If human beings could rule all their affairs with certain counsel, or if fortune were always favorable to them, they would not be bound by any superstition.[2]

With this, Spinoza launches a direct and sustained attack against superstition, exposing its causes and tracing its pernicious effects. Superstition has its roots in fear (or dread) and ignorance, joined with immoderate desires for the goods of fortune and the incapacity of human beings to control either the turns of fortune or their own desires for her favors. Being ignorant of the operation and order of Nature and fearful of supernatural powers, the people or their rulers place their trust in those who claim to be able to interpret, and possibly to control, the course of events, whether determined by fortune, or natural causes, or the will of the gods. Thus they seek guidance from seers or prophets. In this way, superstition becomes associated with prophecy and religion.

Spinoza initially uses the examples of Alexander the

Great and, closer to his own time, the empire of the Moslem Turks, to highlight the pervasive and pernicious effects of superstition. He then shifts the scene to the religious and political world dominated by Christianity. He declares he had often wondered that those "who boast that they profess the Christian religion—that is, love, gladness, peace, continence, and faith toward all" should engage in such bitter hatred and persecution of others. He finds "the cause of this evil" to be the abuses arising from the admixture of religious belief and political ambition, namely, the political abuse of religion and the religious abuse of politics.

The Church has become an entrenched ecclesiastical and political institution concerned with accumulation of honors, privileges, and power, and "faith is now nothing else but credulity and prejudice." Reason is despised as being by nature corrupt, and the free judgment of each person to discern the true and the false is impeded. Spinoza attacks this unholy theological-political admixture, which makes it "seem as though [it has] been intentionally devised for extinguishing the light of understanding." He therefore resolved "to examine Scripture anew in a full and free spirit," contriving a method of interpretation which would "admit nothing as its teaching which was not taught by it very clearly."[3]

As indicated in the Preface, the plan of organization of the *Treatise* is keyed to a series of questions that guide the course of argument of the following twenty chapters. The questions pertaining to the chapter on miracles ask "whether miracles happen contrary to the order of nature, and whether they teach God's existence and providence more certainly and more clearly than do the things we understand clearly and distinctly through their first causes."[4]

How do human beings come to know "first causes"? Is there more than one source available by means of which knowledge can be acquired? In Chapter 1 (Prophesy) and Chapter 2 (Prophets), Spinoza begins to explicate his account

of natural knowledge as grounded in reason and experience, in contrast to knowledge claimed through prophecy or revelation as grounded in imagination and faith.

Chapter 1 begins as follows:

> Prophecy, or Revelation, is certain knowledge *(certa cognitio)* of some matter revealed by God to human beings. A Prophet, moreover, is one who interprets the revealed things of God to those who are unable to have the certain knowledge of the matters revealed by God, and so can only embrace the matters being revealed by *mere faith*.[5] (Emphasis added.)

Drawing on this definition, Spinoza then claims, "it follows that natural knowledge can be called Prophecy *(cognitionem naturalem prophetiam vocari posse)*. For the things we know by the *natural light* depend solely on knowledge of God and of his eternal decrees."[6] (Emphasis added.)

What then, for Spinoza, is "natural knowledge"? How is it distinct from the "certain knowledge" which prophets may claim for themselves? And how does knowledge obtained by the *natural light* differ from the certain knowledge revealed by the *prophetic light?*

He begins to answer these questions in remarks that take the form of an argument.[7]

> 1. "[N]atural knowledge is common to all human beings—for it depends on foundations common to all human beings."
> 2. However, this kind of knowledge "is not well regarded by the vulgar [the multitudes], who are always panting after what is rare and alien to their nature . . . ; when they speak of prophetic knowledge, they want this [natural] knowledge excluded."
> 3. Nevertheless natural knowledge "can be called divine *(divina vocari potest),* as can any other knowledge, whatever it may be . . . . Yet in respect

> of the certainty that natural knowledge *(cognitionem naturalem)* involves and the source from which it is derived (namely, God)," it is in no way inferior to prophetic knowledge *(cognitione prophetica).*
>
> 4. "Yet though natural science *(scientia)* is divine, its propagators still cannot be called Prophets." For what the teachers of natural science impart to others can be grasped by them, not by faith alone, but with a certainty and entitlement equal to that of the teachers.
>
> 5. "[S]ince our mind . . . has the power to form some notions explaining the nature of things and teach the conduct of life, we can deservedly state that the mind's nature . . . is the first cause of divine revelation."
>
> 6. "[T]he idea and nature of God dictates everything we clearly and distinctly understand, not in words but in a far more excellent mode, which best agrees with the nature of the mind—as anyone who has tasted the certainty of understanding has without a doubt experienced within himself."

These six steps lead to Spinoza's powerful conclusion:

> 7. "For everything is done through God's power. Indeed, since Nature's power is nothing but God's power itself, it is certain that we do not understand God's power to the extent that we are ignorant of natural causes."[8]

In this last statement, Spinoza reveals his deepest and most comprehensive insight, namely, the fundamental unity of God and Nature. Although the phrase "God or Nature" is explicitly used in the preface to Part IV of Spinoza's *Ethics,* the application of this insight runs through the *Treatise* and forms the constant backdrop for its unfolding argument.[9]

It is often debated whether Spinoza's use of the phrase "God or Nature" is to be understood as a deification of Nature or as a naturalization of God. In either case, the term "supernatural" is drained of its meaning. For Spinoza the understanding and explanation of the phenomena of the world must be attained through the acquisition of natural knowledge alone. It is from this perspective that Spinoza's philosophic position can be called Naturalism, in opposition to the theological point of view called Supernaturalism.[10]

Spinoza fully develops his naturalistic position in the *Ethics.* Its central teaching is that Man is necessarily a part of Nature, that striving *(conatus)*[11] is the essence of Man, and that our supreme good and highest happiness can be attained by means of striving toward what he calls "the intellectual love of God." In the light of what will be discussed later, Spinoza's account of *the active emotion* (or affect) of intellectual love can be construed as among the "spiritual rewards" experienced by those who seek to understand the mind of God through understanding the system of Nature.

In Chapter 3 of the *Treatise* Spinoza employs this "God or Nature" point of view when he restates the idea of God's providence in terms of God's direction, God's external and internal help, God's choosing, and fortune. He writes:

> By God's direction, I understand the fixed and unchangeable order of nature, or the chaining together of natural things. For . . . the universal laws of nature, in accordance with which everything comes to be and is determined, are nothing but God's eternal decrees, which always involve eternal truth and necessity. Accordingly, whether we say that everything comes to be in accordance with the laws of nature, or that everything is ordered on the basis of God's decree and direction, we are saying the same thing.[12]

Turning now to Spinoza's analysis of miracles in Chapter 6, we see that the heart of the opposition between revealed and natural knowledge comes to light in the questions con-

cerning what miracles are and whether they are possible.[13]

He begins his discussion by stating "the opinions and prejudices of the vulgar [i.e., the many] concerning nature and miracles." He notes that the vulgar call divine any knowledge that surpasses their understanding, especially works of nature whose causes are unknown. These works of nature, of whose causes they are ignorant, are also called works of God or miracles. They believe that God's existence, power, and providence are most clearly established if they imagine that God is the direct cause when something happens in nature which is contrary to their opinion of how nature works. This is because they assume that God and nature are two distinct powers, and that if one of these powers is responsible for an event, the power of the other must be excluded or suspended. So that "partly out of devotion and partly out of a desire to oppose those who cultivate natural science, they desire not to know the causes of things, and they think that those who seek to understand these so-called natural events deny God's existence, or at least God's providence."[14] Thus, in the vulgar view, a miracle is a providential act intended for human benefit to achieve a result that would be contrary to the ordinary operations and power of nature.

Drawing on conclusions earlier established: (a) that the power of nature is the same as the power of God; (b) that the actions of God are eternal, necessary, and immutable; and (c) that God's will is identical with God's intellect, Spinoza argues that miracles are not possible within nature.

Nor can miracles be understood as supernatural events directly referred to God's providential intervention in nature's established processes, for such an intervention by God would contradict the principle that God acts from the necessity of His own nature.

Moreover, since nature's power is nothing but God's power, and God is understood to be infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, so also is nature's power. Whatever may be the

limits of nature's power is the necessary consequence of its own laws. On this account, there is no way to distinguish the natural from the supernatural; there is no conceptual space outside of Nature in which a supernatural Divine Agent, intending to produce a miraculous intervention, could act.

Spinoza's argument can be summarized as follows. If God is a supernatural agent distinct from nature, and has created and established the laws of nature, then a contradiction would arise if God, acting from the necessity of His own nature, could act both according to and contrary to the laws of nature. If God's fixed and unchangeable order of nature is suspended to accomplish a supernatural purpose, which is what the vulgar call a miracle, then the processes of nature are not fixed and unchangeable, and everything is subject to doubt, including God's fixed nature and existence.

Thus contrary to the vulgar view that miracles most clearly affirm the existence and power of God, Spinoza argues that the incoherence of their view undermines the conclusion they wish to establish; it is rather this vulgar view which leads to atheism.[15] If, on the contrary, God is identical with nature, then there are not two distinct and opposed principles; miracles, therefore, could not be supernatural events, the cause of which is outside of and contrary to nature and reason.

Further, if one nevertheless believes or supposes that there is a transcendent supernatural God distinct from the system of nature, and that such a God is utterly mysterious, hidden and unknowable, the consequence of this supposition is that human beings would not be able to distinguish the ordinary acts of nature from the so-called supernatural acts which are the cause of miracles. Neither the principle of causality nor any of the categories or aspects of human rationality could be supposed to apply to such an utterly unknowable Being.

Spinoza therefore understands and defines a miracle to

be nothing else but an event whose natural cause cannot be explained by the person who narrates it or who believes the event to be supernatural and surpasses human understanding. The designation of an event as a miracle is merely a way of saying that we are ignorant of its cause, which, though presently unknown, may not be unknowable.

Spinoza's overall philosophical conclusions, the answer to the questions posed in the Preface, are: (a) God's existence and providence cannot be known through miracles, but these conclusions are far better established and understood from the principle of the fixed and unchangeable order of nature; and (b) the very idea of a miracle "whether contrary to nature or above nature is a mere absurdity."[16]

Hume[17]

In Section X of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* "Of Miracles," Hume is not directly concerned with the metaphysical question, Do miracles exist or are they conceivable within the order of Nature as a whole? Rather, he is concerned with the epistemological question, How can one know or prove that a particular event is a genuine miracle, and not merely the effect of excessive imagination, superstition, or wishful thinking?

Necessarily involved in this epistemological question are certain assumptions about the nature of belief and about what it is reasonable for a person to believe. These assumptions involve the meaning and use of such concepts as evidence, proof, fact, probability and truth. In short, what is ultimately at issue in any discussion about the possibility of miracles is the concept of "rational belief."

In pursuing the inquiry into miracles, Hume wastes no time searching for a definition. It is already at hand. A miracle, he says "is a violation of the laws of Nature," to which he adds that "as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very

nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. . . . Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of Nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden. . . . But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must therefore be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof,* from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof which is superior."[18]

In a footnote to this paragraph, Hume refines and restates his definition: "a miracle may be accurately defined, *a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.*" How does this condition, that the cause of the miracle be attributed to "a particular volition of the Deity," affect our ability to know that the alleged miracle is genuine? The answer is provided in Part 2 of this Section where he states:

> Though the Being to whom the miracle is ascribed, be in this case, Almighty, it does not upon that account, become a bit more probable; since it is impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, otherwise than from the experience which we have of his productions in the course of nature.[19]

Thus Hume's "direct and full proof" against the possibility of miracles is based on the well founded assumption of, and the belief in, the regularity and uniformity of nature and of its laws. This belief, in turn, is grounded in his philosophical analysis of human experience: he believes that we generate ideas and, within limits, acquire knowledge of nature by means of a sustained application of the methods of the experimental sciences.

In this same Section, Hume then proceeds to undermine any and all claims of reported miracles, even those whose pedigree is historically recent and bears the testimony of a large number of highly placed political and ecclesiastical figures. Having previously supposed that the testimony in favor of a miracle "may possibly amount to an entire proof," he then retracts this supposition: "[I]t is easy to shew that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession and that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence."[20]

To support this conclusion he offers a range of evidence based on experience and well established principles of human nature. He mentions such phenomena as self-delusion, a desire to deceive others, and the tendency of people to accept as fact what is "utterly absurd and miraculous." The cause of this, he says, is that "the passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion," gives rise to pleasurable affects. Hume is especially harsh in condemning those cases in which "the spirit of religion joins itself to the love of wonder." In these circumstances, "human testimony . . . loses all pretensions to authority." Citing various examples of "the strong propensity of mankind to the extraordinary and marvelous," he asks rhetorically whether it is not such passions which "incline the generality of mankind to believe and report, with the greatest vehemence and assurance, all religious miracles."[21]

Although Hume has labored to undermine all rational belief in the possibility of miracles and in the veracity of those who testify to them, what finally is the purpose of his labors? He states that "the method of reasoning here delivered . . . may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the *Christian religion,* who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason." He believes, it seems, that it is a deep disservice to the Christian religion to defend it on those principles. To elim-

inate the desire or the need to defend Christianity on rational grounds, he then asserts: "Our most holy religion is founded on Faith; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure."[22]

In what is surely one of the most striking passages in the book, Hume ends his essay on miracles by commenting:

> Upon the whole, we may conclude, that the Christian religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: and whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continuous miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.[23]

Given Hume's disbelief in all claims of reported miracles, we may wonder: How can this concluding statement be construed to serve the interests of the Christian religion, or to be a defense of the Christian faith?

Part II: C. S. Lewis and Francis Collins

C. S. Lewis

The arguments of both Spinoza and Hume against the possibility of miracles assumed a certain perspective regarding the knowledge of nature's processes and the existence of its laws. This perspective has often been called naturalism. This means that explanations of all phenomena must be sought within the scope of natural knowledge as grounded in reason and experience, without recourse or appeal to explanations in terms of supernatural causes or agents. The knowledge thus obtained by adhering to the principles and methods of the sciences yields conclusions, in the form of provisional laws of nature, which are open to being tested, confirmed or disconfirmed, and corrected.

The alternative to this naturalistic perspective can be

called supernaturalism.

These are exactly the pair of terms used by C. S. Lewis in his book *Miracles: A Preliminary Study.*[24] Lewis's aims are to confront the reader with the choice between naturalism and supernaturalism, to show the limitations of the former and the superiority of the latter, and to lead the reader to adopt the particular form of supernaturalism supplied by Christianity.

Regarding naturalism, he concedes that "if Naturalism is true, then we do know in advance that miracles are impossible: nothing can come into Nature from the outside because there is nothing outside to come in, Nature being everything."[25]

Therefore, in order to provide an affirmative answer to the question of whether miracles can occur—that is, in order to show that miracles are indeed possible—Lewis says that he must first settle what he calls "the philosophical question."[26] Since the philosophical question at issue here is whether miracles can occur, and since miracles are not possible if naturalism is true, he must either show that naturalism is not true or he must argue that the opposite perspective—supernaturalism—is true.

However, according to Lewis, an argument attempting to show the possibility of miracles cannot be based on experience or history or the examination of biblical texts. This is so because the evidence obtained from each of these sources "depends on the philosophical views which we have been holding before we even began to look at the evidence. The philosophical question must therefore come first."[27] Lewis's general argument seems to be directed, initially at least, against those who reject the possibility of miracles because "we know in advance what results they will find for they have begun by begging the question."[28]

Does Lewis himself think he can settle this "philosophical question" without any begging of the question? To avoid this

result, he would have to confront and overcome the position of those who accept the principles of naturalism as broadly interpreted and applied. In particular he would have to show that it is impossible for naturalism to fulfill its claim to provide the best and fullest explanation of the whole range of phenomena constituting human experience. Let us see whether he succeeds in this undertaking.

Although different chapters of this book present various aspects of his position, his overall argument in behalf of the truth of supernaturalism seems to depend on at least the following premises or assumptions:

> 1. Nature is not the whole of reality. Rather it is merely a partial reality embedded within a higher supernatural reality which constitutes a total reality. Lewis agrees that "all reality must be interrelated and consistent."[29] To find the grounds of this interconnection between the partial and the total reality, one must go back to their common origin, the Creator God. With this supernatural assumption of a Creator God, plus the premise that this God might wish to intervene in or interrupt the order of Nature, miracles can occur.[30]
>
> 2. The system of Nature can only be partial. What it essentially lacks is the spiritual element contained in the Christian and Jewish doctrines which "have always been statements about spiritual reality."[31] What these doctrines mean is that "in addition to the physical or psychophysical universe known to the sciences, there exists an uncreated and unconditional reality which causes the universe to be, [and] this reality has a positive structure or constitution."[32] To distinguish the Christian from the Jewish understanding of the meaning of spiritual reality, he adds that this reality is described "though doubtless not completely, . . . in the

doctrine of the Trinity; and that this reality, at a definite point in time, entered the universe we know by becoming one of its own creatures."[33]

3. In order to tell the story of Christianity, supernaturalism is necessary because it is the realm in which miracles find their being. In the Christian religion, "the Miracles, or at least some Miracles, are more closely bound up with the fabric of belief than in any other."[34] Further, miracles, after all, are "precisely those chapters in the great story [of Christianity] on which the plot turns. Death and resurrection are what the story is about."[35]

4. To tell the Christian story, Lewis must also tell the story of mankind. But from what perspective should this story be told? To tell the story of Man is to give an account of Man's nature. Nature and human nature are complex things, and as Lewis himself points out, "the kind of analysis which you make of any complex thing depends on the purpose you have in view."[36] Since his purpose is to give an affirmative answer to the question whether miracles are possible, the story of mankind must be told from the supernatural perspective.

> When we are considering Man as evidence for the fact that this spatio-temporal Nature is not the only thing in existence, the important distinction is between that part of Man which belongs to this spatio-temporal Nature and that which does not. . . . These two parts of a man may rightly be called natural and supernatural. . . . [T]his "Super-Natural" part is itself a created being—a thing called into existence by the Absolute Being and given by Him a certain character or "nature."[37]

Thus, in order to argue for the truth of his Christian supernaturalism, Lewis assumes the very perspective according to which the concept of Nature is arbitrarily narrowed and

excluded from any connection to the moral or rational development of human beings. He thereby renders the naturalist perspective incapable of explaining the most basic features of human nature. Indeed, in the chapter entitled "Nature and Supernature," he separates Reason from man's nature and asserts that "rational thought is not part of the system of Nature."[38] He then adds that "human minds are not the only supernatural entities that exist. They do not come from nowhere. Each has come into Nature from Supernature: each has its tap-root in an eternal, self-existent, rational Being, whom we call God. Each is an offshoot, or spearhead, or incursion of that Supernatural reality into Nature."[39]

In short, from the supernaturalist perspective, the existence of each human being having the capacity to reason is itself a miracle.

Lewis himself has emphatically asserted the elementary logical point that "a proof which sets out by assuming the thing you have to prove is rubbish."[40] Does he think he has somehow avoided an enormous begging of the question?

Francis Collins

One strongly affected reader of C. S. Lewis is Francis Collins, who is currently the Director of the National Institutes of Health and previously the head of the Human Genome Project.

In his book, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief,*[41] Collins's primary aim is to provide "the possibility of a richly satisfying harmony between the scientific and spiritual world views."[42] That these world views are often said to be in opposition is expressed by such phrases as "the 'battle' between science and religion"[43] and "the conflicts between science and faith."[44]

Note that, in presenting their opposition in these terms, Collins consistently and freely substitutes the words "religion" and "faith" for the word "spiritual," thus treating these three terms as equivalent when set in opposition to "science."

In the introduction to his book, Collins poses the question whether "the scientific and spiritual world views are antithetical." His own answer to this question is:

> No. Not for me. Quite the contrary. For me, the experience of sequencing the human genome, and uncovering this most remarkable of all texts, was both a stunning scientific achievement and an occasion of worship.[45]

From this answer we see that at least in his own heart and mind the dichotomy of "science" on one side, and "religion," "faith" and "the spiritual world" on the other is only apparent. But when he further says: "Science's domain is to explore nature, God's domain is in the spiritual world, a world not possible to explore with the tools and language of science,"[46] the antithesis appears to harden. We now have on one side of the dichotomy Science and Nature, and on the other side Religion, Faith, Spirit, and God. Since in his own terms each side occupies a separate and distinct "domain," it is not immediately evident how these two sides can come together.

On the religious or spiritual side, the book is the personal story of Collins's journey from atheism to wholehearted acceptance of the fundamental tenets of the Christian religion, with its mysteries and its miracles, all centering on the person of Jesus Christ: his Virgin Birth, his Divinity, his Death and Resurrection.

On the side of science and nature, he discusses with elegance and insight, and with similarly wholehearted acceptance, the scientific view of the understanding of the natural world. He writes:

> Science is the only legitimate way to investigate the natural world. Whether probing the structure of the atom, the nature of the cosmos, or the DNA sequence of the human genome, the scientific method is the only reliable way to seek out the truth of natural events. Yes, experiments can fail spectacularly, interpretations of experiments can be misguided, and science can make mistakes. But the nature

> of science is self-correcting. No major fallacy can long persist in the face of a progressive increase in knowledge.[47]

So the question continues: does Collins see and treat the two world views as essentially separate, distinct and antithetical, or is their opposition only apparent and capable of being harmonized?

Although Collins undoubtedly has a great love of science and has attained a high level of achievement and satisfaction through the understanding of natural phenomena, that way of pursuing the truth is insufficient. For him "science is not the only way of knowing. The spiritual world view provides another way of finding truth."[48] But Collins also thinks that "each person must carry out his or her own search for spiritual truth."[49] What he desires for himself is a "way of seeking fellowship with God," of being able "to communicate with Him."[50] What Collins also desires are answers to the questions that cannot be answered by science, the "eternal questions of human existence." These are questions such as: Why did the universe come into being? and What is the meaning of human existence?[51]

But since these kinds of questions cannot be answered by science, one must go beyond science, go beyond the natural world and into the realm of supernaturalism and the transcendence of a creator God. Or as Collins puts it:

> As seekers, we may well discover from science many interesting answers to the question "How does life work?" What we cannot discover through science alone are the answers to the questions "Why is there life anyway?" and "Why am I here?"[52]

Collins finally finds the answer to such questions, including the question of the possibility of miracles, in the language of the Christian Bible, in the texts of the four gospels, the central figure of which is Jesus, the Christ. These texts revealed to him "the actual account of His life, . . . the eyewit-

ness nature of the narratives, and the enormity of Christ's claims and their consequences."[53] He writes:

> [I]f Christ really was the Son of God, as He explicitly claimed, then surely . . . He could suspend the laws of nature if He needed to do so to achieve a more important purpose.[54]

In attempting to understand God's purpose, Collins wrestled with impenetrable theological conundrums, and again found answers in the writings of C.S. Lewis. Through these writings, Collins was persuaded of spiritual truths the logic of which had previously seemed "like utter nonsense."[55] But now that he has become "a believer in God,"[56] this logic seems to him compelling.

Although Collins's *Language of God* is wonderfully clear in explaining much of the reasoning and evidence supporting the scientific conclusions of cosmology and biology (as in Chapter 3, "The Origins of the Universe," Chapter 4, "Life on Earth: Of Microbes and Man," and Chapter 5, "Deciphering God's Instruction Book: The Lessons of the Human Genome"), I find his language about "truth" to be at the least fuzzy and puzzling.

On the one hand Collins speaks of faith as a "search for absolute truth,"[57] and says that "each person must carry out his or her own search for spiritual truth."[58] Yet he praises the truth-gathering methods of science as "the only reliable way to seek out the truth of natural events" and asserts that "the nature of science is self-correcting."[59] So at least some claims regarding scientific truth, and the beliefs based on those claims, are thereby discovered to have been false. But if each person's search for spiritual truth is a search for what most satisfies his or her longing for fellowship with the Divine, by what shared criteria can these private beliefs and spiritual truths be judged to be either true or false? Is the search for spiritual truth self-correcting in the same way and in the same sense as the search for scientific truth?

Perhaps what is called spiritual truth *is* a genuinely private matter, involving each person's sense of the divine and of what constitutes an adequate relationship to the divine. No doubt such private thoughts and feelings are full of meaning which can be shared with other like-minded persons. It is evident, however, that not everyone needs a belief in miracles to achieve their sense of fellowship with the Divine. We have already noted the example of Spinoza, and we would certainly have to include other philosophers or scientists or seekers after truth who find their spiritual satisfaction within the horizons of a naturalistic world view without having to posit another level of reality called "supernatural."

Collins says that science and faith "fortify each other like two unshakable pillars, holding up a building called Truth."[60] But there are good reasons to think that (1) the logical ground on which each of these pillars stands is essentially different, and (2) the paths toward scientific truth and spiritual truth, as well as the human capacities required to pursue these, are not the same.

Should we not conclude, therefore, that there is not one but two very different buildings called Truth, the foundations of which are laid in two separate realms in the landscape of the human mind? If, as Collins himself describes, there are two distinct world views, the scientific and the religious, and if each relies on its own conception and criteria regarding the truth, how is it possible, as he urges, to "seek to reclaim the solid ground of an intellectually and spiritually satisfying synthesis of *all* great truths?"[61] (Emphasis in the original.)

Recalling for a moment the theological-political theme, perhaps Collins's desire for harmony can be understood in light of his role as a preeminent scientist who heads a national government agency. In this role one can understand that his goal is to bridge the deep divisions in this country concerning major biomedical issues such as stem cell research, cloning, and the search for genetic cures to a wide spectrum of dis-

eases, issues which often are polarized along both religious and political lines. It is this goal which is reflected in his "Final Word":

> It is time to call a truce in the escalating war between science and spirit. The war was never really necessary. Like so many earthly wars, this one has been initiated and intensified by extremists on both sides, sounding alarms that predict imminent ruin unless the other side is vanquished. Science is not threatened by God; it is enhanced. God is most certainly not threatened by science; He made it all possible.[62]

In response to Collins's "final word" on this problem, let us pose instead two "final questions." First, how is it possible to harmonize the truth claims of religious believers and the truth claims of the scientific community without equivocating on the meaning of the term "truth"? And second, if a truth claim, in general, is understood to require a correspondence between what is said or thought and some assumed objective reality—call this the requirement of corresponding to reality—then how is it possible to establish with certitude that this requirement has been met?

NOTES

1. This question is a narrowly formulated aspect of the larger perennial question of the relation of reason to faith. Three relatively recent books which argue for the compatibility of this relationship are: C.F. Delaney, ed., *Rationality and Religious Belief* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University Notre Dame Press, 1983); and Joshua L Golding, *Rationality and Religious Theism* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

2. Preface, Paragraph 1, Sentence 1. In the following notes, all references to the *Theological-Political Treatise* (referred to as *TTP* from its Latin title *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*) will be to *Spinoza's Theologico-*

Political Treatise, trans. Martin Yaffe (Newburyport, Mass.: Focus Philosophical Library, 2004). Citations to the text will be in accordance with Yaffe's system of citations explained on p. viii of that edition. For example, in a subsequent footnote, *TTP,* 1.1.1-2 refers to Chapter 1, Paragraph 1, Sentences 1 and 2. "P" preceding Arabic numerals refers to the Preface.

3. Partial summary of Spinoza, *TTP,* P.1.1 to P.5.l.

4. Spinoza, *TTP,* P.5.6.

5. Spinoza, *TTP,* 1.1.1-2.

6. Spinoza, *TTP,* 1.2.1-2.

7. The following statements numbered 1-6 summarize Spinoza's sentences from *TTP,* 1.2.3 to 1.4.1. Statement number 7 quotes from *TTP,* 1.22.6.

8. In Chapter 2, Spinoza further distinguishes the certainty obtained through the natural light versus the certainty obtained through the prophetic light, finding the difference to be based on the prophets' more vivid power of imagining. He argues that "since simple imagination does not of its own nature involve certainty, as every clear and distinct idea does . . . it follows that by itself prophecy cannot involve certainty." (*TTP,* 2.3.1). What is required to obtain the certainty of clear and distinct ideas upon which natural knowledge is based is nothing other than the power of reasoning itself.

9. Earlier in the *Ethics* (Part I, Proposition 29) Spinoza had introduced the distinction between the active and passive expressions of Nature's all-comprehensive dynamic system: *natura naturans* and *natura naturata,* translated as Nature naturing and Nature natured.

10. As we will see below, these are the terms of the dichotomy proposed by C. S. Lewis.

11. *Conatus,* translated as "striving" or "endeavor," is Spinoza's general term, which includes as aspects "will," "appetite," and "desire." See, *Ethics,* Part III, Proposition 9, Scholium.

12. Spinoza, *TTP,* 3.3.1- 3.

13. Spinoza says that his treatment of this subject is explicitly philosophical; that is, his conclusions about miracles are drawn solely from the principles of nature and reason. This procedure contrasts with earlier chapters that treat of prophecy and prophets, which are theological matters, where he drew his conclusions from the text of Scripture alone.

14. Spinoza, *TTP,* 6.1.90-91.

15. Ibid., 6.1.34.

16. Ibid., 6.1.31, 35.

17. References will be to sections, parts and page numbers in David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Anthony Flew (Chicago: Open Court, 1988). It is noteworthy that both Spinoza and Hume—proponents of the philosophic point of view called Naturalism—also share a common ground of political principle. Each quotes and adopts the political ideal stated by Tacitus: "to be able to think what we please and say what we think" (*Histories,* I.1). For Spinoza, see *TTP,* P 5.18, and the content and title of Chapter 20: "It is shown that in a Free Republic each is permitted both to think what he wants and to say what he thinks." For Hume, see *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Maral Subjects,* in which the quotation from Tacitus serves as the epigraph both for Book I, "Of the Understanding," and for Book II, "Of the Passions."

18. Hume, *Enquiry,* X.l, p.148.

19. Ibid., X.2, p.164.

20. Ibid., X.2, p.150.

21. Ibid., X.2, pp. 151-52.

22. Ibid., X.2, p. 165.

23. Ibid., X.2, p. 166.

24. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001). Lewis is also the author of many popular works of fiction such as *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (seven volumes between 1950 and 1956). The greatest influence on Lewis's fiction seems to have been the Scottish author George MacDonald, a preacher and Christian apologist, who was a prolific writer of novels, short stories, and fairy tales. When Lewis was sixteen, he chanced upon MacDonald's most famous novel *Phantastes* and was enchanted by his prodigious imagination. The book was Lewis's favorite, and he returned to it often throughout his life. See Michael White, *C. S. Lewis: A Life* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004), 103-104.

25. Lewis, *Miracles,* 14-15.

26. Ibid., 2.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 4.

29. Ibid., 96.

30. Ibid., 96-98.

31. Ibid., 124.

32. Ibid., 125.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 108.

35. Ibid., 157.

36. Ibid., 275.

37. Ibid., 276.

38. Ibid., 41.

39. Ibid., 43.

40. Ibid., 18.

41. Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006). Francis Collins is connected to St. John's College by virtue of being the godson of Robert Bart, a long time tutor both in Annapolis and Santa Fe and also Dean of the College in Santa Fe. Collins was one of the speakers at the memorial service for Robert Bart held in McDowell Hall in Annapolis, February 3, 2001.

In a personal communication, Collins wrote: "As I recall, I spoke about the remarkable role he played in my own education. He was my godfather, and no godfather ever took that role more seriously—he gave me many precious gifts as I was growing up, all of which had artistic, religious, or intellectual significance and led to deep conversations. . . . I also remember him assisting me with a particularly thorny calculus problem, and marveling that this sophisticated professor of humanities was also awfully good at integrating by parts. Such was the St. John's way!"

42. Collins, *The Language of God,* 6.

43. Ibid., 4. See also 272: "The current battles between the scientific and spiritual worldviews need to be resolved."

44. Ibid., 84.

45. Ibid., 3.

46. Ibid., 6.

47. Ibid., 228.

48. Ibid., 229.

49. Ibid., 225.

50. Ibid., 220.

51. Ibid., 6.

52. Ibid., 88.

53. Ibid., 221.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., 223.

56. Ibid., 118.

57. Ibid., 227. See also 271: "Given the uncertain ethical grounding of the postmodernist era, which discounts the existence of absolute truth, ethics grounded on specific principles of faith can provide a certain foundational strength that may otherwise be lacking."

58. Ibid., 221.

59. Ibid., 228.

60. Ibid., 210.

61. Ibid., 234.

62. Ibid., 233. For readers wanting to pursue a comprehensive critique of Collins's book, see George Cunningham, *Decoding the Language of God: Can a Scientist Really be a Believer? A Geneticist Responds to Francis Collins* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2010). For readers wanting to pursue further the topic of Truth, see the recent collections of essays in Simon Blackburn and Keith Simmonds, eds. *Truth,* Oxford Readings in Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and Kurt Pritzl, ed., *Truth: Studies of a Robust Presence,* Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

The Question of Questions

Michael W. Grenke

What is involved in *really* asking a question? What is the most important question a human being can ask? Tonight I want to try to consider, along with you, these two questions in the challenging and connected manner in which Martin Heidegger presents them, especially in his *Introduction to Metaphysics.*

If we try to rise to Heidegger's challenge of really asking these questions, then we face serious obstacles in our ordinary modes of living, thinking, and talking to one another. Heidegger characterizes us "modern" human beings as people "who scarcely respond, and then for the most part emptily, to the simplicity of the essential" (*IM,* 98).* But is not the essential that which is sought in all real questioning? And can a minimal and mostly empty response be what is appropriate to the object of real questioning? Later in his argument, when considering the standards of discourse exemplified in contemporary books and newspapers, Heidegger laments "the paralysis of all passion for questioning that has long been with us. The consequence of this paralysis is that all standards and perspectives have been confused and that most men have ceased to know where and between what the crucial decisions must be made" (*IM,* 143).

Lest we too readily exempt ourselves and our community

*Key to citations: *IM = Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). *BT = Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). Page numbers for *Being and Time* are keyed to the seventh German edition, noted marginally in the English translation. In some instances translations have been altered slightly for the sake of accuracy.

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from these criticisms as though they are leveled only at "modern" men, not those who study great books, and only at the discourse found in books and periodicals that we do not allow ourselves to read here, we should consider what Heidegger calls "idle talk" in *Being and Time*. "Idle talk" is discourse that seeks to tone down the stakes of conversation and to keep the responses of the interlocutors within well-prescribed and familiar bounds. Instead of containing and conveying a "primary relationship-of-Being towards the being talked about" (*BT,* 168)—a relationship of the kind that might deeply excite or disturb the speaker and the listener, a relationship that might move a human being as much as the thing in question can move a human being—idle talk just passes words around in the fashion of gossip. The worst part is that it pretends to be real discourse, and in this pretending it hinders attempts at real discourse. Surrounded by such discourse that says very little while pretending to say all there is to say, the average understanding "will *never be able* to decide what has been drawn from primordial sources with a struggle and how much is just gossip" (*BT,* 169). Heidegger finds this idle talk that belongs to everyday average human life to be almost everywhere and to dominate almost everything about human discourse, both spoken and written. We should not pat ourselves too readily or casually on the back and blindly assume that this idle discourse goes on only outside our community or only on the weekends and never in our classrooms. Idle talk "discourages any new questioning and any confrontation" (*BT,* 169). But might not all *real* questioning be, in a way, new and confrontational?

In order to try to get free from the realm of idle talk and really to ask questions, to *question* questions—*die Fragen fragen,* as the Germans say—we must try to situate ourselves in a realm of thinking and discourse that is not saturated with the sense, the assurance, that whatever is to come next will be comfortably like that which has already come before. Per-

haps we can start to get a feeling for this in a slight observation of a feature of the text of the *Introduction to Metaphysics* that might tend to frustrate us with Heidegger, or even make us distrust him. The book asks a question in its very first paragraph, and it makes explicit the difficulty of really asking that question. A large portion of the discussion on the pages that follow is devoted to a discussion of that question and its asking. Nine pages in, Heidegger proclaims, "We have not even begun to ask the question itself" (*IM,* 9). If the reader's patience has not worn thin after nine pages, it may be getting frayed at twenty-nine pages in, where Heidegger says, "We still know far too little about the process of questioning, and what we do know is far too crude" (*IM,* 29). In a way, the saga of really asking a question goes on throughout the entire book, all the way to the very end, where Heidegger suggests that real questioning may be a matter that takes a whole lifetime.

I am not calling attention to these matters to complain about the way Heidegger seems to avoid or defer satisfaction of the desires he has aroused in his readers. The more generous and fruitful way to look at this, regardless of its accuracy, is to think that Heidegger is really making a high demand upon himself and upon his intended readers. He is not settling back into the easy and comforting conviction that he already knows how really to ask questions and that he already is asking real questions.

What would it take for us to follow Heidegger's example? In thinking about Heidegger's challenge, I have been trying to ask myself whether I have ever been involved in real questioning myself, and I have been continually struck by how hard it is to make that a real question. Can you ask yourself in a real way, in way that does not presuppose an answer, in a way that does not let you shrug off, turn away from, or deny the question, whether in our classes—and especially in those most avowedly devoted to questions, our seminars—whether

any real questioning has been going on? I do not ask this question to satisfy any savage and lingering resentment you might have over a seminar gone wrong; rather I mean it to stir concern in you about your own questioning.

The Question of *Questions*

Now that you are stirred up, let us turn to a more detailed look at what Heidegger has to say about questions. A brief glimpse at *Being and Time* might help lay some groundwork. In the second section of the book, Heidegger begins the task of trying to "formulate"—or rather reformulate—the question of Being, the question that is the leading question of the whole work, and the question that Heidegger presents as the question that is first in rank. The reformulation of the question is undertaken explicitly to "revive" the question, to make it a matter of living concern again. In order to reformulate this question, Heidegger tries to "explain briefly what belongs to any question whatsoever" (*BT,* 5). The following scheme of three elements emerges: "Any question, as a question about something, has *that which is asked about.* But every question about something is somehow a questioning of something. So in addition to what is asked about, a question has *that which is interrogated*. . . . Furthermore, in what is asked about there lies also *that which is to be found out by the asking;* this is what is really intended: with this the question reaches its goal" (*BT,* 5).

In fitting his leading question into the scheme that belongs to any questioning, Heidegger announces that Being is what is asked about, even though Being is not a being, which is to say Being is not a thing like other things. He then announces that the meaning of Being is what is to be found out by the asking. And then he turns to the middle element of his scheme—"that which is interrogated." Since Being is the Being of beings, the interrogation is to be directed at beings themselves. Perhaps because many beings would seem to be

rather unresponsive to interrogation, Heidegger notes, "When we come to what is to be interrogated, the question of Being requires that the right way of access to beings shall have been obtained and secured in advance" (*BT,* 6). Method matters, even if the motto of Heidegger's phenomenal approach is "To the beings themselves!" "Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make one being—the questioning one—transparent in its own Being. The very asking of this question is one being's mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about—namely, Being. This being which each of us himself is and which includes questioning as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term 'Dasein'" (*BT,* 7). Dasein, "Being there," is Heidegger's technical term for the kind of being that is human being. Because human beings have a special relationship to Being, because they are beings that ask the question of Being, the rest of Heidegger's *Being and Time* occupies itself with an analysis of the structure of human being.

In the Author's Preface to the seventh edition, Heidegger admits to the unfinished character of *Being and Time.* He admits that a promised second "half" of the book has not been delivered, and he says that the first half, which is the book as he has left it to us, would have to be newly presented if the question were to be carried further. Heidegger then suggests that in order to shed some light on this the reader should look at his *Introduction to Metaphysics,* published in the same year as the seventh edition of *Being and Time.*

The beginning of *Introduction to Metaphysics* focuses attention on the fundamental question of metaphysics and on the difficulty of asking it.

> Individuals and peoples ask a good many questions in the course of their historical passage through time. They examine, explore, and test a good many things before they run into the question "Why are there beings rather than

> nothing?" Many men never encounter this question, if by encounter we mean not merely to hear and read about it as an interrogative formulation but to ask the question, that it, to bring it about, to raise it, to feel oneself in the state of being compelled to this question (*IM,* 1).

Although this is a somewhat different question than the leading question of *Being and Time* (*IM,*18-19), both are put forth as the fundamental question and as the question that is first in rank. Also because Heidegger asserts that the second clause of the question, "rather than nothing," is not superfluous, and because it reveals that the scope of the question aims at the ground of beings (*IM,* 24), it is very close to being the question of being. Does what Heidegger says here at the beginning of *Introduction to Metaphysics* serve, then, to help us understand what he means in *Being and Time* when he calls human being the being that asks the question of Being?

Also, what does this initial statement tell us about really asking this (or any) question? What does it mean to "encounter" a question if it does not mean to hear it or to read it? Heidegger's gloss here on asking the question is that it involves bringing a question about, placing or "putting" the question, and finding oneself in the state of feeling the necessity for the question. This suggests that the asking of a question is very different from becoming aware of a question or from "finding" a question. The relationship of the questioner to the question is more intimate and more essential than the relationship of an uninterested, passive observer to an observed object. With respect to the fundamental question, Heidegger goes so far as to say "*if* this question is asked and if the act of questioning is really carried out, the content and the object of the question react inevitably on the act of questioning" (*IM,* 5). What is this reacting? Is it similar to what Heidegger means when he says in *Being and Time* that the being that asks the question of Being "gets its essential character from what is inquired about—namely Being"? Heideg-

ger extends this thought here in *Introduction to Metaphysics* in the context of its fundamental question—"this question 'why,' this question as to the being as such in its entirety, goes beyond mere playing with words, provided we possess sufficient intellectual energy to make the question actually recoil into its 'why,' for it will not do so of its own accord" (*IM,* 5).

Really asking this question means making the question recoil into its why. This questioning of the question searches for the grounds of the questioning itself. It asks "Why the why?" And in so doing, it turns its attention toward the being that questions. This "privileged question 'why' has its ground in a leap through which man thrusts away all the previous security, whether real or imagined, of his life. The question is asked only in this leap; it is the leap; without it there is no asking" (*IM,* 6).

If this leap, without which there is no asking, involves thrusting away all the previous security of life, it may be objectively impossible to determine when such a leap has been made. "Let us be clear about this from the start: it can never be objectively determined whether anyone, whether we, really ask this question, that is, whether we make the leap, or never get beyond a verbal formula" (*IM,* 6). This might seem to mean we can never know whether a question has really been asked. But the sentence that follows this statement seems to point to history as the obstacle to our objective determination. "In a historical setting that does not recognize questioning as a fundamental human force, the question immediately loses its rank" (*IM,* 6).

The paragraph that immediately follows would seem to be an example of such a historical setting. In that paragraph, Heidegger considers those who hold the Bible to be divine revelation and truth. For those believers, there would seem to be a clear and immediate answer to the question "Why are there beings rather than nothing?" They have this answer before the question is even asked. Heidegger says that such be-

lievers cannot really ask the question. "One who holds to such faith can in a way participate in the asking of our question, but he cannot really question without ceasing to be a believer and taking all the consequences of such a step. He will only be able to act 'as if'" (*IM,* 7). Thus Heidegger seems to point to a situation in which he feels confident that the question is not really being asked. This is because he thinks he can recognize a "historical setting" where questioning is not recognized "as a fundamental human force"; rather, "[f]rom the standpoint of faith our question is 'foolishness'" (*IM,* 7).

Heidegger goes on to identify philosophy with this foolishness. He then says "Really to ask the question signifies a daring attempt to fathom this unfathomable question by disclosing what it summons us to ask, to push our questioning to the very end. Where such an attempt occurs there is philosophy" (*IM,* 8). Is Heidegger going so far as to suggest that where there is no philosophy there is no real questioning? Would that in turn lead so far as to suggest that where there is faith there is no real questioning of anything? Does the need for philosophy constitute some part of the obstacle to the objective determination of whether a leap into real questioning has been made? For the historical is not the objective, the historical is subject to "its own law," not the universal law. And Heidegger conceives of philosophy as historical, so that "there is no way of determining once and for all what the task of philosophy is" (*IM,* 8).

What I have presented so far has followed, with some principle of selection, what Heidegger has to say about really asking questions in the beginning pages of *Introduction to Metaphysics,* up to page nine. You will recall that on page nine Heidegger announces that, "We have not even begun to ask the question itself." What still stands in the way of our really asking a question (or the question)? What needs to be seen, done, or suffered?

The question of *questions* dies down in the text for about

ten pages. Then it is resumed explicitly with a series of statements that might seem unnecessary. First Heidegger tells us that "questions and particularly fundamental questions do not just occur like stones and water. Questions are not found ready-made like shoes and clothes and books. Questions are, and are only as they are actually asked" (*IM,* 19). Heidegger seems to fear that we might not yet be thinking properly about questions. He feels the need to tell us questions *are,* that is they have some kind of being. And he feels the need to point out that questions do not have the kind of being that we might tend to ascribe either to natural beings (stones, water) or to artificial beings (shoes, clothes, books). This difference is amplified when Heidegger claims, "A leading into the asking of the fundamental questions is consequently not a going to something that lies and stands somewhere; no, this leading must first awaken and create the questioning" (*IM,* 19).

What kind of being, then, should we think that questions have? Heidegger seems to think we might be tempted to think that questions have the kind of being belonging to a particular kind of sentence—the kind that ends with a question mark. So next he tells the reader, "To state the interrogative sentence, even in a tone of questioning, is not yet to question. To repeat the interrogative sentence several times in succession does not necessarily breathe life into the questioning" (*IM,* 20). Is the task, then, to breathe life into our interrogative statements? What can that mean? Heidegger makes it clear that this is not a rhetorical move that can be accomplished through repetition or through variation in tone.

Heidegger next considers the experience of listening to a question. He points to a way in which one could mistake a question to be a mere assertion about the questioning state of the speaker. But if that is how you hear my question, then "you do not join me in questioning, nor do you question yourself. No sign of a questioning attitude or state of mind is awakened." This consideration of what is involved in hearing

a question as a question seems to reveal for Heidegger the questioning state of mind. "Such a state of mind consists in *willing* to know. Willing—that is no mere wishing or striving. Those who wish to know also seem to question, but they do not go beyond the stating of questions; they stop precisely where the question begins. To question is to will to know. He who wills, he who puts his whole existence into a will, *is* resolved. Resolve does not shift about; it does not shirk, but acts from out of the moment and never stops" (*IM,* 20-21).

So a question is not a sentence uttered in the right tone, but a sentence uttered with the right (rather extreme) attitude or state of mind? It turns out that Heidegger also cuts off this notion that a question is a certain kind of sentence uttered with a certain kind of attitude. "So much the less will the interrogative sentence, even if it is uttered in an authentically questioning tone and even if the listener joins in the questioning, exhaustively reproduce the question. The questioning, which is still enclosed, wrapped up in words, remains to be unwrapped. The questioning attitude must clarify and secure itself in the process, it must be consolidated by training" (*IM,* 22).

In the case just described, the questioning done by the speaker and shared in by the listener is not to be found wholly in the sentence uttered or in the tone in which it is uttered. The questioning would seem separable from the words; perhaps the questioning could be carried out with other words, or even without words. The questioning attitude seems not to be a thing of the moment, nor something finished and static. This attitude needs clarifying, securing, and consolidating. By what process or training might a questioning attitude be properly developed? That attitude is characterized by a resolved will to know. What that will aims to know is the truth. Under Heidegger's analysis of the meaning of the word truth, truth is "unconcealment." This is to be distinguished from thinking of truth as correspondence. And late in *Introduction*

to Metaphysics, Heidegger asserts, "Unconcealment occurs only when it is achieved by work" (*IM,* 191). Heidegger gives many examples of intellectual work on the intervening pages—especially in his laborious excursions into the primordial etymologies of important terms in Western thought—and one might profitably attempt to consider much of what he does in *Introduction to Metaphysics* as an attempt to begin training a questioning attitude.

The Question of Questions

Let us turn now to look at Heidegger's claims as to which question is the most important question a human being can ask. "Important" is my term. Sometimes Heidegger says "fundamental," or "first," or "first in rank," or "worthiest." We can try to discipline our conception of the most important question by keeping in mind our observations regarding really asking a question—that questioning extends beyond specific verbal formulae and that a questioning attitude requires work and training,. The most important question is not an object sitting somewhere. I cannot sell you a map with which you can locate it in order to wonder at it. The most important question is not a sentence written on a page in some rare book, available to be read by anyone who can afford to purchase the book. I give you the most important question now as Heidegger expresses it as a sentence. But to hear it properly, we must not get too caught up in its wrappings.

"The question 'Why are there beings rather than nothing?' is first in rank for us first because it is the most far-reaching, second because it is the deepest, and finally because it is the most fundamental of all questions" (*IM,* 2). Heidegger explains that this question is the most far reaching, the widest, because it "confines itself to no particular being" and thus "takes in everything" (*IM,* 2). The question is the deepest because it "aims at the ground of what is insofar as it is" (*IM,* 3). It "penetrates to the 'underlying' realms and indeed to the

very last of them, to the limit" (*IM,* 3). This question is the most fundamental question because "it breaks open the ground for all authentic questions and thus is at the origin of all of them" (*IM,* 6).

From the standpoint of really asking questions, the asking of this question stands out as special. "For through this questioning the being as a whole is for the first time opened up *as such* with a view to its possible ground, and in the act of questioning it is kept open" (*IM,* 4). This statement about the fundamentality of this question—that it opens up a ground of possibility and keeps that possibility open—might also be taken as a statement about what it means really to ask this question. Does really asking a question always involve asking fundamental questions? This might explain Heidegger's big claim that "Our question is the *question* of all authentic questions, i.e., of all self-questioning questions, and whether consciously or not it is necessarily implicit in every question. No questioning and accordingly no single scientific 'problem' can be fully intelligible if it does not include, i.e., ask, the question of all questions" (*IM,* 6).

Pretty quickly, however, Heidegger finds an obstacle to his pursuit of this question of questions and to his claims about its importance. Heidegger finds he must confront a long intellectual tradition that has found Being "unfindable, almost like nothing" (*IM,* 35). Heidegger cites Nietzsche's claim that the highest concepts, "like Being," are the "last cloudy smoke of evaporating reality" (*IM,* 35). as both the final expression and the culmination of this tradition, which holds being to be an error, a mere word, empty of meaning. Heidegger feels the need to confront Nietzsche, and through him the tradition, because if Nietzsche is right, "the only possible consequence would be to abandon the question" (*IM,* 35).

In order to respond to Nietzsche's claim, Heidegger sets out to show that the word being does have meaning. Heidegger gives a series of examples of ways we mean being when

we use the word "is."

> We say "God is." "The earth is." "The lecture is in the auditorium." This man is from Swabia." "The cup is of silver." "The peasant is to the fields." "The book is mine." "He is of death." "Red is the port side." "There is famine in Russia." "The enemy is in retreat." "The plant louse is in the vineyard." "The dog is in the garden." "Over all the summits, there is rest" (*IM,* 89).

Heidegger observes that in each of these cases the word "is" is meant differently.

> "God is"; i.e., he is *really present.* "The earth is"; i.e., we experience and believe it to be *permanently there.* "The lecture is in the auditorium"; i.e., it *takes place.* "The man is from Swabia"; i.e., *he comes from there.* "The cup is of silver"; i.e., it *is made of* . . . . "The peasant is to the fields"; he has gone to the fields and is *staying there.* "The book is mine"; i.e., it *belongs to me.* "He is of death"; i.e., he succumbed to death. "Red is the port side"; i.e., it *stands for* port. "The dog is in the garden"; i.e., he is *running around* in the garden. "Over all the summits, there is rest"; that is to say??? (*IM,* 90).

(There is no account given of the famine, the retreat, or the infestation.) Heidegger gets a bit confused by the last example and tries out a number of meanings, without being satisfied by any of his own suggestions. This occurs perhaps, Heidegger suggests, because the last example is a bit of poetry written by Goethe in pencil on a window frame. Be that as it may, what Heidegger claims to have shown with these examples is that "the 'is' in our discourse manifests a rich diversity of meanings" (*IM,* 91). This rich diversity is possible because the word "being" is empty in the sense of being indeterminate enough to encompass all the various meanings Heidegger presents in all his examples. But the word "being" is not empty in the sense that what is meant in each particular example is quite determinate and distinct (except perhaps for the case of the quotation from Goethe). So Heidegger claims

this evidence proves that being is not an empty word. "If being thus represents what is most unique and determinate, the word "being" cannot be empty . . . . There is no such thing as an empty word; at most a word is worn out, though still filled with meaning" (*IM,* 79).

In replying to Nietzsche, Heidegger has been moved to consider the kind of understanding of being to which human beings already and always lay claim whenever they use the word "is," or any of its other inflectional forms. Heidegger finds in this usage a word that is at once unique and determinate and indeterminate. Might this revelation about the ways in which the word "being" is meant not suggest that being is a realm uniquely suited to a questioning unwrapped from words and a questioning attitude in need of development?

> Questioning is the authentic and proper and only way of appreciating that which, by its supreme rank, holds our existence in its power. Hence no question is more worthy of being asked than the question of our understanding of being, unless it be the question of being itself. The more authentic our questioning, the more immediately and steadfastly we dwell on the most questionable of all questions—namely, the circumstance that we understand being quite indefinitely and yet with supreme definiteness (*IM,* 83).

Is there a kind of fit between the mode of being that belongs to human beings, the questioning beings, and the determinate indeterminacy with which being manifests itself? Is the human relation to being more than the merely "happy" accident that we happen to ask the question of being? As *the* questioning being, is human being a fit mirror for being itself? I find it suggestive that Heidegger notes in passing in *Being and Time* that "the idea of Being in general is just as far from being 'simple' as is the Being of Dasein" (*BT,* 196).

Human Being and Questioning

I feel like I have been holding my usual critical judgment in

abeyance in much of what I have said so far. I have done this in order to try to think Heidegger's thought as genuinely as I can on its own terms. That entails the abandonment of much of our traditional sense of evidentiary criteria. For Heidegger claims to be thinking about and writing about matters that are more fundamental than our traditional notions of truth as correspondence, and more fundamental than our idea of argument as a progression of inferences that follow one another according to the rules of logic. As Heidegger suggests, "Perhaps the whole body of logic . . . is grounded in a very definite answer to the question about the being" (*IM,* 25).

But still, isn't Heidegger wrong about Nietzsche? Isn't he misstating the main point of Nietzsche's claim? When Heidegger cites Nietzsche as saying that the highest concepts, including Being, are "last cloudy smoke of evaporating reality," Heidegger is referring to a passage in section 4 of *Twilight of the Idols,* called "Reason in Philosophy." Being is not mentioned in section 4, but is discussed in the following section as a concept that is derived by means of abstraction from the concept of the I involved in willing. In section 4, the highest concepts are not said to be empty, rather they are said to be emptiest. Therefore Heidegger's overcoming of Nietzsche by means of proving that being is not an empty word is no real overcoming at all. Moreover, Heidegger's treatment of this passage seems to be silent about Nietzsche's main point, which is that the so-called highest concepts are actually the last concepts, not the first; they are derivative concepts, not first things. To address Nietzsche's real point, Heidegger would have to try to show that Being is available to human beings in some primary—I am tempted to say "direct"—experience *and* that this primary experience contains the kind of rich diversity that, as Heidegger demonstrates, belongs to our use of the word "being." I do not think Heidegger tries to show this by means of argument, although at times he seems to claim that it is the case; it may be, in fact, that Hei-

degger would claim that such a primary experience of being could never be shown in argument.

How would Heidegger respond, then, to the claim that he got Nietzsche wrong? One possible type of response might be found in a passage where Heidegger raises the complaint on the reader's behalf that Heidegger himself is misreading Parmenides. Heidegger admits that "our interpretation of the fragment must appear to be an arbitrary distortion. We are accused of reading into it things that an 'exact interpretation' can never determine. This is true" (*IM,* 176). Heidegger does not leave the matter at a rather matter-of-fact "Very well, you caught me." Instead, he turns the complaint about his own inaccuracy, his own making things up, into an opportunity to transform the criteria of truth. He asks, "Which interpretation is the true one, the one which simply takes over a perspective into which it has fallen, because this perspective, this line of sight, presents itself as familiar and self-evident; or the interpretation which questions the customary perspective from top to bottom, because conceivably—and indeed actually—this line of sight does not lead to what is in need of being seen" (*IM,* 176).

Whether we should find this a slippery and discreditable evasion of intellectual integrity, or an example of a very serious way to maintain intellectual integrity, or something in between, I shall leave for you to ponder. Rather than trying to resolve the matter, I will instead point out the way in which Heidegger's response to the question of the intrusion of his own creativity into his interpretations of the texts connects to the way in which he thinks about really asking questions. Immediately after suggesting that his creative interpretation has a right to be considered "true" interpretation, Heidegger directly connects true interpretation to questioning—"to give up the familiar and go back to an interpretation that is also a questioning is a leap. In order to leap one has to take a proper run. It is the run that decides everything; for it implies that

we ourselves really *ask* the questions and in these questions first create perspectives" (*IM,* 176).

But how does really asking questions "create" and how are "we ourselves" really involved? In *Being and Time,* Heidegger presents the kind of being of human beings that he calls Dasein as always having its own "there." One might say crudely that a human being is its own "there" and makes its own "there" but also makes a "there" for other kinds of beings. Heidegger suggests in one early passage of *Introduction to Metaphysics* that the way a human being both is itself and is a "there" is transformed by real questioning. "In this questioning we seem to belong entirely to ourselves. Yet it is this questioning that moves us into the open, provided that in questioning it transform itself (which all true questioning does), and cast a new space over everything and into everything" (*IM,* 29-30). The human "there" is not some kind of cloud of spatiality and temporality that follows each of us around as we go about our day, like the personal clouds of gloom one sometimes sees in comic strips. Rather, Heidegger presents the human "there" as the projection of a human being's own self onto the given possibilities of a particular historical circumstance. Usually this projection of self is not a human being's genuine self, but the projection of a universal, non-individuated self that belongs to the kind of average way of being human that gives rise to "idle talk." But it looks like Heidegger wants to suggest that when questions are really asked, the questioner projects a self that is really his own.

The projection of one's own self involves a more intense set of possibilities of relating to beings than the projection of just "someone." Heidegger locates the most intense human relations to beings in what he calls *the primordial.* In a way, Heidegger seems to use the intensity of human affective relations to beings as the measuring stick of the primordiality of those relations. Intensity seems to become the measure of the truth. This would seem to lead philosophers to seek the

intensity found in the primordial. Thus Heidegger claims, "The ultimate business of philosophy is to preserve the force of the most elemental words in which Dasein expresses itself" (*BT,* 220). Note here that Heidegger does not say philosophers try to "find" the force of the most elemental words, rather they try to "preserve" that force.

Why is philosophy, which, as we saw earlier, is associated with really asking questions, also burdened with the task of preserving the force of primordial modes of expression? For Heidegger, it is because every human experience, however seemingly inactive, is some kind of human doing, that is, a projection onto a possibility. It is possibilities that emerge into the truth as unconcealment; but whatever force or power is available in such possibilities is only available in the form of some human action, and this very action depletes the possibility's original intensity. "A beginning can never directly preserve its full momentum; the only possible way to preserve its force is to repeat, to draw once again more deeply than ever from its source. And it is only by thoughtful repetition that we can deal appropriately with the beginning and the breakdown of truth" (*IM,* 191). The repetition of a possibility is always an act, and in order to access again the original affective intensity of that possibility, the "repetition" cannot be exactly the same act. Remember, real questioning is not to be achieved through the repetition of an interrogative sentence.

This idea about the nature of the repetition of possibilities, then, is the defense of Heidegger's creative, "inexact" interpretations. This idea also seems to guide his sense of what is involved in really asking questions. "Men can retain basic truths of such magnitude only by raising them constantly to a still more original unfolding; not merely by applying them and invoking their authority" (*IM,* 145). It is perhaps a corollary of this idea that "in principle, philosoph-

ical questions are never dealt with as though we might someday cast them aside" (*IM,* 42).

These considerations may also help us to understand the rather cryptic statement that very nearly ends *Introduction to Metaphysics:* "To know how to question means to know how to wait, even a whole lifetime" (*IM,* 206). Waiting is not just sitting there. Waiting has to be a dynamic passivity. Waiting must mean a creative holding-open of the humanly affective and ontologically revelatory potential in possibilities. Questioning, then, becomes repeating those possibilities again and again, each time differently.

* * * * *

Whatever we might now think of Heidegger as I have presented him—whether we think he is an untrustworthy interpreter, whether we think he fails to give us sufficient argumentative proof, whether we think he lacks sobriety and has a dangerous proclivity toward the extreme, whether we think what we know about his biography says all that need be said—must we not agree that his thinking about questions helps us to think about questions? If we can agree on that much, then I want to pose one last question: Does what Heidegger shows us make us want really to ask questions?

We do not have to ask the fundamental question. We do not have to ask any question in a real manner. Nothing urgent or practical pushes us to it. "To be sure, the things in the world, the beings, are in no way affected by our asking of the question 'Why are there beings rather than nothing?' Whether we ask it or not, the planets move in their orbits, the sap of life flows through plant and animal" (*IM,* 5). But if the other things that we always find alongside us in the world do not make us want really to ask questions, what does? Has Heidegger managed somehow to convey to us a questioning attitude? And if we do find ourselves wanting really to ask questions, can we ask ourselves why we want to do so?

The Rehabilitation of Spiritedness

Gary Borjesson, *Willing Dogs and Reluctant Masters: On Friendship and Dogs*. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012, x + 251 pages. $14.95.

Book Review by Eva Brann

This book is a delight to read and a profit to ponder. It is a dog story, a human story, a lesson book (for dog owners), and a philosophical meditation (for anyone). It is learned, but lightly so, and it has a powerful thesis gently imparted.

I loved it, but my credentials for reviewing it are even better than that: I don't like dogs. They slobber, shed and speak not a word of English—none of which facts is denied in this account of friendship between dogs and humans. (In my defense: among the *alogoi,* the wordless, I do feel friendly toward dolphins, who luckily live in another element, and toward babies, who are both incarnations of potential rationality and cute—for which the animal ethologist's term is "care-soliciting.") Moreover, I have no idea whether Gary Borjesson's fundamental claim is true: that real—not in-a-manner-of-speaking—friendship between dog and human is possible. My old friend Ray Coppinger, a dog evolutionist and breeder (he found the Jack Russell terrier that inhabits the Assistant Dean's office at St. John's College in Annapolis), whose expertise figures in this book, thinks otherwise. He once said to me that attributing friendly feelings rather than self-serving instincts to dogs is pure "anthropomorphizing." So I'm starting out severely objective in several respects.

Yet I'm captivated by the author's account of his life with the two dogs who are the principals in this story, Kestra and Aktis. His claims rest on acutely attuned and prolonged observation of his own dogs, and, peripherally, other people's dogs. This affectionate attention is at once trust- and doubt-inspiring. It makes an enchant-

ing story, but it might also be self-confirming, producing the illusions of mutual love. For example, his dogs often smile at him, though I've read that animals with fangs don't smile, that the evolutionary origin of the human smile is the wolfish snarl. So I'm one of the author's acknowledged dog-skeptics—or rather, one half of me is. With the other half, I'm totally persuaded that the friendship view is the better hypothesis for dog, man, and world.

For not only is it a more coherent and a more friendly universe if the friendship hypothesis proves out, but it is also a more interesting world, since this position rests on postulates that modulate some current reductionist dogmas concerning beast and man, both in themselves and together. There are thought-provoking lessons here both for intra-species and inter-species relations.

Gary Borjesson's philosophical reading continually underwrites and illuminates his meditations. Sometimes it's almost as if this dog-and-man tale came into its own as a corroboration of Aristotle's, Plato's, and Hegel's insights into animate nature—especially Aristotle's. Thus the epigraph to the second chapter, on the spirit of friendship, is part of a passage taken from Aristotle's *Politics.* Let me quote the whole, which I've always found puzzling, but which becomes very satisfactorily clear in this book:

> Spirit (*thumos*) is what makes friendliness. For it is the very power of the soul by which we feel friendship. And here's the sign: Spirit, when it feels slighted, is roused more against intimates and friends than strangers (*Politics,* 1327b40-41).

And Aristotle mentions the Guardians, Plato's warriors in the *Republic,* who are friendly to those they know and savage to those they don't know, and whose nature Socrates compares—here's serendipity!—to that of a noble young dog (*Republic,* 375a-376b).

Spirit, spiritedness, passionate temperament, as a middle and mediating aspect of the human soul, is a Socratic discovery. Sometimes it is obedient to reason, sometimes it in turn masters lust; these latter are respectively the highest and lowest parts of our soul.

Why should spirit be the enabler of friendship? It is a working postulate of Borjesson's book that Aristotle is simply right: spiritedness is the condition of friendship. The argumentation is of the

best sort, the sort that starts in a variety of quarters, but from which all roads lead to Athens: The high road, however, connecting spiritedness to friendship, is the desire to be recognized, attended to, praised, and the corresponding recoil is the shame of being misconstrued, ignored, or disrespected.

By the intra-species hypothesis, dogs have spirit; it might even count as an oblique proof that some dogs have a lot and others but little, and even the latter have a sense of injury. One of the pleasures of this book is the interweaving of dog anecdotes and human reflection, and the principal subjects of the often poignant stories—never shaggy—are Gary Borjesson's own two dogs. Kestra is sweet-tempered, a little passive, and, for all her lovableness, a little unkeen, but even she has an acute sense of her trust in her master being betrayed.

If, then, people and dogs have common ground of a higher order than animal needs, it must be in the territory of the spirit. For the author is far from committing the philosophical solecism of attributing reason to dogs. Spirit, however, is, just as Aristotle says, where friendship is at home. Now among us humans, this capability of the spirit is both an accomplishment and a work in progress, and so it is if one of the friends is a dog.

This book is full of observations about friendship—discerningly borrowed and observantly original; it is a credible descendant of those wonders of human perspicacity, Aristotle's books on friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics,* Books 8-9). One of those borrowed observations is that "the point of being friends is to charm each other"; I love that, because I once long ago phrased it similarly to myself, sailing the Aegean with a friend: "The motor of friendship is mutual delight." It doesn't have Aristotle's gravity, but he would not repudiate it. Applied to dogs, it does, however, imply that what Aristotle considers the highest kind of friendship—that of beings of intellect in increasingly deep, mutually satisfying conversation—is not a necessary option (and indeed not available) to a dog/man pair of friends.

And that indefeasible fact means that friendship as a work in progress takes on a very different shape for this inter-species pair. Here the work of friendship is obedience training, where man is

master, dog subject! As the title of the book declares, dogs, the good ones, are willing. Not that they are called good because they like to obey, but they obey because they are good. They have in them that which can listen—"obey," from Latin *ob-audire,* means "to listen and really to hear." That is just what Socrates thinks of spiritedness: It is pride able to listen to reason. They are, one might say, a-rationally rational. They understand, and so they accept the superiority of their masters.

Here is where Gary Borjesson's book becomes topical and controversial. The second part of his title is "Reluctant Masters." He analyzes out this component of our modernity: the reluctance to act with authority, to accept the charge of mastery, be it in child-rearing or dog-training. The result of this abashment—often moralizing—in the face of asserting the control of superior reason is spoilage: spoiled children, ruined dogs. The book is full of funny and sad examples; some are reports of outrage expressed by spectators watching the book's author at work being a master.

One result of the failure of rational mastery is loss of dignity on both sides, and with it, of equality. For, at its best, friendship is mutual and so a relation of peers. Some of the most poignant passages of the book are about mutuality, the balanced equality of dog and human in the territory of spiritedness. Indeed, in the controlled competition that characterizes the play between these two spirited animals from different species, the dog often wins—to the man's delight. The result of mastery accepted is an equality at once properly delimited and invaluable.

Aristotle, one last time, says that happiness is the soul fulfillingly at work in accordance with its own goodness (*Nichomachean Ethics,* 1098a13-16). The willing master of this book really means to train his dog to happiness. He (or she—the author's favorite dog trainer is Vicki Hearne) teaches the young dog to obey, first as parents habituate a child, by gentle and consistent compulsion, even fear. That training produces the inner control that in us is called self-determination, freedom. Within these bounds the dog has scope to fulfill his dog-nature as a competitive pursuer and predator of minor wild life and as a cooperative playfellow of humans and

dogs. The descriptions of these play-episodes induce sympathetic joy.

I'll now take it on faith, the writer's faith, that dogs, domesticated wolves, may be happy under—no, may be made happy by—human mastery. But that humans, uncircumventably the masters of domesticated nature, can be exhilaratingly happy, and also better, more thoughtful, and more just in their friendly companionship with dogs—that's proven beyond doubt by this lovely book.