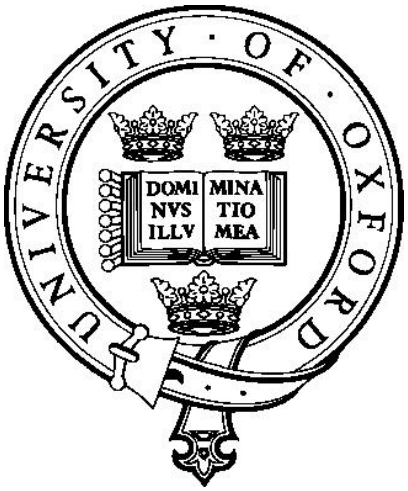


Can Courage Be a Modern Virtue?: Seeking Insight in Tocqueville, Mill, and Arendt

Thesis submitted for fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of D.Phil in Politics at the University of Oxford

By: Ryan Christopher Berg
Brasenose College
Supervisor: Dr. Teresa Bejan

Word Count: 86,136 words

Table of Contents

Abstract……1

Introduction: Wither Courage?……2

Chapter I: Defining and Problematizing Courage…….11

Chapter II: Alexis de Tocqueville and the Search for Courage in the Age of Equality……61

Chapter III: "Many-sidedness:" John Stuart Mill and the (Underdeveloped) Courage of Liberal Individuality…….114

Chapter IV: "Pearl Diving:" Hannah Arendt and the Search for Sources of Modern Courage...167

Conclusion: Modern Contexts for Courage……...……..220

Bibliography……255

ABSTRACT

CAN COURAGE BE A MODERN VIRTUE?: SEEKING INSIGHT IN TOCQUEVILLE, MILL, AND ARENDT

Thesis submitted for fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of D.Phil in Politics at the University of Oxford

By: Ryan Christopher Berg
Brasenose College
Hilary Term 2018

This dissertation examines the role of political virtues in modern contexts, and in particular, the role of courage as a potential modern political virtue. Despite frequent commentary on the importance of virtues, many political theorists have exhibited a strange reluctance to discuss the virtue of courage, at least in the sort of depth that it merits. This thesis puts forward the suggestion that courage is one of the most important modern political virtues and one ripe for rediscovery by political theorists and historians of political thought alike. Following the Ancient Greeks, the dissertation defines courage as the virtue which aids us in the proper assessment of threats and, where appropriate, the overcoming of fear in the service of causes we deem worthy, while emphasizing the contexts in which it is deployed. The dissertation also seeks to outline several reasons for the seemingly problematic relationship courage has with modernity, given its historical nexus with war and conquest, the striving for difference and distinction, and exclusionary notions of masculinity. The dissertation moves on to examine the role of courage in the thought of three thinkers—Tocqueville, Mill, and Arendt—all of whom have their doubts about the existence of courage in the modern world. Chapter 2 examines the role of courage in Tocqueville's early modern America, swept up in Americans' economic pursuits and captured by the soothing nature of consumer appetites. Chapter 3 examines the role of courage in Mill's thought, arguing that Mill's liberalism inherits many of the driving political and social concerns illuminated by Tocqueville, his friend and correspondent; however, Mill's advocacy for a politics free from the crushing weight of inherited dogmas and traditions leads him to fall into the modern trap of jettisoning courage, even as his politics makes abundantly clear the need for it. Chapter 4 turns to Arendt's skepticism that courage can ever exist in the modern world short of a fundamental act of recovery from the ancients, with a concomitant willingness to accept all of the problematic elements of courage as practiced by the Greeks. The dissertation concludes by stating that newer schools of thought on virtue, like liberal virtue theorists, have neglected the virtue of courage, which *must* be considered a modern political virtue, as there has been a proliferation of modern political contexts in which it is absolutely critical that we muster nothing short of courage. Courage is presented as a potential solution to the modern challenges facing liberalism from within, such as safe spaces, political correctness, no platforming, and trigger warnings, amongst others.

Introduction

Wither Courage?

"But he struck his chest and curbed his fighting heart: 'Bear up, old heart! You've borne worse, far worse!'"
—Homer, *Odyssey*[1]

There is no consensus on which virtue is the supreme political virtue, whether virtues are permanent, or whether they vary by regime type. Political theorists have occasionally offered justice, moderation, prudence, or individual responsibility as answers.[2] This thesis puts forward a new suggestion for the most important political virtue in a modern context—courage—ripe for rediscovery by historians of political thought and political theorists alike. I argue that courage represents a forgotten virtue in modern politics, due to its previous embeddedness in ancient and honor societies, recent social and economic developments, and the existence of a modern liberal world which broke starkly from the values and traditions of antiquity. To conclude, I offer up one possibility for how to think about and conceptualize courage in the age of liberal modernity, as well as how to apply courage to the challenges and contexts of modernity.[3]

Courage is an exciting and yet simultaneously elusive virtue. "Where moderation is boring, courage is dangerous; where justice is impartial, courage is dedicated to special causes."[4] Perhaps no virtue has been so consistently praised *and* cursed for so many years and for so many

[1] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles, New York: Penguin, 2006, 20.19-20.
[2] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971 and later revised in John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia UP, 2005; Aurelian Craiutu, *Faces of Moderation: The Art of Balance in an Age of Extremes*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016 and Aurelian Craiutu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012; J. Patrick Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," Public Administration Review 58 (1998): 74-81; Paul A. Rahe, *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville and the Modern Prospect*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.
[3] I ought to be clear at the outset that when I use the term "modernity," I mean liberal modernity, defined broadly as a political system focused on the preservation of liberty and equality through the deft formation of institutions and practices, what Tocqueville might call the "age of democracy and equality." While modernity is not completely synonymous with democracy and equality, they are certainly modern phenomena.
[4] Ryan K. Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014, p. 1.

reasons. Tyrants and benevolent rulers alike have possessed it. It has flourished in many times and in many places. History has doubtless witnessed the continuous exercise of courage by courageous figures and discovered the exercise of great courage "in unlikely places."[5] Despite the existence of numerous historical examples, "no quality has ever so much addled the brains and tangled the definitions of merely rational sages."[6] And in spite of courage being one of the oldest virtues, with a ubiquitous presence throughout human history, we still find definitions of courage muddled and wanting. We lack firm knowledge of its proper place within military action, within politics, within morality, and within society. And we have an incomplete understanding of its relationship to concepts often considered synonymous in modern parlance, like bravery and valor, and the role of fear and reason in its cultivation and practice.

Thesis Outline

As a means of exploring the virtue of courage, I trace the concept through the thought of three thinkers—Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, and Hannah Arendt—in order to better place courage within a modern context and to understand some of the concerns which have led to its diminishment as a virtue receiving much attention from modern political theorists. It will become clear throughout the thesis, then, that discussions of courage cannot be uncoupled from broader debates about modernity and its critics. Modernity has engendered a kind of anti-modern backlash—it was only a matter of time before the critical faculties modernism brought to bear on antiquity would turn on itself—which has manifested itself in philosophical, literary, and political forms. As thinkers, Tocqueville, Mill, and Arendt help us to understand how the once-celebrated modern man—whose search for autonomy and claims of individual rights comprise some of the defining vocabulary of liberal modernity as an idea—has come under suspicion and

[5] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Boston, MA: Mariner, 2012, p. 95.
[6] G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, London: Simon & Brown, 2012, p. 92.

association instead with low-minded materialism, cowardice, and political apathy. The great middle class produced by modern, liberal democracies instead devolved into Marx's charge of "commodity fetishism," Weber's "rationalized world," Nietzsche's "last man," and Heiddeger's anonymous "*das Man*."[7] In sum, modernity is no longer a cause for universal celebration but a reason for profound pessimism and doubt.

In Chapter 1, I turn first to Aristotle and the ancients to outline a basic definition of courage as the appropriate response to threats and discuss the role of fear and reason in its proper cultivation as a virtue. I highlight five crucial characteristics of courage which help us to know when the virtue might be present and operative, but also to distinguish it from bravery and valor. I then examine its various applications—martial, political, and moral—and its operation within these contexts. Born in the ancient world and refined in the pre-modern, Chapter 1 also aims to explain what I call "modernity's aversion to courage," offering three broad reasons for why liberal modernity has not focused on courage and even found it to be an objectionable virtue: its long association with military conquest and colonization, its difficulty to inculcate as a virtue and its propensity to engender an appetite for dangerous risk-taking, and its historical conceptualization as gender exclusive.

In Chapter 2, I address Tocqueville's search for courage in the early American republic. In America, a bourgeoning commercial republic in his time, Tocqueville observes that the virtue of courage appears to have been absorbed by the commercial ethic of bourgeois exchange. By absorbing courage into the commercial sphere, bourgeois society severed it from its historic association with wild, sometimes unpredictable passions and spiritedness and made it more predictable and placid. Even as this move mitigated some of the worst byproducts of courage,

[7] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents: Making and Unmaking the Bourgeois from Machiavelli to Bellow*, New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2016, p. xii.

this harnessing of courage is possibly to the detriment of one's fellow citizens, Tocqueville points out, as comfortable tranquility may be the gravest danger to political freedom with the arrival of new forms of despotism and complacency that accompany the age of equality and democracy (what Tocqueville calls "privatism"). Rather than celebrating the gentler habits of the democratic age as a sign of moral progress, Tocqueville worries this trend puts man at greater risk of manipulation by a rising, tutelary administrative state. As a young aristocrat in partial conflict with both the sensibilities of the America he visited and his native France, Tocqueville's America became a mirror and a crystal ball for his beloved France. He writes to his cousin that he "seldom spoke of France in that book," but that he did not fail to "write a page without thinking about France or without having France in a manner of speaking before my eyes." There were "constant, unspoken" comparisons.[8]

Since both works address issues of authority, administrative centralization, and political transition, I present Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution* as works with considerable thematic continuity, rather than erecting a barrier between them. In the transition to the age of equality and democracy, whether in America or in France, Tocqueville reveals himself to be a proponent of the preservation of certain aristocratic qualities in the modern world, in an effort to mitigate some of the worst negative byproducts of "democratic courage" and to supplement the modern age of equality and democracy.[9] Americans, he finds, have at least found a way to enlighten their self-interest so as to attenuate the pernicious effects of individualism, but for an aristocrat like Tocqueville, enlightened self-interest certainly seems to fall short of full virtue. Thus, Tocqueville is one of the first and most

[8] Quoted in Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008, p. 5.
[9] This is not Tocqueville's term but mine, based on my reading of him. In Chapter II, I explain more satisfactorily why I believe it makes sense to speak of "democratic courage" within Tocqueville's work.

persuasive thinkers to shed light on the absence of classical courage in the modern world where the commercial ethic reigns supreme. Tocqueville offers a stark choice regarding the ineluctability of certain elements of modernity: we could try our best to imitate the greatest aspects of what we once were while embracing the goods of modernity, or we can begin down a path of isolation and acquisition that eventually issues in a gradual, soft descent into servitude at the hands of an overly active administrative state.

In Chapter 3, I present John Stuart Mill as owing a debt to Tocqueville's observations about the coming age of democracy and equality, inheriting his selfsame concerns and putting forth answers, primarily in *On Liberty*, to the questions first raise by Tocqueville's work, which Mill greatly admired. In his response to the rise of an age of democracy and equality, I characterize Mill (contrary to the secondary literature that focuses mostly on the Harm Principle) not as an atomistic liberal concerned only with the constraints on political interference and the pursuit of narrowly-defined individual interests, but rather as a theorist with a thoroughly embedded conception of human virtue and self-development, as well as a deep understanding as to why character formation and self-improvement are important within social and political structures. What is unique about Mill's conception of character is that it is simultaneously liberal, as demonstrated in its upholding of plurality and "many-sidedness," but also perfectionist, in that it establishes the deepest and most optimal possible development of the human person as a proper political end, not only for those most capable, but for all of society. Unlike, say, Thomas Carlyle's great men whose efforts are "the practical realization and embodiment" of society's accomplishments, Millian virtue is attainable by many citizens (even if not by all).[10] It is my contention insofar as Mill is recognized as a figurehead for a certain type

[10] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History*, Ed. Michael K. Goldberg, Berkeley, CA: University of California P, 1993, p. 9.

of liberal theory in the modern age of democracy and equality, we need to examine elements of what his political theory entails, like the recognition of virtue, in a much more nuanced way if we are to attempt to clarify what Alan Ryan states is the major point of contention in Mill scholarship: "what the liberalism is that it defends and how he defends it."[11]

Tellingly, what is most interesting about Mill's political theory for the purposes of this thesis is how concerned it is with the development of character—Mill even outlined a new social science of character study, which he called "ethology"—and yet how little mention he makes of the virtue of courage, even as it is manifest that there is a need for courage within the framework of liberal politics he builds in *On Liberty*. In other words, Mill falls into the modern trap highlighted in the Introduction, demonstrating a reluctance to discuss courage. Courage is a virtue without which Mill's political and social thought would fail to make sense and indeed function at all, most obviously in his desire for citizens to cultivate strong individualities within the crucible of mass conformity that characterizes modernity, as well as the necessity to participate in robust free speech and rough-and-tumble public debate, despite its attendant harms and offenses. I argue in this chapter that the elision of courage represents a conscious absence on Mill's part, so as to avoid admitting that modernity might require supplement from pre-modern traditions (including the religious), and to remain consistent in his position against "dead dogmas" and other relics of outdated, prejudicial thought that prevents us from embracing a fully progressive, modern future.

In Chapter 4, I examine Arendt's analysis of modernity after the "catastrophic" experience of twentieth century totalitarianism. Arendt famously refers to courage as the "political virtue *par excellence*," but remains skeptical that it can blossom and remain relevant in

[11] Alan Ryan, "Mill in a Liberal Landscape," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, ed. John Skorupski, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, p. 497.

the modern world without an essential act of recovery from the ancient world. In this chapter, I explore how Arendt's conception of politics shapes her thinking about the uniqueness of the public sphere and the place of courage within it, namely, that the public sphere is something diametrically opposed to the private and existing for the attainment of a distinctive type of human freedom only possible within it (politics as an end in itself). Unlike Tocqueville, then, Arendt does not find elements of courage sidelined or contained within the bourgeois, commercial sphere, but in a public sphere threatened by the rise and colonization of the private. Citizens require the virtue of courage to enter a public realm defined by a plurality of others, whose presence frustrates and renders their political action futile and unpredictable. The political realm specifically denies, according to Arendt's dichotomy, citizens' ability to discuss questions of biological sustenance or to pursue them as proper political ends because politics does not exist to safeguard matters of the private sphere. To avoid conceptualizing politics as a means-ends relationship, or a necessary evil, Arendt looks to the ancients for inspiration. The chapter concludes by arguing that Arendt's proposed solution, seeking ancient supplements to modernity's lack, relies too heavily, in this instance, upon heroic character types to function properly or realistically. That is, Arendt's very methodology of "pearl diving" is actually prejudicial to the ends she wants to bring about because its sources of courage are overly martial, embedded within honor-based societies, and undesirable in a modern world that already displays an aversion to the virtue of courage on these grounds—a critique made both on Arendt's terms and externally by the standards of liberal modernity.[12]

In the Conclusion, I return to the present day and outline the current state of theorizing on courage and of virtues in the modern world, which I have taken throughout the thesis to be

[12] Arendt might counter this argument by stating that modernity needs to drop its reservations, but this thesis is an attempt to argue *for* a form of modern courage, rather than a newly-instantiated form of Greco-Roman courage.

mostly the world of liberal modernity. Principally, I provide an overview of the so-called "liberal virtue theorists," whose work over the last thirty years in the context of the liberal-communitarian debates constituted much of the major work done on political virtues and convinced many that modern liberal regimes require the possession and practice of robust virtues in order to survive. However, liberal virtue theorists failed to explain which virtues are most critical to modern liberal regimes, beyond a laundry list of often amorphous concepts and ideas (e.g., "magnanimity in defeat"). Courage finds itself strangely absent from these laundry lists of liberal political virtues. I attempt to outline the recent contexts in which it has become clear that a modern virtue of courage must take root. Having examined the contexts in which courage found itself in the preceding three chapters—Tocqueville's democratic courage of the commercial sphere and the enlightened self-interest to combat the baleful effects of privatism, Mill's bold experiment shunning "dead dogmas" and traditions of the past coupled with an embrace of a progressive future, and Arendt's acts of recovery for modern supplement from the ancient world—I offer a series of examples from the so-called "moral panic of our time," pointing to a context for modern courage that is substantial enough as a concept that it allows us to navigate the difficult issues of safe spaces, trigger warnings, political correctness, free speech, and norms surrounding political debate. By focusing on new contexts in which courage may be employed, rather than massive shifts in its content, modern courage does not require the heroism of the ancients, but an exchange of courage in the form of physical conflict on the battlefield for that in contexts of persuasive and intense speech exchange (since all of these challenges involve, somehow, a breakdown in communication). Like any other virtue, courage requires cultivation and conscientiousness to the point of becoming a firm habit. It does not incentivize unnecessary risk-taking, but it helps us assess threats and decide which are worth fighting and resisting,

demonstrating great concern for things, causes, ideas, and even persons outside ourselves. The modern context of courage may no longer elevate us to the heights of immortality (as it did, in the most famous example, for the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae), but it does excite in us passions, strong emotions, and deeply-held ontological convictions, which we ought to feel compelled to put forward for rational scrutiny by others.

Chapter 1

Defining and Problematizing Courage

"This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper."
—T.S. Eliot, *"The Hollow Men"*[1]

I. Introduction

The chapter proceeds by first defining courage as the appropriate response to threats. As will become clear, I use the word threat (as opposed to fear) intentionally because it allows us to speak of courage in a wider context of situations. Second, this chapter outlines five characteristics of courage and the mechanics of its practice: courage helps us formulate appropriate response to the perception of threats; courage helps us to elevate ourselves and overcome great challenges; more often than not, courage impels us to action, as opposed to inaction; courage is visceral and spirited in character; and lastly, courage uncoupled from the practice of other virtues, is liable for misuse and injustice. Third, I mention three contexts in which courage can be employed, while not making any claims on comprehensiveness. Accounts of virtues imply an interrelation between them and the possibility for their actual expression. In other words, we employ courage in martial, political, and moral contexts, where the corresponding threats are that of bodily integrity, self-interest, and social relations. Most obviously, in martial courage, soldiers risk their lives for their brothers in battle. The individualism of the self is the first to go on the battlefield as one makes sacrifices for one's brothers. In political courage, the pursuit of self-interest permitted in the economic sphere is attenuated and broadened to incorporate a wider realm of communal interest. And in moral courage, one elevates oneself above the crowd to make difficult moral choices free from the

[1] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, ed. Helen Vendler, New York: Signet Classics, 1998, p. 65.

majority's influence, and to display resilience in moral dilemmas. Obviously, the boundaries between these contexts are highly fluid and dynamic. Lastly, the chapter addresses the tension between courage and modern principles for three main reasons: courage is too martial; courage is too demanding and contributes to unnecessary levels of risk-taking; and courage is gender exclusive, given its longstanding association with notions of manliness.

II. Arriving at a Definition

C.S. Lewis notes that "words which originally referred to [something in] a person's rank…have a tendency to become words which assign a type of character and behavior," in which those implying superior status become associated as terms of praise and virtue and those implying inferior status become associated as terms of derision and vice.[2] Chivalrous is an example of the former, while ignoble or bourgeois—in the age of modernity—are examples of the latter. Courage, seen for decades by many as the purview of warrior classes, medieval knights, and later, aristocratic noblemen, fits Lewis's description of characteristics belonging to rank. Following Aristotle, Lewis says, "A word like nobility begins to take on its social-ethical meaning when it refers not simply to a man's status but to the manners and character which are thought to be appropriate to that status."[3] Hence, a chivalrous person acts chivalrously, while an ignoble person acts ignobly. We come to see these as internal aspects of one's character. Courage, then, impels one to act courageously, but in what does this consist?

Courage is a virtue or character trait disposing one to act appropriately in response to threats. Threats themselves are on a sliding scale and encompass everything from frustration of one's ends to death. Courage encompasses proper threat perception and assessment, meaning

[2] C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990, p. 21.
[3] C.S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*, p. 22. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, second edition, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999, 1115b15-20.

that reason plays an integral role in the calculation of threat and the removal (or addition) of fear. Courage goes far beyond mere physical bravery, though most applications of courage, as we shall see, include a physical aspect—hence the enduring image of martial courage. It is different from the absence or ignorance of fear, but its relationship to fear is important. The feeling of fear usually implies the presence of some threats. When we define courage in terms of threats and not only in terms of fear, we may speak of courage in a greater range of appropriate situations, i.e., in situations of both action and inaction, without risking a contradiction of terms. Man is courageous when charging into battle *and* in deserting battle, contingent upon the appropriate response to the contextual situation. In other words, the coward is not cowardly by *ipso facto* retreating from battle; rather, he is cowardly in deserting battle in a context where it is the inappropriate response. This might be where his threat assessment is flawed and he acts upon it, say, when the prospects for success are good or at least average. It would seem strange indeed to argue asymmetrically that courage requires of man that he always fight, even when the prospects of success remain bleak at best, as opposed to affording some room in our definition for man to assess the situation and act accordingly. A definition lacking the possibility of both outcomes would not approach courage but bravado or foolhardiness—either a reckless fearlessness or an over-exuberance of confidence—which is no virtue at all. Thus, action induced by proper courage is not "like a bull [who] rushes at the red cloak instead of the person who is holding it; [who] exhausts himself and is beaten," but is a well-balanced, reasoned approach to threat perception.[4] Perhaps Aristotle's most trenchant insight about courage is that

[4] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Trans. Christian K. Verlag, New York: Touchstone, 1997, p. 4.

its practice requires knowing and feeling the anguish of loss, "for without feeling the burden of the costs, there is only bravado and sanguinity."[5]

Plato makes clear in the *Republic*, by beating back the arguments of Thrasymychus, that one driven by conquest alone becomes a slave to one's passions and loses the freedom for which he ought to be fighting. In the Platonic dialogue *Laches*, Plato uses the eponymous Laches to demonstrate the pigheadedness of Spartan definitions of courage which always urge one to fight.[6] Laches defines courage as standing and fighting, to "stand in the ranks, face up to the enemy and not run away."[7] Courage is thus a "certain perseverance of the soul" and "endurance present in one's character."[8] Socrates parries this definition by citing examples of military retreat that are nevertheless courageous and appropriate—such as when Socrates and Laches himself, fighting beside one another, retreated at the Battle of Delium. "To charge rashly into battle and engage the enemy hand to hand is monstrous and beastlike…we must avoid exposing ourselves pointlessly to risk. Nothing can be stupider than that."[9] Courage is a fine thing indeed, but Socrates' point is that ignorant endurance is not a fine thing. We must infuse courage, therefore, with reason; courage is "wise endurance," says Socrates.[10] If anything, *Laches* is a dialogue marked by Socrates' insistence on an expansion of the domain of courage, part of Plato's recurring effort to soften the martial connotation given to it by Socrates's opposing interlocutors.[11] "I wanted to find out," Socrates concludes, "not just what it is to be brave during

[5] Nancy Sherman, *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2010, p. 212. This trenchant insight could be said of Aristotle's theory of happiness more generally, not just of his theory of courage, i.e., that emotions like anger, fear, and grief may be unpleasant taken on their own, yet all are necessary for understanding human vulnerability to threat and loss and thus, genuine happiness cannot be simply "sanitized" or disjointed from emotions that are in themselves painful.
[6] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, Trans. Trevor J. Saunders, New York: Penguin, 1987, 191d-e.
[7] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, 190e.
[8] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, 192b.
[9] Cicero, *On Duties*, Ed. M.T. Griffin, Trans. E.M. Atkins, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991, I.81-83.
[10] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, 192b.
[11] Indeed, Avramenko makes this argument in Chapter 2 of *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*.

a war, but to be brave in the face of danger at sea…in the face of an illness…poverty, and in public life."[12] We have the character of Socrates to thank for bringing our attention to political uses of the virtue of courage, even if in his personal life he failed to insert himself much into the life of the Athenian polis.[13]

In Plato's famous "tripartite soul," *thumos*, or spiritedness, is the source of courage and an appetite for risk-taking. *Thumos* has been a part of human nature from the start. Even children, Glaucon states, are full of spiritedness "right from birth, but as for rational calculation, some of them seem to me never to possess it."[14] Aristotle identifies *thumotic* behavior as the most obvious form of courageous activity.[15] "Aristotle's point is that spirit is a natural ally of rational courage because nature has locked it automatically onto the same [external] goals."[16] Unchecked *thumos*, however, is far different than courage, for spiritedness that is not checked by reason leads to unwise and impetuous action. Once aroused, *Thumos* is by nature "hot and hasty" and mishears reason as much as it hears it. "It is like…servants who run out before they have heard all their instructions, and then carry them out wrongly, or dogs who bark at any noise at all, before looking to see if it is a friend."[17] Without a subservient relationship to reason, courage risks transforming into an instrument of injustice or abuse, as well as foolish bravado. "*Thumos* can be instrumental in achieving the greatest good, both in the soul and in the city. But it needs to be made so, for it can just as easily be enlisted into the service of lower and even

[12] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, 191d.
[13] Cf. Paul Woodruff, "Socrates and Political Courage," *Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2007): 289-301 for the argument that Socrates teaches us that courage has a place in politics, but lacked political courage himself and "could have done more" in various enumerated (biographical) instances without presenting the sort of risk to his life he claims it would have had in the *Apology*.
[14] Plato, *Republic*, 441b.
[15] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1117a4-5.
[16] David Pears, "Courage as a Mean," *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, Ed. Amélie O. Rorty, Berkeley: University of California P, 1980, p. 182; cf. Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics*, Trans. Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011, 1229b20-32.
[17] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1149a26-30.

lawless desires, or else simply run rampant and resist subservience either to reason or to the lower desires, in either of which cases *it becomes the stuff of tyranny*, both in the soul and in the city."[18]

So far I have spoken only in terms of the vocabulary of threats, but we must also address the relationship of courage to fear. Aristotle's contention is that courage helps us to stand firm against fear and in the right way, as reason prescribes.[19] This position remains popular with the wider public. "It is through the resistance to fear that a person develops courage," declares David Brooks.[20] Aristotle says fear makes men inclined to deliberate, and courage helps him to deliberate whether the fears associated with certain threats are well or poorly-placed.[21] Aristotle situates courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as lying between the extremes of fear and confidence on a single continuum. We calculate the former based on our desire to avoid an object or outcome, with the ultimate desire being the avoidance of death, i.e., our self-preservation. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle defines fear as avoidance of probable "things that look like causing life-threatening pain."[22] Fear is possible when we have some hope of safety, even when we judge harm probable, otherwise we would resign ourselves to the inevitable. Lacking such hope of escape, the desire remains present, but its prospects move from distinct possibility to mere wish—meaning fear is no longer the best emotive descriptor. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle confirms this by arguing that proper fear exists only provided there is hope for safety, since fear sets us thinking about the possibilities of escape, "which of course nobody does when things are hopeless."[23] The counter-goal of courage is thus "pains that are of a kind to take away life,"[24]

[18] Laurence D. Cooper, "Beyond the Tripartite Soul: The Dynamic Psychology of the 'Republic,'" *The Review of Politics* 63 (2001): 362, emphasis mine.
[19] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115b12-13.
[20] David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, New York: Random House, 2016, p. 110.
[21] Aristotle, *Poetics and Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005, 1383a6-7.
[22] Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics*, 1229a34-35.
[23] Aristotle, *Poetics and Rhetoric*, 1383a.

given "there is no trace of the idea that there might be examples of external goals less closely related to safety and survival."[25] Fear is fairly unique in that it has a particular phenomenology: "the object of fear is (implicitly) presented as a *threat to oneself*."[26] Some say fear is such a useful phenomenon for the avoidance of life-threatening pains that it is actually "a gift."[27]

Intuitions can also be great resources in our development of virtues, especially the virtue of courage. We can define an intuition as that which we know but not how we know it. Evolution has honed human intuition well. There really is such a thing as "gut feeling," as the human stomach contains more than 100 million brain cells.[28] Intuitions seem most relevant when humans are scanning the environment for the presence of threats. After all, the mind brings the greatest resources to bear when life is in danger, the ultimate threat. The highest order messenger of intuition is in fact fear, though lower order messengers might be curiosity, hesitation, and suspicion. Like every other animal, humans do not ignore intuitions. Fear goes from a state of intuition up to the more rational part of our cognitive process, whereupon we introspect on whence the fear comes, for instance, from our senses, the presence of anxiety, or a particular memory.

It is in this way that threat perception is a more expansive way of discussing courage, for it includes both situations with escapability—what Aristotle terms "fear"—and those unfortunate incidents of inevitability, such as a terminal illness, where we would also seek to employ the vocabulary of courage. Aristotle specifically mentions cases of illness as examples of courage

---

[24] Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics*, 1229a40.
[25] David Pears, "Courage as a Mean," p. 185.
[26] Robert Gay, "Courage and Thumos," Philosophy 63 (1988): 264.
[27] See Gavin de Becker, *The Gift of Fear and Other Survival Signals that Protect Us From Violence*, New York: Random House, 1997.
[28] Michael Mosley, "The Second Brain in Our Stomachs," *BBC News*, 11 July 2012, < http://www.bbc.com/news/health-18779997>.

exhibited off the battlefield.[29] And in early Platonic dialogues, Socrates also recognizes a capacious sphere, including the threat of disease, for the employment of courage: those who are "courageous in perils by sea, and who in disease, or in poverty, or again in politics, are courageous, and not only those who are courageous against pain or fear."[30] As will become clear, we can speak of courage in circumstances when "fear" is not the proper emotional descriptor and the possibility of safety is not nigh. "It seems that the emotion of fear is not a necessary condition for the display of courage; in face of a great evil such as death or injury a man may show courage even if he does not tremble."[31]

As with any virtue, courage is a habit or disposition trained, honed, and cultivated as one's second nature. A virtue is something akin to a habit which over time and with diligence becomes a near mental trait requiring little reflection or cognitive effort on our parts (in fact, like competing in a sport, the cognitive element often detracts from the performance thereof). As William James states in a small treatise on the topic, habits are difficult to root in our lives, unless we go out of our way to gratuitously practice them and "never suffer an exception." "Asceticism of this sort," James continues, "is like the insurance which a man pays on his house of goods. The tax does him no good at the time, and may possibly never bring him a return. But if the fire does come, his having paid it will be his salvation from ruin."[32] It takes time and great effort to deeply ingrain virtues to the level of habits, but when the moment in which they are necessary arises, we will be prepared to employ them naturally and instinctually and not left wishing we had developed them all along. "The fact that virtue must be acquired (and is not

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115a29-36.
[30] Quoted in Eugenio Benitez, "Cowardice, Moral Philosophy, and Saying What You Think," in *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity*, ed. Gerald A. Press, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. 89.
[31] Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, p. 12.
[32] Quoted in David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, p. 57.

innate) is contained already in the concept of virtue," says Kant, "virtue can and must be taught…from the fact that it is not innate."[33]

Aristotle speaks of virtues as settled habits and sometimes dispositions, as opposed to emotions, that serve as preconditions for good character. According to Aristotle, a person *sans* virtue cannot exist long. Without virtue we would fail to be fully goal-oriented and to comprehend the complex and extended goals of life. Indeed, we would fail to accomplish many tasks. He describes a sequence of necessary steps to achieve good character. One ought to avoid vice not because of its consequences, but because of a deep "impulse, that is, by a feeling…which has no ulterior end."[34] Disinterested virtue must be posited not as a means to achieve maximal pleasure, a bettering of material conditions, or some type of utilitarian calculus, but inward improvement, even if these are the results of actions performed in the name of the latter. Right action performed often with the guidance of an influential teacher, develops right habits, in turn engendering good character. When one reaches the stage of good habits and dispositions to form good character, one can attain moral virtue of the highest potential, what Aristotle calls *areté*. *Areté* is the perfection or excellence of these habitual virtues that form good character, developed much as the harpist develops his craft, which is to say rationally and through practice in consistency until it becomes "second nature."[35] In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that courage, specifically, and virtue, more generally, ought to be like a "dye, so that their [the guardians'] belief about what they should fear and all the rest would become so fast that even such extremely effective detergents as pleasure, pain, fear, and desire wouldn't wash it

[33] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, Trans. James W. Ellington, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995, p. 145.
[34] Bernard Semmel, *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue*, New Have: Yale UP, 1984, p. 88.
[35] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a12.

out."[36] We could also recall Tocqueville's adept phrase to describe virtues as "habits of the heart."[37] *Areté* helps fulfill the purpose or function of the virtue in an effective manner, pushing man to reach for excellence in doing so. An *areté* of courage means an excellent performance of the function thereof, which we have identified already as that of an appropriate response to threats.

Before I outline several characteristics of courage, it is important to distinguish courage from its closely related terms, bravery and valor. In offering a modern interpretation of Plato's tripartite soul, C.S. Lewis simultaneously draws our attention to the difference between courage and its related terms, bravery and valor, with a corporeal analogy. In a very succinct manner, he says of the well-ordered person: "The head rules the body through the chest."[38] Lewis builds on Plato's tripartite soul by offering specific corporeal locations to its three constituent elements—the head is the home of reason (*logos/nous*), the chest is the home of spirit (*thumos*), and the belly the home of appetitive desires (*epithumia*). So the head (reason), in conjunction with the chest (spirit), rules over the belly (appetites). For Lewis, the chest is the corporeal provenance of *thumos* because it contains the heart, the most important organ for spiritedness. Take the etymology of the word "encourage:" to inspire with courage or spirit in order to advance a cause. It is literally to make one courageous (*en-couragier*) or strong at heart (*cœur*) for the purpose of action. "Courage…shares the Latin root for heart, *cor*."[39] To have a chest is thus synonymous with courageous behavior, but Lewis fears that modern education (in the wake of Rousseau's *Émile*) engenders only "men without chests." To draw out the corporeal analogy even further,

[36] Plato, *Republic*, 530a-b.
[37] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Trans. George Lawrence, Ed. J.P. Mayer, New York: Harper Perennial, 2006, p. 150; cf. also to Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California P, 1996.
[38] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001, p. 24.
[39] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 193.

our heart is integral in controlling our breathing, affording us the opportunity to respond to threats appropriately; without control over our heart rate, we are more likely to respond inappropriately, in a cowardly manner.[40]

Courage reveals many things we care about more than the mental, moral, physical, or political strength required for the struggle. Courage is therefore something deeper and more ingrained than bravery. It takes real heart to be resolute against a threat one knows and has assessed properly—and hence a threat one fears properly because one understands the possible consequences of failure—as opposed to bravery, which is the ability to confront pain or danger without the feeling of fear, and in some cases to ignore fear in situations where others might be fearful. In this sense, bravery is closer to pure *thumos* in that it is the spirit that leads us, sometimes less than fully rationally, to do things that only in hindsight might appear to different. The strength of character bravery provides allows the person to appear always bigger than the crisis at hand and confident in the outcome. The etymology of the word bravery comes from the Italian word "bravo," meaning "bold, wild, or savage," lending credence to the idea that bravery is less a habit or steadfast quality of mind than courage is. In other words, it is less rigorous in its development and cultivation. Bravery may even be related to the older Latin word "barbarus," meaning foreign or non-Greek, but also carrying pejorative connotations of ignorance, uncivilized, rough, and untamed.[41] Bravery is certainly more impulsive and potentially more open to foolhardiness than courage. Finally, valor is a specific type of bravery applicable in the more circumscribed instances of military confrontation.

[40] Since humans are one of the only creatures with the ability to consciously control their heart rates, this corporeal interpretation is also consonant with the many virtue theorists who posit that only humans, as opposed to other animals, are capable of virtue. These questions lie beyond the scope of this thesis, however.
[41] Anatoly Liberman, *Word Origins and How We Know Them: Etymology for Everyone*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, p. 157.

Aristotle's account of courage requires us to be at the mean between fear and confidence because those without fear—exhibiting bravado or recklessness—may perform the same actions as the courageous, lending a patina of similarity between courage and bravery, but lack the proper feeling of fear and an appreciation for the risks entailed by the act. "For example, Aristotle notes that while there is no name for a man who exceeds in lack of fear, such a man, while he may appear courageous in certain circumstances, is in fact only reckless. Not to feel fear is to lose exactly the state necessary to be courageous."[42] The paradigmatic case of Aristotelian courage is facing death in battle, but equally important is the Aristotelian notion that a man who is no longer frightened of battle cannot be considered courageous.

With the definition of courage as the virtue which corresponds to the appropriate response to threats, as differentiated from bravery and valor, it is important to highlight five characteristics courage and the mechanics of its practice. These common threads are: the perception of threats; the overcoming of significant obstacles and the elevation of mankind, potentially to the heights of greatness; the inclination towards action, as opposed to inaction; the visceral character of courage and its home in the heart as opposed to the mind; and a warning for the potential of courage, or more likely, the rhetoric of courage, to be used to justify acts of injustice.

1) Threat perception: There are many vocabularies we could associate with the unfolding of an act of courage. It is true that courage affords us the ability to respond to fear and risk in moments of prodigious uncertainty. Indeed, all aspects of courage appear to juxtapose it in some relationship to fear and risk, as we will see. Yet, the most appropriate vocabulary to employ is that of "threats," including proper threat perception. Without a proper sense of threat, it seems

[42] Quoted in Stanley Hauerwas, "The Difference of Virtue and the Difference It Makes: Courage Exemplified," Modern Theology 9 (1993): 254.

strange to speak of courage at all; conversely, in the presence of threats, it does not seem strange to speak of courage *even in contexts when risk, uncertainty, and confidence are not present*. For instance, the person diagnosed with a terminal illness does not encounter uncertainty or risk; the only confidence she feels is, perversely, in her inevitable death. We still say (rightly), however, that this person can approach her situation with great courage, meaning she has perceived the threat accurately and her character bids her to move forward, making the most of her remaining days. The vocabulary of threats thus allows us to speak of courage even when probability and/or inevitability are present, as opposed to the vocabulary of risk, fear, or uncertainty, which limit the contexts in which one may speak properly of courage without a conflict of terms.

Employing the language of threats also allows us to parse the relationship between courage and fear. We ought not to see courage as the absence of fear, but rather as the proper relationship to it, since it is proper to fear some things, while it is also right to use our assessment to determine that other things are more important than fear. Although a courage of threat perception involves knowing what to fear and what not to fear, it is not, importantly, knowledge of the future, divination, or prognostication. In Plato's *Laches*, the Athenian general Nicias, who enters the dialogue *in medias res* to break the aporia, proffers a definition of courage as a special kind of knowledge: that of the future. This is consonant with the portrayal of Nicias in Thucydides as a man suffering from a paucity of courage, concerned above all for his reputation, placing his faith in seers and diviners[43]; during the famed Sicilian expedition, after a strange act of piety, Nicias takes his chances in battle rather than return an unsuccessful expedition to Athens, which would have destroyed his coveted reputation and honor, instead leading his men into a slaughter and a horrible personal death.[44] Thus, in the dialogue, Socrates retorts by asking

[43] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Trans. Martin Hammond, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, 5.16.
[44] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 7.50.

Nicias how one evinces courage if one knows the future. Since it is likely that fear is felt similarly by most humans, it is courage that assesses it as part of the overall threat and determines the appropriate response, but we ought not to expect courage to have foreknowledge of the outcome.

2) Overcoming and elevation: Courage appears linked inextricably to the human activities of overcoming, elevating, or reaching for something higher than oneself. It is certainly beneficial to the possessor in itself, but within the context of virtues, courage is important as an instrumental virtue for the purpose of other things. It allows us to achieve great feats but also to sacrifice for causes greater than ourselves. Bourgeois society, however, wherein the commercial ethos dominates all others, is prosaic and not heroic; nineteenth century literature even has a special word to describe this feeling: *ennui*.[45] Democratic literature no longer consists of the extraordinary feats of extraordinary people, but only the somewhat extraordinary feats—some may even say mediocre—of ordinary people. Gone are epic poems and tragic dramas exploring courage. The leitmotiv *de rigueur* is living happily, not dying well. Perhaps some are too heroic and pre-modern as definitions of courage, but even more quotidian aspects of courage allow man to fashion himself into the being he sees fit, and to make more of himself than is possible otherwise.

On the contrary, cowardice, namely, the care for self-preservation above all else, leads only to mediocrity. Those who think only for their own safety stand anathema to "every great and noble enterprise."[46] Worse yet, some associate cowardice with the debased or dishonorable

[45] Flaubert uses the term in many of his novels. See, for example, *A Sentimental Education*, Trans. Douglas Parmée, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.
[46] Tacitus, *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1942, p. 290.

in humanity—"the mother of cruelty" and injustice, according to Montaigne.[47] Of this association between cowardice and the *déclassé,* between cowardice and cruelty in the context of his thought, Judith Shklar says, "He could dissociate it from aggression by recognizing its perfection only in the dignity of defeated soldiers, not in victorious ones."[48] Courage allows us to evince "fundamental cares" for things beyond ourselves, changing the way we care about things by demonstrating their existential nature. "People are seldom inclined to risk life and limb for things about which they do not care deeply."[49] Cowardice forecloses the opportunity for "fundamental cares" by caring for nothing but one's physical existence.

Indeed, in Greek society, cowardice became associated intimately with what we recognize as Socrates' famous question from Plato's *Apology* and *Crito*—i.e., are there fates worse than death?[50] The Greeks associated love of life above all else, what we call cowardice, with slavishness. In Plato's *Republic*, he posits that the sure sign of natural slavishness is one who prefers slavery to death. This person demonstrates his unfitness to be a citizen by not taking his own life and remaining complacently a slave, for the true citizen elects death over an existence of complacent slavishness.[51] Socrates goes so far as to advocate for extreme censorship of Homer, Hesiod, and other Greek literary figures in his ideal "city-in-speech," in order for the guardians to receive an education allowing them to "be free and to fear slavery more than death."[52] Again, in *Gorgias,* Plato has Callicles state that "the suffering of injustice is not the part of a man, but of a slave, who indeed had better die than live."[53] Later in the dialogue, Socrates states the position he takes later in the *Apology*—that it is foolish to fret an

[47] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, Trans. M.A. Screech, New York: Penguin, 1993, p. 786. As will be made clear in characteristic #5, courage, too, may be associated with cruelty.
[48] Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984, p. 15.
[49] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 7.
[50] Plato, *Essential Dialogues*, Trans. Benjamin Jowett, New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.
[51] Plato, *Republic*, 386a.
[52] Plato, *Republic*, 387b.
[53] Plato, *Essential Dialogues*, 483b.

unknown event such as death to a known evil like injustice—by declaring that "no man who is not an utter fool and coward is afraid of death itself, but he is afraid of doing wrong."[54] The Greeks practiced the theory of "natural slavishness"[55] by enslaving mostly soldiers of defeated armies, as opposed to the small percentage of those birthed into slavery.[56]

The theory of slavishness associated with the fear of death also surfaces in Roman times, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and in the Romantic thinkers, too. In Seneca's letters we read that "Life is slavery without the virtue which knows how to die…A person who has learned how to die has *un*learned how to be a slave."[57] In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* he states, "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once."[58] Rousseau states in *Émile*, that he is unable "to teach living to one who thinks of nothing but how to keep himself from dying."[59] Hegel's famous dialectic of lordship and bondage features two humans who chance upon one another, see something of themselves in one another, and seek a desire for mutual recognition of their humanness. Slaves in Hegel's dialectic are those unwilling to risk their lives in a battle for this "self-consciousness." The paradox of this relationship is obvious from its lack of reciprocal recognition: the master depends upon the slave for his self-consciousness, a being whose consciousness in turn he does not recognize and does not esteem worthy. In a society with slaves, neither the master nor the slave has the type of recognition needed for genuine self-consciousness.[60] The paradox of courage, as Chesterton illuminates, is

---

[54] Plato, *Essential Dialogues*, 522e.
[55] See Aristotle, *Politics*, Ed. R.F. Stalley, Trans. Ernest Barker, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, I.13.1260a12 and Nicholas D. Smith, "Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery," in *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, Ed. David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr., Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p. 148.
[56] Cf. Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, London: Routledge, 1989.
[57] Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*, Ed. Robin Campbell, New York: Penguin, 1969, p. 72, emphasis mine.
[58] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Ed. Barbara A. Mowat, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005, p. 77.
[59] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: or, On Education*, Trans. Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p. 53.
[60] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. A.V. Miller, Ed. J.N. Findlay, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977, pp. 111-118; cf. also to Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. James H. Nichols, Ed. Allan Bloom, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

that it indicates "a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die;" we avoid slavishness by stepping within inches of death.[61] Outside of philosophical circles and in the political sphere, slavishness and cowardice maintain an association, too; for instance, in Martin Luther King's predecessor speech to "I Have a Dream," he declares, "I submit to you that if a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he is not fit to live."[62] Whether we consider courage as a means of reaching human greatness (heroic action) or a more prosaic form of liberating man from the bonds of natural biological processes (slavishness), courage is imperative to overcoming situations, achieving more, and elevating the human person.

3) Action, as opposed to inaction: While it is true that courage may induce inaction, if an appropriate response, on balance it inclines men to action when most would be inclined to inaction. *Thumos* is connected to the word "to go," indicating its tendency towards action.[63] Accurate threat perception makes a correct contribution to action, notwithstanding rare cases like the terminal illness example above. "If one is forever cautious, can one remain a human being?"[64] Courage induces action by opposing inertia, which is often the hallmark of a coward. Courage helps man take calculated risks in the face of uncertainty to realize new possibilities and seize ephemeral opportunities. This is especially true for political leadership and perhaps most obvious in this realm. For citizens, however, courage may induce action also, namely, entering the public sphere. As we will see in Chapter 4, Arendt argues that the defining feature of modern politics is the disappearance of the public sphere—and with it, the sense of ancient, participatory liberty of acting in concert—at the hands of the private sphere, which calls for none of the old virtuous qualities like discourse, civility, moderation, and action. Lacking the Ancient Greek

[61] G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, p. 92.
[62] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010, p. 67.
[63] Robert Gay, "Courage and Thumos," p. 259.
[64] Aleksandr. I. Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle*, Trans. Thomas P. Whitney, New York: Harper & Row, 1968, p. 4.

sense of robust political participation, due to the unwarranted encroachment of the private sphere of "liberty," and with historical ideologies of "inevitability" curtailing man's ability to engage in freedom through political action, man has to muster courage to enter the public sphere—what remains of it, anyway—which explicitly denies his prerogatives in the private sphere. "In spite of our apparently exclusive concern for life" in the private sphere, the satisfaction of our (predominantly) biological needs, the public sphere is unique in its denial of that strongest human instinct, self-preservation, as a legitimate concern. Thus courage liberates man from his private concerns, allowing him to enter upon the public sphere where "not life but the world is at stake."[65] While such political action is no longer likely to be heroic—leading to immortality—it does force man to assert a unique individuality properly his own (and in quite a public manner), as opposed to the products of necessity he secures in the private sphere.

While courage is more likely to incite action than inaction, its employment is no guarantee of the action's success or of the action's justice, even when analyzed through the prism of threat assessment. Action itself, though no guarantor of success *ipso facto*, would be impossible without "he who dares" of courage. Likewise, action itself is no guarantor of the promotion of justice. In Plato's *Statesman*, he outlines the theory of the expert statesman as one who "weaves" together the city's virtues, mainly those of temperance and courage. Of the courageous, he warns, "The character of the courageous…falls short of the [temperate] in justice and caution, but has the power of action in a remarkable degree, and where either of these two qualities is wanting, there cities cannot altogether prosper either in their public or private life."[66]

4) Visceral or "thumotic" in character: Since courage involves the overcoming of fear, an emotion, the home of courage is not so much with reason in the human mind. Man *feels*

[65] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 155.
[66] Plato, *Essential Dialogues*, 311b.

courageous just as much as he *reasons* what it is like to risk for that which he cares fundamentally, in his chest—viscerally. Already, we have seen C.S. Lewis locate courage corporeally with the chest, specifically in the heart, which is an appreciation of its etymology. This fact manifests itself in the concomitant vocabulary of courage we employ. After all, we do not "think" or "reason" courage so much as we "muster" it (or "will" it in Lord Moran's parlance). "It is the power upon which one draws when there is no time for reason, or when reason fails altogether."[67] One can have all the philosophical training in the world, but when it comes time to act selflessly or to elevate the human spirit, for instance, we require courage. Courage is thus antecedent to rationality—its pre-rational nature may partly explain its lack of theoretical treatment—but also a potential buttress for it, employed in the pursuit of various ends. In the Christian tradition, for instance, courage was the fortitude necessary to carry out the other cardinal and theological virtues.[68] For the Greeks, courage acted as the pivotal virtue to upholding the cardinal (Platonic) virtues of prudence, justice, and temperance in the face of difficulty. Although courage may be antecedent to reason, it is obviously not disconnected from it, as we have seen in Plato's ordering of the soul and its hierarchy of non-rational to rational elements. On the proper ordering of the soul, Plato says it is "appropriate for the rational part (*logistikon*) to rule (*archein*), since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part (*thumoeidei*) to obey it and be its ally." He depicts the appetitive and *thumotic* parts of the soul as two horses "charioteered" by reason toward the good, whose achievement relies on the soul's harmonization "as if they were literally the three defining notes of an octave—lowest, highest, and middle."[69]

[67] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 254.
[68] Cf. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001.
[69] Plato, *Republic*, Trans. G.M.A. Grube, Ed. C.D.C. Reeve, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992, 443d5.

5) Liable for misuse and injustice by citizens and leaders alike: We employ courage in the name of another good for which we deem sacrifice worthy in the face of threat(s). Courage often has an external goal, exposure to threats and the emotion of fear *for the purpose of* something deemed worthier than the threat's impending danger. This calculation, however, *ipso facto* is no guarantee of the justice or goodness of the external goal. Often, courage is a double-edged sword. It may serve occasionally unjust ends and it is indubitably subject to abuse and false pretenses. Courage may clothe cruelty or brutality, which are not virtues at all. Montaigne juxtaposes courage to cowardice and cruelty, but this is not always the case. Plato notes in the *Statesmen* that the courageous are often far less cautious and just. One need think only of Machiavelli's cruel prince who is, at times, ruthless and yet simultaneously admired because of his courage.[70] Tocqueville also succumbed to this danger in his advocacy of the brutal conquest of Algeria, on the grounds that pulling out would show France "in the eyes of the world…appears to be yielding to…her lack of courage."[71]

To pursue courage as an end in itself is the danger that results often in injustice, used so brazenly as a mantle upon which to rest one's inner motivations, as we read, for instance, in Primo Levi's account of the "useless cruelty" of the Third Reich:[72]

> Wars are detestable; they are a very bad way to settle controversies between nations or factions, but they cannot be called useless: they aim at a goal, though it may be wicked or perverse. They are not gratuitous, their purpose is not to inflict suffering; suffering is there, it is collective, anguishing, unjust, but it is a by-product, something extra. Now, I believe that the twelve Hitlerian years shared their violence with many other historical space-times, *but that they were characterized by widespread useless violence, as an end in itself, with the sole purpose of creating pain, occasionally having a purpose, yet always redundant, always disproportionate to the purpose itself*…[i.e.,] to unleash

[70] See also Michael Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands." Philosophy & Public Affairs 2 (1973): 160-180.
[71] Quoted in André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography*, London: Peter Halban, 1988, p. 318.
[72] Cf. Florian Berger, *The Face of Courage: The 98 Men Who Received the Knight's Cross and the Close-Combat Clasp in Gold*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2009.

> military aggressions or ruthless wars, support internal Fifth Columns, transfer or remove entire populations, subjugate them, sterilize them, or exterminate them.[73]

Desperate to find a rationale behind these senseless acts of violence, Levi concludes that they serve the purpose of attenuating the (eventual) murderer's guilt by first degrading the victim to a sub-human status, a being for whom compassion is unnecessary. On a more general note, war, the most brutal enterprise known to man, is also the occasion for displays of great fellowship and courage. The psychic desire for glory in posterity (i.e., immortality) engenders both the conditions for the unfolding of courage *and* potential cruelty. Indeed, some have gained fame precisely for their lack of justice or temperance, which led some theorists like Rousseau to support a hero who shows his courage not in battle but "every day."[74]

In a more quotidian example, the thief may convince himself that he displays courage in going to great lengths to steal a purse. "If the loftiness of spirit that reveals itself amid danger and toil is empty of justice…it is a vice," Cicero warns his son.[75] Men who display inordinate amounts of courage, Cicero notes, are "more easily…driven by desire for glory to injustice."[76] There are surely more ambiguous cases, such as opposing soldiers fighting in a war in which both sides have legitimate grievances against the other. How could one declare the soldier of one party courageous and not the other, provided both displayed similar acts in the face of similar threats, merely because one belonged to the group whose cause lacked the clear-cut justness or clarity of the other? *In nuce*, being a good fighter does not mean one will fight for what is good or just. Even though this thesis explores courage in isolation, as with all virtues, we

---

[73] Quoted in Preface to Rudolf Hoess, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, Trans. Joachim Neugroschel, London: Phoenix, 2000, pp. 83-84, emphasis mine.
[74] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on This Question: Which is the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero and Which Are the Heroes Who Lacked This Virtue?," *Social Contract, Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero, Political Fragments, and, Geneva Manuscript*, Trans. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, Hanover, NH: Dartmouth P, 1994, p. 4.
[75] Cicero, *On Duties*, I.62.
[76] Cicero, *On Duties*, I.65.

must see courage as part of the whole, since what we are really discussing is the well-functioning of man.

There are two interpretations here, one being that the agent has feelings about the external goal of courage, the other being that the agent has certain feelings about the external goal of courage, *and that they are correct feelings*. Aristotle is one of the latter virtue theorists. Alas, Aristotle "confines his discussion of courage to cases where the external goal is unquestionably good."[77] One suggestion out of this dilemma of who possesses courage, which is anyway beyond the scope of this thesis, is to indicate that courage sometimes contributes to evil acts, but in no way are their perpetrators *virtuous* in their display of courage. In other words, there is such thing as courage and *the virtue of courage*. "Not every man who has a virtue has something that is a virtue in him."[78] This idea accords with Susan Sontag's theory that courage is a "morally neutral" virtue, as well as Stanley Fish's idea that "courage is a quality that someone can display in the performance of a bad act," both of whom found themselves in the crosshairs of public opinion after they declared the 9/11 hijackers to be courageous.[79]

III. Contexts of Courage

The previous section attempted a definition of courage, with five key characteristics. Having set out a definition of courage as the appropriate response to a variety of threats, from frustration of one's aims to death, it is necessary to examine the different *contexts* in which courage might manifest itself in the world, each corresponding to different types of threats. Further exploring the various contexts in which we employ courage will help us solidify our definition of courage as the habit or disposition of responding to threats appropriately. The

[77] David Pears, "Courage as a Mean," p. 187.
[78] Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices*, p. 17.
[79] Linda R. Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University P, 2006, p. 4.

proceeding section draws on a diverse body of work from ancient to modern: war memoirists, political dissidents, and the literature of existential philosophers, *inter alia*.

The section is organized around three main sections, corresponding to the three contexts in which I describe the virtue of courage as operative—martial, political, and moral.[80] Each application further elucidates a different "fundamental care," to borrow Richard Avramenko's phrase, for which we deem our sacrifices worthy. Having no fundamental cares, nothing for which one would sacrifice in the face of threats, is a form of nihilism.[81] (This type of nihilism is slightly different than having fundamental cares but not the courage to stand firm for them.) Thus, by tracking the varying applications of courage, we can elucidate the nature of the person who elevates these aspects above others. For instance, because the Spartans prized martial aspects of courage above all others, we understand that they inhabited a community whose chief currency was honor and glory and whose individuals were motivated by it. It should come as no surprise to us that courage has manifold applications as a virtue, not least because we have competing visions of what constitutes a good person and a good community.

Significantly, however, I want to emphasize the words "contexts" or "applications" in my description of courage. These are not different *iterations* of the virtue courage—as if they were discrete types—for the virtue of courage is clearly wide-ranging. Martial, political, and moral—all are different *applications* of the virtue of courage, different contexts in which we can discover its employment to respond appropriately to threats, even if demarcating such applications would have made little categorical sense to the Greeks, for example.[82] Needless to say, the borders between these applications are porous. Where one begins and the other ends is not always a

[80] I am indebted to Richard Avramenko's *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb* for the idea of neatly analyzed categories of courage, although I build upon Avramenko's categories and add a few I believe he has elided.
[81] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 7.
[82] I have labeled, quite conveniently, each corresponding threat in the subtitle of each chapter subsection.

clearly discernible exercise. Yet, the mechanisms of parsing threats and overcoming them are often the same. By presenting some of the main contexts of courage and its most common applications, I endeavor to come to a better sense of the different contexts in which courage exists and how it *functions* in these various contexts. At the same time, the way courage is employed in each context will reveal that there is likely no such thing as a timeless or essentialist idea of what courage is, since this assumes an unchanging nature and continuity of the virtue throughout time and place. What different authors characterize as courage will of course be slightly dependent upon time, place, and context.[83] I present each application of courage in turn, with no pretense as to the comprehensiveness of this list.

Martial Contexts: The Threat to Bodily Integrity

War is omnipresent throughout history, and the popular imagination always seems moved by the idea of military fraternity and noble deeds performed under the harshest of conditions in battle. "Without risks or prizes for the darer, history would be insipid indeed."[84] Unsurprisingly, then, martial applications of courage are the oldest and most enduring aspects of the virtue. Instantiated in ancient societies even before the Greeks, martial aspects of courage find perhaps their strongest and clearest articulation in the Homeric world. The point of that articulation is most obvious in battle, epitomized by the ferocity of the Spartans, a society obsessed with martial courage, a love of honor, and manliness. In fact, the word for manliness in Ancient Greek—*andreia*—doubles as the word for courage. Herodotus recounts an incredible tableau of "the three-hundred" Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae, repelling Xerxes' forces and then sacrificing themselves in a courageous last stand.[85] The martially courageous constitution of Spartan men led Xenophon to declare that "where such a load of dishonor burdens the coward

[83] Cf. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," History and Theory 8 (1969): 3-53.
[84] William James, *Writings, 1902-1910*, p. 1285.
[85] Herodotus, *The Histories*, Ed. John M. Marincola, Trans. Aubery de Selincourt, London: Penguin, 2003, 8.24-25.

death seems preferable instead of a dishonored and shameful life."[86] This aspect of courage predicated upon selfless acts of heroism offers its participants camaraderie and fraternity amongst bloodshed, which may explain some of its enduring appeal.[87] In the *First Discourse*, in which he valorizes Sparta, Rousseau establishes the test of a martially courageous people indicating their proclivity for self-sacrifice: "nothing is left to us except the memory of their heroic actions."[88]

A man's sense of self is the first thing to dissipate in contexts articulated by martial courage. This can be seen vividly in the hoplite method of fighting in a phalanx formation, which relied upon "a greater number of trained fighters accustomed to acting as a team and not showing off their individual prowess."[89] Greeks fought in close and especially intimate quarters. The shield, originally called a *hoplon*, from whence the word hoplite probably comes, was designed to protect the torso of one's neighbor while fighting. "It was eminently practical because the hoplite carried his shield on his left forearm and his spear in his right hand. The shield was held in such a way that it protected not the shield bearer himself but the man to his left."[90] The success of the army depended upon each individual man carrying out his duty—above all, to hold his place in line. The duty of one man had a direct nexus to the survival of his fellow to his left, and the failure in discipline of one man could lead to a domino effect down the line.

Martial applications of courage, however, are double-edged swords. Because courage is often a relational virtue—i.e., it involves estimation from others based on actions performed in their presence—and martial courage takes root in a community which evinces a fundamental

[86] Xenophon, *Spartan Constitution*, Ed. Michael Lipka, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002, 9.6.
[87] Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990, pp. 31-35.
[88] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourse*, p. 43.
[89] Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny*, p. 6.
[90] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 54.

care for honor and glory, it often embeds itself within honor cultures, societies, or groups which function with highly demanding honor codes and according to strict hierarchies. Honor's corollary, shame, serves as a powerful external sanction of individuals' behavior by controlling their reputation and self-esteem and others' recognition of these claims. In an honor society as extreme as Sparta, for example, cowardice and dishonor were matters not only of social ostracism and exclusion (the individual became literally *apolis*), but also of death—politically, spiritually, and eventually, physically. Because the fate of the coward was practically irreversible, it was to be avoided at all costs. It is no wonder that Sparta advocated a policy of "death before dishonor."[91]

The love of honor, therefore, often belies its episodic outbreaks of violence.[92] This is not a coincidence. As Avramenko remarks, "honor is, on principle, violent. In honor cultures, offenses must be redressed, and redress is almost always violent."[93] Martial aspects of courage, predicated upon honor, risk encouraging acts of revengeful blood spilling—perverse, yet blatantly empirical evidence—to redress offenses. Think of the common aristocratic principle: "no man may harm me with impunity." Edgar Allan Poe begins his macabre short story of aristocratic backstabbing, "The Cask of Amontillado," with a stark reminder of this principle: "The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge."[94] Indeed, a simple apology cannot suffice. Redress must take a deeper form. On this account, we see the inextricable link between martial applications of courage and the ability to perform acts of violence, bodily sacrifice, and revenge—in poor Fortunato's case,

[91] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 33.
[92] See, for example, *Laches* 182e in Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*.
[93] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 84.
[94] Edgar Allan Poe, *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: Penguin, 2006, p. 208.

being murderously shackled and entombed alive. Reiterating the fifth characteristic of courage, displays of courage are vulnerable to coincide with acts of violence and deep injustice.

Interestingly, Ryan Balot argues that for a brief period of time, the Athenians displayed a less rigid and more democratized courage by linking its ideal not to the military but to democratic freedom, equality, and rational deliberation and placing it within a new context: free and equal debate within Athenian public life. They viewed it as a worthwhile character excellence which allowed them to be free and partake in the public life of the city. Since Plato's tripartite soul, courage has often been linked to emotion (*thumos*), but it was the Athenians, distinct among other Hellenic cultures, who linked courage to practical reasoning and gave full detail to its complete expression. "Courage requires deliberateness and intentionality: it is 'about' certain things and 'for' certain purposes."[95] By looking to Athens and modern America, he argues that courage is a virtue oriented around openness to new ideas and driven by non-conformity, therefore requiring more democracy for its inculcation. The openness and innovation of the Athenians makes them the definitive example of a democratic regime in a world of martial courage, as compared to their ancient brethren who lived in ultra-closed societies.[96] Athenians made speeches and explained why, in front of their peers, they ought to go to war. This made the expression of courage within Athens different than its other expressions—gentler and highly regime-specific.

Nevertheless, this conception of courage appears to have always existed in an uneasy tension with *andreia*, the manly form of courage seen in martial contexts. For this reason, Balot declares Athenian democratic courage "not to be the essential truth of the Athenian experience,

[95] Ryan Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis*, p. 4.
[96] Ryan Balot, "Transforming 'Manliness' into Courage: Two Democratic Perspectives," in *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, eds. Geoffrey Kellow and Neven Leddy, Toronto: University of Toronto P, 2016, p. 143.

but rather an interesting and fertile ideological construct."[97] But as Timothy Burns' work on Periclean Athens argues, Athens cannot be entirely or even easily separated from its problematic history of empire, as the democratic ideals found within Athens' city walls often went hand-in-hand with conquest and subjugation, especially as its citizens sought to escape conflict at home by pursuing it abroad. Urged by Pericles to question their traditions, which included venerable questions of political justice, the Athenians came to believe in the pursuit of empire—with devastating consequences resulting in plague and military defeat.[98] At times, Balot appears to be splitting hairs between "Athenian rational courage and the Spartans' socially compulsory courage."[99] In Periclean Athens as in the rest of the ancient world, it appears as though martial courage still applies abroad.

The twentieth century put martial applications of courage to its greatest test yet, and not even it could save man from the carnage and slaughter of modern warfare.[100] In the late nineteenth century, technology and progress were viewed largely positively, as "the word machine was not yet invariably coupled with the word gun."[101] The unprecedented horrors of the twentieth century, however, led Dr. Charles McMoran Wilson, better known as Lord Moran, field doctor in WWI and later Churchill's personal physician, to declare that in the trenches, "A man's courage is his capital and he is forever spending."[102] Although nuance has a difficult time surviving the theater of war because writers tend to emphasize moments of physical and psychological anguish, we find this straightforward sentiment about courage reiterated by other

[97] Ryan Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis*, p. 8.
[98] Timothy Burns, "The Problematic Character of Periclean Athens," in *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, eds. Geoffrey Kellow and Neven Leddy, Toronto: University of Toronto P, 2016.
[99] Ryan Balot, "Courage in the Democratic Polis," *Classical Quarterly* 54 (2004): 417.
[100] See Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*, New York: Basic Books, 2000.
[101] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 24.
[102] Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage: The Classic WWI Study of the Psychological Effects of War*, New York: Basic Books, 2007, p. xxii.

memoirs of the period, such as Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That*, wherein he states that "the only thing respected in young officers was personal courage."[103] Moran outlines an empirical take on martial courage akin to "will power;" this is because the practice of conscription changes the makeup of the army. Rather than the self-selected cast of courageous characters who come forth voluntarily, some seeing it as the duty of their station in life, the common conscript who "feels fear" has to "will" courage on the battlefield, especially given the realities of what Siegfried Sassoon called the "homicidal eloquence" of trench warfare—quotidian isolation, loneliness induced by the invention of long-distance weapons inhibiting the advancement of armies, stasis in fixed trenches, "defensiveness," and a nervous paranoia about "the other side" and its movements.[104] This type of fear does not reside in man's thoughts, but in his actions, paralyzing his ability to defend himself. Through his psychological analysis, Moran finds that the average man has a limited capacity for willing martial courage in the context of modern warfare; once utilized without replenishing or nourishment, he ceases to be of any use on the battlefield and must retreat in order to convalesce. "[N]o man has an unlimited stock of courage and…when this is done he is finished."[105] Moran's diary is replete with accounts of, literally, "broken men." The absurdity of modern war, then, was not only the massive loss of life it inflicted but also the lack of respite for soldiers to replenish their ability to muster courage.[106] What may have been "sweet and proper" for Horace and the ancients—namely, to die in battle for one's country—had become, with the development of modern warfare, Wilfred Owen's "Old

[103] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, London: Penguin, 2011, p. 135.
[104] Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997, p. 5.
[105] Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, p. 26. Napoleon writes similarly in his *Maxims* of the necessity to nourish and replenish courage. "Courage is like love; it must have hope for nourishment." (Quoted in Peter G. Tsouras, ed., *The Book of Military Quotations*, Minneapolis: Zenith, 2005, p. 101.)
[106] Cf. Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Lie."[107] In the end, nobody but "the war had won, and [it] would go on winning," declared Edmund Blunden.[108] Although many still extol the virtues of the war hero, there is a palpable pessimism surrounding the desirability and romanticism of martial courage brought on by the experience of modern warfare. "Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow," states Hemingway, "were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."[109] The idea of martial courage served only as an ideological crutch to grieving family members, as well as to those soldiers unenviable enough to have to deliver the grim news. Yet, a strong desideratum to return to the camaraderie, "warriorness," and fraternity of the frontline reveals the enduring nature of martial courage.

Political Contexts: The Threat to Self-Interest

In political applications of courage, courage manifests itself as a virtue inducing action, creating new realities, and above all, preventing idleness. In a passage on the uncertainty of politics and especially political leadership, Machiavelli notes, "Nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders."[110] Indeed, some equate Machiavelli's *virtù* to courage itself—the antonym of cowardice—which opposes fear, but also a love for idleness (*ignavia* or *ozio*).[111] Machiavelli's advocacy of risk-taking is not unqualified, however. It combines boldness with sagacity to allow a leader to seize the moment through calculated risk that may result in strength or restraint from action. In the *Florentine Histories*, Machiavelli tells us of Baglione, a prince who failed to take advantage of the opportunity to destroy Julius II, the warrior Pope, when he

[107] Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum est," line 27. Cf. *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, Ed. George Walter, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 142.
[108] Edmund Blunden, *The Mind's Eye, Essays*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1934, p. 38.
[109] Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, New York: Scribner, 1957, p. 161.
[110] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince: Second Edition*, Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998, p. 23.
[111] Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998.

waltzed into the former's city unarmed.[112] Instead of striking decisively, Baglione acted with reservation and forfeited the city to Julius II; on Machiavelli's account, Baglione found himself incapable of seizing this opportunity because he had fallen into a life of indolence, greed, and corruption. Machiavelli's scorn for extreme dissolution and especially indolence tracks closely to that of another notable Florentine, Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* illustrates history's cowards inhabiting the exurbs of hell. In the Inferno, Canto III, the cowards reside outside of hell because even the devil finds them abhorrent—i.e., they were not faithful enough to remain with God, nor were they courageous enough to rebel against him and join the devil.[113]

In more expansive translations of *virtù*, we gather just how opposed Machiavelli is to idleness, and the connection between his advocacy of action and a political leader's personal fortune. While Mansfield prefers "courage," others argue that *virtù* is more expansive than this, denoting "ability" or "determination" as well.[114] Regardless of its precise rendering, one thing that is manifest is the relationship between *virtù* and *fortuna*, the luck or personal fortune of a ruler, indicating Machiavelli's belief in a leader's ability to contribute to his own luck, in some situations. Fortune, paradoxically, was not to limit the prince, but to encourage him in his zeal. This relationship is so important that *virtù* implies occasionally a ruthlessness (following the dictates of necessity) that is not characteristic of a "virtuous man" in the ordinary sense of the word, and certainly far from the humanistic and moral conception of princely virtues found in Cicero (the latter declares unvirtuous behavior as "wholly unworthy of man" and "bestial")—*a fortiori* in light of the need to control the paralyzing factions that plagued Machiavelli's Florence, which produced "as many dead, as many exiles, and as many families destroyed as

[112] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, Trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990, p. 94.
[113] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Volume 1: Inferno*, Trans. Mark Musa, New York: Penguin, 2002.
[114] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988, pp. 100-104.

ever occurred in any city in memory."[115] While the leader cannot possibly avoid creating enemies, he can prevent the rise of factions. In pursuit of these ends, Machiavelli speaks of "cruelties badly used or well used," the former of which persist over long periods, while the latter are "done at a stroke" and aimed at the utility of the state's subjects.[116] Nevertheless, Machiavelli uses the example of Agathocles, tyrant of Syracuse and Sicily, who consolidated his absolute power by feigning the need to assemble his government and then slaying its members, to show that *virtù* is not bereft of moral content even as it differs from classical virtue—of the contemptible Agathocles, Machiavelli says quite simply, he "acquire[d] empire [*imperio* or "political power"], but not glory."[117] Needless to say, this moral content is in no way overtly Christian, given that Christianity "holds down ambition" and "imposes on the human spirit," especially the desire for princely glory and self-aggrandizement, denying "the value of the worldly honors and rewards by whose attraction human spiritedness can be made to serve the needs of mankind."[118] Hence, *virtù* is above all flexibility in pursuit of glory and proper foresight and calculation in one's use of means and ends, with the ultimate aim of securing favorable personal *fortuna* and staving off any unfortunate strokes of *fortuna*, especially in the form of crippling factions and conspiratorial attempts to disrupt the state.

Machiavelli's frequent descriptions of indolent rulers are illuminating—they often lose power and subsequently blame their precipitous fall on bad luck, failing to realize their own role in engendering such regrettable circumstances. "Those of our rulers who lost their principalities, after having ruled them for many years, should not lament their bad luck but should blame their

[115] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, p. 7.
[116] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince: Second Edition*, pp. 37-38.
[117] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince: Second Edition*, p. 35.
[118] Harvey C. Mansfield, "Party & Sect in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories," *Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought*, Ed. Martin Fleisher, London: Croom Helm, 1972, p. 258.

own indolence."[119] That is, they ought to look at their own *ignavia*, their "slothful failure to use quiet times for building up their power and strengthening their defenses."[120] He continues, "A ruler who trusts entirely to luck comes to grief when his luck runs out"[121]; rather, a wise ruler contributes, through purposive and courageous strategies, to his own fortune, for he knows that "worldly things are not allowed by nature to stand still"[122] because "human things are always in motion, either they ascend or descend."[123] Reliance upon mere fortune without leading a life of action, he says, is not courageous but cowardly, since it demonstrates a lack of self-reliance and *virtù*. One of the traits of modern character is to believe that through human agency, we have the problem of fortune solved. Thus, the close nexus between *virtù* and *fortuna* is yet another demonstration of Machiavelli's belief that political leaders must avoid halfway, feeble measures and evince active courage, without which they risk complacency and a threat to their rule.

While Machiavelli describes the nexus between political leadership, action, and courage, i.e., pushing ambivalent, wishy-washy, or pandering leaders to take a position and act, for citizens not in political leadership, the political realm is not concerned so much with individual's wills—which can be satisfied best in the private realm—but with the collective will. In man's private life, he seeks security by serving his private interests. The political realm, by contrast, cannot evince concern for individual citizens because it existed before them and intends to outlast any one individual. The impersonal liberal state itself—that of Hobbes who distinguished state and society, allowing the former to represent the latter impartially—is constituted not by the current holders of power—*l'etat c'est moi*, the personified state, no longer applies—but it exists

[119] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 84.
[120] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 106.
[121] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 85.
[122] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, p. 185.
[123] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, Chicago: University of Chicago P, p. 123.

prior to their arrival, waiting for a party or faction to claim it, and it will continue long after they depart from power. Hence, it also requires an application of courage to step into such a realm that expressly denies human survival as its foremost concern and operates on a temporal scale longer than any individual life. "[W]e have arrived in a realm where the concern for life has lost its validity…Courage is indispensable because in politics not life but the world is at stake."[124] The public realm opposes itself to that deepest instinct of man—self-preservation—and makes claims on the primacy of his self-interest; one only needs to look at the trial of Socrates to realize that politics, like martial and moral applications of courage, occasionally involves the denial of life.

Aristotle, upon whose *Politics* Arendt bases her sharp distinction of the public and private realms in *The Human Condition*, saw the polis as absolutely necessary to the human project. While household leadership is a necessary precondition of citizenship for Aristotle, it is not sufficient for virtuous living. Man cannot be a *zoon politikon* ("political animal") if he remains in the house or private sphere. The polis is thus such a distinctively human experience that a man living outside of it "must therefore be either a beast [and thus without need for human association] or a god [and thus self-sufficient in himself/herself]."[125] Man has by nature a political impulse, and the good propels him into civic life (hence the organic nature of the polis, too); here Aristotle makes an empirical claim about what impels us to the good and a normative claim about where that good lies. In the intersubjective community of the polis, we debate the nature of law and justice with a distinctively different form of argument than in the household—i.e., justification to the *koinonia* ("collective body/community").

[124] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 155.
[125] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a25.

Paradoxically, political applications of courage raise the threshold for mustering courage above that of martial applications precisely because of this collective component to political justification. Political applications of courage, helping man to enter the public sphere and partake in its discursive culture, require more courage than to stand and fight. "[M]ore courage is needed to participate discursively than to employ either sophistry or violence."[126] The reason is that a true commitment to political applications of courage leads into the uncharted territory of self-examination and self-critique in a liberal community of others, friends, or peers. The community emerges stronger after its denizens share in the risks and gains of its common goal(s), "for the discovery of truth is a common good," Socrates declares in Plato's *Gorgias.*[127] In Callicles, one of Socrates' interlocutors in the dialogue, we see only obfuscating rhetoric and a desire to stymie the Socratic inquiry, for Callicles lacks the political application of courage necessary to engage in soul-searching public dialogue. Socrates, by contrast, is the "only or almost the only Athenian living who practices the true art of politics; I am the only politician of my time."[128] Therefore, any man desiring meaningful participation in a common political life, citizen or leader, requires courage.

Moral Contexts: The Threat of Social Relations

I label this application moral in that it is an ethics of courage (though not an "*ethical use* of courage," recalling characteristic 5 of courage above), morality being the subset of ethics—reasoning about human decision-making—that addresses human social relations. This is a social function of courage that has a lot to do with the authenticity of the self, but as will become clear, it is sometimes individualistic and often has a highly fluid border with political applications. In Martin Luther King's collection of sermons titled *Strength to Love*, he explains the moral

[126] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 134.
[127] Plato, *Essential Dialogues*, 505e.
[128] Plato, *Essential Dialogues*, 521e.

application of courage well: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."[129] In martial applications of courage we impose rule from without through the mechanism of shame, while in moral applications rule comes from within. Moral applications of courage entail the power to face unpleasant facts when so many people free themselves improperly of this elementary task. Chesterton says that "there is only one thing that it requires real courage to say, and that is a truism."[130] Others have envisioned the task of the writer as engendering moral applications of courage: if moral courage means anything at all, "it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear," Orwell declares in a preface to *Animal Farm* his publisher refused at first to publish, even when those unpleasant truths are "right in front of one's nose."[131] "To see what is in front of one's nose needs constant struggle," he declares in a famous article for *Tribune*.[132]

> The point is that we are all capable of believing things which we *know* to be untrue, and then, when we are finally proved wrong, impudently twisting the facts so as to show that we were right. Intellectually, it is possible to carry on this process for an indefinite time: the only check on it is that sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield.[133]

Likewise, in Orwell's great dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* he introduces the concept of "doublethink," whereby the person in question accepts two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct, without the conflict of mind caused by cognitive dissonance. Doublethink is "the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of

---

[129] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*, p. 26.
[130] G.K. Chesterton, *G.F. Watts*, London: Duckworth & Company, 1904, p. 17.
[131] George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, New York: Penguin, 2000.
[132] George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell Volume 4: In Front of Your Nose*, London: Penguin, 1968, p. 154. Hence also the posthumous Orwell Award, awarded to a deserving journalist on an annual basis, whose formal name—the National Council of Teachers of English George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contribution to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language —is even more elucidating and evocative of Orwell's goals.
[133] George Orwell, *The Collected Essays*, p. 153.

them…To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just as long as it is needed." In its labyrinthine world it allows lies to masquerade as truth while remaining cognizant of the lies, which are "always one leap ahead of the truth."[134] Without moral applications of courage, these lies masquerading as truths make contrition impossible and eventually come to constitute the subjective reality of the "doublethinker," so to speak, at which point all is lost; of Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz, Primo Levi writes, he "spent all his life assimilating lies from the very air he breathed and therefore lying to himself," making penitence even in the face of the gallows impossible.[135] Note that Orwell's courage to tell the truth serves liberty *and* permits moral action by recognizing what would be easier to dismiss or ignore.

It is easy to see how moral applications of courage quickly intersect with politics. The politician has always held power over the philosopher, threatening him with death or public humiliation. This has been true since the successful prosecution of Socrates in Plato's *Apology*, purging Athens of its best man. The only cities in which the politician does not hold power over the philosopher are Plato's "City in Speech" and Augustine's "City of God," both of which do not exist—at least outside of the ideal, utopian, or metaphysical worlds. Moral applications of courage, despite numerous examples in antiquity, exploded in the twentieth century because of the unprecedented "surveillance power" gained by all states, and also the dominant ideologies' use of repression, torture, show trials, and assassination as acceptable tools of political rule.[136] The sheer amount of state surveillance power accrued by both fascism and communism implicated not just the philosopher or intellectual dissident, but made independent moral stands

[134] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, New York: Penguin, 2000, pp. 40-41.
[135] Rudolf Hoess, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, p. 25.
[136] Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed., New York: Vintage, 1995.

perilous endeavors for all who dared to take them. Cold, impersonal power and the policing of opinion by some regimes drives up the costs associated with moral stances, so that a "wretched feeling of gratitude" accompanies "every uneventful day."[137] Moral applications of courage impel philosophers and average citizens alike to voice their opinion and take a moral stand, especially when doing so incurs a potential threat, such as bodily harm, prison, or reputation, as in the case of so many dissidents in the former Soviet Bloc. Rousseau's "Discourse on the Hero" labeled such ordinary people true heroes: "The kind of man who could write against an oppressor in his fatherland, even if the result was his own death."[138]

Living in Orwellian regimes, we see such examples of moral courage in figures like Václav Havel, Ludvík Vaculík, and other organizers or writers of samizdat *feuilleton*. In Vaculík's "A Day in August," he declares, "If I am unable, or not allowed to function, I have to grin and bear it. Let them get on with it. But I don't have to keep silent, that I don't!"[139] Vaculík may have been physically constrained, beaten, and interrogated brutally—arrested, along with Havel, as a leading member of the Charter 77 human and civil rights movement—but his ability to take a moral stance transcends his physical limitations. After all, it is precisely his obstinate moral stance—the intangible principles of comprehensive de-Stalinization during the Prague Spring for which he stands in his famous "2000 Words" manifesto—despite his constrained physical situation, which confounds and irritates his interrogator throughout his

[137] Ludvík Vaculík, "Impermissible Thoughts," *Index on Censorship* 4 (1975): 12.
[138] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on This Question: Which Is the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero and Which Are the Heroes Who Lacked This Virtue?" in *Social Contract, Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero, Political Fragments, and, Geneva Manuscript*, Trans. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, Hanover, NH: Dartmouth P, 1994, p. 5.
[139] Ludvík Vaculík, *A Cup of Coffee with My Interrogator*, Trans. George Theiner, London: Readers International, 1987, pp. 110-111.

"Prague Chronicles." Interestingly, Vaculík sees this as the "duty of moral responsibility"[140] as a journalist and writer, just as Havel, too, saw this truth-telling as a "moral obligation."[141]

We see in Havel's life that moral applications of courage, although not necessarily, often become entangled in politics, take place within the crucible of the political, or at the very least, acquire political overtones. Havel's courage was simultaneously moral and political, not least because he believed in "politics as practical morality." To be political, for Havel, is to utter "the word of truth and stand behind it with all [one's] person and all [one's] life."[142] Havel felt that moral applications of courage often collided with politics because they were prior felt commitments to embark on certain courses, especially within fields of political power. In fact, in his response to Vaculík's "Notes on Courage," in which the latter argues that courage in the face of totalitarianism ought to be calculated, viz., that sometimes jail sentences are the folly of courage, Havel excoriated Vaculík for offering a view of courage subject to the calculation of risk. If courage in the face of arbitrary totalitarian power comes down to mere calculation of risk, Havel says, it ceases to be proper courage, that is, it fails to respond appropriately to threats by failing to affirm that some things in life are worth more than life itself. Courage must be a key source of citizen's power to act in this world, often at the intersection of politics and morality.

In his famous essay "The Power of the Powerless," which explores the implications of taking moral stances and echoes Orwell's affinity for living in the light of truth, Havel explains the implications of Charter 77 for potential supporters. The essay is an outright rejection of the belief that subjects of immense power are lost causes; it takes direct aim at those who would rather abjure action and stand aside, tolerating totalitarianism. Havel states, "Those apparently

[140] Ludvík Vaculík, "Impermissible Thoughts," p. 12.
[141] Quoted in John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, New York: Basic Books, 2002, p. 255.
[142] Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, Ed. Jan Vladislav, London: Faber & Faber, 1989, pp. 155-156.

powerless individuals who have the courage to speak the truth out loud and stand by what they say body and soul, and are prepared to pay dearly for doing so, have—astonishingly enough—greater power—however formally disfranchised they are—than thousands of anonymous electors in other circumstances."[143] What made the powerless so powerful is that courage never leaves the world untouched, but transforms the individual citizen. The power to remedy powerlessness resided in mustering the courage to take moral and political action on one's beliefs; strong beliefs are indeed commendable, but lacking courageous moral character they are often insufficient.

The efficacy of dissident action exists insofar as the omnipresent power of the totalitarian system seeks only to engender subservience to itself via acts of unconscious self-censorship, though this finds equal application in the social censorship and political correctness of liberal democracies; hence, "every instance of such transgression is a genuine denial of the system."[144] The powerful are powerless to prevent conscious acts of disruption that deny the obsequiousness desired by the system and constitute something of an "existential revolution," insulating the actor from the most pernicious effects of the system. Acts of state repression and reprisal, says Havel, which usually follow on the heels of such independent self-expression, such as the hounding of Solzhenitsyn, only serve to prove that the courage to live differently can obstruct normality and embarrass authorities. Thus, the essay might as well have been called "the Powerlessness of the Powerful."[145] The higher life of truth, and the moral and political courage it requires, stuck with Havel as a theme throughout his life; in his New Year's address to then-Czechoslovakia, he

[143] Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, p. xviii.
[144] Václav Havel, *Open Letters: Selected Prose 1965-1990*, Ed. Paul Wilson, London: Faber & Faber, 1991, p. 135.
[145] John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, p. 271.

opens his speech in his typical, sardonic style: "I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, would lie to you."[146]

In the Polish context of solidarity, poet and essayist Czesław Miłosz reiterates the strength of moral applications of courage in *The Captive Mind*, a fulmination against most Polish academics and artists under communism. When authoritarianism has such "mastery over the human spirit," one cannot engage in the necessary debates or produce the necessary pieces of art without fear of retribution; "such discussions are permitted—and even then, fearfully—only in the upper circles of the Party."[147] Despite these unfavorable conditions for artistic creation, however, what these intellectuals really lacked was the moral application of courage necessary to unshackle themselves from the "fear of thinking for [themselves]," without which communist ideology and control penetrated into the fields of art, philosophy, and literature, making intellectual productivity nothing more than "subjective impotence" in the face of the regime.[148] Miłosz concludes that however difficult critique is in the political reality of one's time, "The pressure of the state machine is nothing compared with the pressure of a convincing argument."[149] It is a matter of mustering the moral application of courage to either make it or accept it.

IV. The Aversion to Courage: Honor, Heroism, Conflict, Hierarchy, and Misogyny

It is the contention of this thesis that modernity exhibits of a certain tension with the virtue of courage. An aversion to the virtue of courage can be explained by its discrediting in three broad categories. First, there are those who argue that it is too martial of a virtue to

[146] Quoted in the "New Year's Address by Vaclav Havel to his Nation (Prague, January 1, 1990)." 19 Dec. 2011. Free Republic. Accessed 17 Jan. 2013 <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2822384/posts>.
[147] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, Trans. Jane Zielonko, New York: Vintage, 1981, p. 13.
[148] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, pp. 11-15.
[149] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 12.

promote in an era of bourgeois, gentler values. Courage has the potential to give rise to revolutionary and violent passions in a modern era when we have finally managed to pacify these outbursts. Second, courage is seen by some scholars as too demanding for the common man to attain and therefore exclusionary, or imposing too large an appetite for risk-taking without the requisite abilities to handle that risk. Third, and most problematic, there is an explicit connection of courage with notions of masculinity, lending the virtue a level of gender exclusivity which is anathema to our modern the sensibilities of the modern era. I expound upon each one of these criticisms in turn.

1) *Courage is too martial for modern society. We must find replacements for it so as to avoid imperial impulses, like bourgeois society's focus on gentler virtues or the Enlightenment's greater focus on reason.*

If we fast forward more than two millennia from the Greeks, martial applications of courage bound up with military feats and human transcendence remain commonplace. Pacifists like William James lament that military virtues are simply too entrenched in society to abdicate their place therein; human history is too stained by blood and battle to do away with martial applications of courage. We inherited these capacities for heroism and courage from a cruel history of war in which our ancestors "bred pugnacity into our bone and marrow, and thousands of years of peace won't breed it out of us."[150] Courage and other martial virtues are indeed the biggest obstacles to widespread acceptance of pacifist positions, argues James, the element that appeals to something fundamental in man and causes him to overlook war's inhumanity and destruction.[151] If we ever managed to stop war, human hardihood would have to take other

[150] William James, *Writings, 1902-1910*, pp. 1281-1283.
[151] Cf. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*, New York: Metropolitan, 1997.

forms, lest life fall into flat degeneration.[152] What *fin-de-siècle* pacifists needed, James thought, was a "moral equivalent" to war, otherwise the human, *ontological* attraction of heroism, glory, and courage would win out in perpetuity. The challenge is breeding martial characteristics without the necessity of war—which man feels as a "higher social plane," according to H.G. Wells[153]—whereupon "the old morals of military honor" fade away and "a stable system of morals of civic honor builds itself up."[154]

Four years after his death, the outbreak of WWI crushed James's vision for a new beginning. After many years of relative peace and security in Europe and America, ruptured only by intermittent skirmishes and small border wars, martial applications of courage received the enduring, seemingly eternal, validation James lamented as the chief obstacle to peace in the modern world. The violence of the modern age has been unkind to the pacifist position, although it remains an attractive one. The desire to rid the violent and revolutionary passions of individuals and usher in a time of gentler sensibilities achieved its most effective form, however, in the rise of bourgeois society, which pacified men in a way that the frequency of wars, revolutions, and what was once called "great politics" have largely been consigned to a bygone era, but which gave rise to a new set of problems. "The modern philosophers behind the project of rational control…laid the groundwork for a dull, *bourgeois* society lacking…ambition."[155] Nietzsche's famous "last man" is one who desires peace, comfort, and above all, an erroneous understanding of happiness. "'We have invented happiness'—say the last human beings, blinking."[156] The "last man" is a thoroughly uninspiring creature with a herd-like mentality and

[152] Cf. Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, New York: Anchor Books, 2003.
[153] H.G. Wells, *First and Last Things*, Matthews, NC: Bastion, 2008, p. 73.
[154] William James, *Writings, 1902-1910*, p. 1290.
[155] Harvey Mansfield, *Manliness*, New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006, pp. 228-236.
[156] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Adrian del Caro, ed. Robert B. Pippin, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, p. 10.

above all, a concern for self-preservation. "One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one honors health."[157]

The bourgeois man defines happiness as the desire to be "secure, respected, and well-liked," but not in terms of his ability to perform acts of great sacrifice.[158] "Bourgeois society is uninterested in such transcendence, which at best it tolerates as a private affair," says Irving Kristol. "It is a society organized for the convenience and comfort of common men and women, not for the production of heroic, memorable figures." Even in bourgeois society, however, which roots itself in the strongest and most common human impulse—self-interest—courage could help man to elevate himself.[159] The trap of discounting courage among the modern virtues seems to befall even a historical figure of such standing as Benjamin Franklin. As Steven Smith notes, Franklin's *Autobiography*, which reads as a sort of catalogue of virtues for the current age, lacks an entry on courage. "In a quiet and understated way, Franklin is engaged in a piece of spiritual warfare with the heroic virtues associated with the aspiration to fame, glory, and immortality."[160]

Besides the peaceful and acquisitive bourgeois spirit used to temper the passions of courage, modernity has sought to cast aside courage as a non-rational element of life. Courage conflicts with the wisdom of Enlightenment thinkers who thought that the chief virtue of humanity was rationality. It thus makes little sense to privilege a virtue like courage, which is often thought to be non-rational or pre-rational, over intellectual action, of which all are considered capable to varying degrees.[161] As previously stated, courage has maintained a

[157] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 10.
[158] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 251.
[159] Irving Kristol, "The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals," *Encounter* Oct. 1979: 6.
[160] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 121.
[161] One notable exception is Rousseau, who laments that the Enlightenment left virtue without any accolades, as talent associates primarily with the mind and virtue with the actions performed by the body, the latter lending itself

connection with emotion ever since the Greeks spoke of courage as being bound up with notions of spirit or *thumos*. In Plato's tripartite soul, rationality was to rule over *thumos*. By privileging rationality over all else, Western culture has given short shrift to emotion. Michael Stoker argues that this is one of the many examples of "the ideal of unemotionality" expressed in philosophy. "This is or comes close to being…an *idealization* of reason and a correlative *splitting off* and demonization of emotions" or anything related to emotional elements.[162] Even if we believe courage is nothing more than pure emotion, which is highly doubtful considering the importance reason plays in proper threat perception, Stoker argues that "without emotions it is impossible to live a good human life and it may well be impossible to live a human life, to be a person, at all."[163]

2) Courage is too demanding and imposes too great an appetite for risk-taking.

As we have noted already, the practice of courage is a demanding endeavor. The rationale for this aversion is therefore rather straightforward: as it maintains a difficult and demanding standard, if one must possess courage to be a good citizen, then there will be necessarily few good citizens. As such, many political theorists reject courage as a necessary political virtue because political participation in the democratic age ought to be facilitated, not made more difficult. Mark Warren, for example, argues that the barriers to democratic participation ought to be made as low as possible, and that democratic institutions ought not to require the virtue of courage at all for their accessibility. Indeed, institutions ought to "reduce and contain the risks of

---

to a more egalitarian distribution. Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, Trans. Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, New York: St. Martin's P, 1969, p. 58.

[162] Michael Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996, p. xvi.

[163] Michael Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 1.

political engagement."[164] Warren argues that we ought to ensure citizens do not require "heroic" virtues like courage to participate effectively in public spaces.[165] The intimation that the coward has no place in modern political life is too much to bear for our egalitarian principles; good citizenship and political participation ought to be attainable irrespective of one's possession of demanding virtues like courage.

Courage may be a virtue *for the creation of* liberal democracy, but certainly not within it—not for those liberal citizens who inhabit them. "In the United States and Britain, where constitutional traditions are rarely challenged radically and tend to grow stronger over time, moral philosophers will in these circumstances rightly…regard courage as double-edged and unnecessarily romantic…[it is] not [a liberal virtue for] those who already live in one."[166] Sabl implies that in a liberal democracy of stable political institutions, without massive ruptures in continuity, courage is not only demanding, but potentially downright dangerous to the polity.

Amélie Oksenberg Rorty has put forth a related argument, namely, that the exercise of courage, without a strict system of checks and balances which is unlikely to exist satisfactorily, saddles citizens with an unhealthy appetite for risk-taking into the modern world. An admiration for courage risks that there will be a greater appetite for situations in which we are called upon to act courageously, shaping the types of situations that occur in our lives most frequently. In turn, she says, this can lead to an addiction to the excitement of risk. Besides, modern politics is not about creating citizens who take great risks or need to take great risks for survival; rather, it is

[164] Mark E. Warren, "What Should We Expect from More Democracy? Radically Democratic Responses to Politics," Political Theory 24 (1996): 244.
[165] Mark E. Warren, "What Should We Expect from More Democracy?," p. 264.
[166] Andrew Sabl, "Virtue for Pluralists," Journal of Moral Philosophy 2 (2005): 234.

about teaching exhibiting prudence and to living together harmoniously, i.e., "commodious living" in Hobbes' memorable phrase.[167]

Rorty advocates a completely fresh start, conceptualizing courage as merely a disposition which allows citizens to pursue what they find worthwhile in the face of the dangers and fears associated with those pursuits. Courage, in other words, is safest when defined as anything which approaches a stubborn persistence, in terms of means-ends relationships, to achieve the goals and activities we find to be worthwhile. She proposes a series of "petites actions," ways of beginning on a course of action that carry one through various stages of fear but that do not contribute to an overall culture of unnecessary risk-taking.[168] What Rorty proposes is akin to nothing more than self-control over fear, rather than the full virtue of courage.

3) *To talk about courage is to talk about concepts of "manliness." Courage is a gender exclusive virtue.*

As mentioned previously, the Greek term for courage, *andreia*, doubles for that of "manliness."[169] The Romans "often suggested that manliness was the best or even the whole of 'virtue'—as in the Roman term *virtus*, 'virtue,' derived from the Latin word *vir*, 'man' as opposed to 'woman.'"[170] This is obviously problematic to modern tenets of gender equality because courage has long been thought to be the exclusive possession of men, which not only debilitates healthy gender relations but also impacts our outward orientation towards other cultures. "In its guise as 'manliness,' Athenian courage was always implicated in the subordination of women and in the desire to rule others…The Athenians frequently intended to

[167] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991, p. 90.
[168] Amélie O. Rorty, "The Two Faces of Courage," Philosophy 61 (1986): 151.
[169] Harvey Mansfield, *Manliness*, p. 18.
[170] Ryan K. Balot, "Transforming 'Manliness' into Courage," p. 136.

extend imperial power over other Greeks. The Athenians' 'manliness' or 'courage' was often toxically invested in the projection of power over others, in the execution and enslavement of enemies, and in the maintenance of hierarchies over women."[171] The gender hierarchy extending over women in Athens was replicated in relations with those groups conquered by Athens' military campaigns. So deeply ingrained is this nexus of courage with manliness that it "has been a cherished marker of status and social esteem from classical antiquity to the present."[172]

Rather unhelpfully, some modern theorists, such as Harvey Mansfield in his book *Manliness*, not only compound this problem, but gleefully goad feminists and others advocating the necessity of a gender-neutral society for a return of manliness, especially in the face of what these theorists see as a crisis in manhood—the modern man is not a man at all, but an effeminate, weak, irresponsible individual.[173] Mansfield defines manliness as "confidence in the face of risk," which might as well serve as a fill-in definition for courage.[174] Courage reveals basic differences between the sexes on numerous fronts, Mansfield posits, such as how they speak, conduct themselves, and make distinctions. The fact that courage often cuts against modernity's egalitarian sensibilities led to a ripe debate within feminist literature about the value of courage. "To many of us…courage as a virtue may seem but a tattered remnant of outdated ideals of chivalry—a macho-military quality that has outgrown its usefulness in civilized society…an indelicate reminder of violence, war, domination, and other unpleasant conditions."[175] These critiques have touched other aspects of modernity's aversion to courage as well—viz., that it is too militaristic, violent, and aggressive. Rather than doubling down on courage as inextricable from ideals of manliness, advocates of courage ought to present it as necessary for both (or all)

[171] Ryan K. Balot, *Courage in the Democratic Polis*, p. 7.
[172] Ryan K. Balot, "Transforming 'Manliness' into Courage," p. 136.
[173] W.R. Newell, *The Code of Man: Love, Courage, Pride, Family, Country*, New York: HarperCollins, 2003.
[174] Harvey Mansfield, *Manliness*, p. 23.
[175] Quoted in Linda R. Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*, p. 11.

genders and contexts, for if courage cannot rid itself of this deep association as the exclusive province of men, then all the potential goods flowing from its cultivation will sink into insignificance or oblivion.[176]

V. Conclusion

This chapter offered a definition of courage as the appropriate response to threats, explained why the language of threat was more suitable than the language of fear used in many classical accounts of courage as a virtue, and drew out five core components to the virtue of courage. It also put forth three major contexts in which the virtue of courage as a response to threats is employed, while making no claims to comprehensiveness: martial, political, and moral applications or contexts. The variegated uses of courage demonstrate its wide-ranging application as a virtue employed in many contexts. Lastly, the chapter demonstrated the uneasy relationship the virtue of courage has with certain tenets of modernity. It remains to fully examine the relationship between courage and political modernity, particularly the questions at hand: can we arrive at a better understanding of the contexts for courage in the modern world? Can courage become suitable as a virtue for modern politics? Which modern political contexts, in particular, beg the attention of a virtue like courage?

A good place to start this intellectual journey, then, is with Alexis de Tocqueville, a critical but sincere friend of democracy who displays great concern for the fate of pre-modern and traditional concepts such as courage. Tocqueville is also keen to track the evolution of pre-modern concepts in the new world of equality and democracy because he is convinced that the retention of traditional sources of authority has the potential to blunt some of the greatest ills of

[176] For two devastating critiques of Mansfield, see Martha Nussbaum, "Man Overboard," *The New Republic*, 22 June 2006, <https://newrepublic.com/article/64199/man-overboard> and Gowri Ramachandran, "Book Review: *Manliness* by Harvey Mansfield," *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* 19 (2007): 201-220.

the modern age, such as privatism and the pursuit of self-interest. Tocqueville's discovery of a new type of courage in America—one practiced primarily within the commercial sector—is a great jumping off point because it provides an image with which we are all intimately familiar: that of the risk-taking entrepreneur intrepidly braving the threats of starting a new venture, bringing it to market, and then scaling it. Tocqueville's work also calls our attention to the challenge that, if we are to identify a context for courage meant for the modern age, it must be softer and less demanding than its pre-modern brethren.

Chapter 2

Alexis de Tocqueville and the Search for Courage in the Age of Equality

"He is descended from an old family yet animated by a strong love of liberty. He belongs to the nobility by birth, to liberty by the activity of his mind."
—Édouard Gans, "Tocqueville in the Salon of Madame Récamier"[1]

I. Introduction

As a visitor to the United States, with one foot in the democratic world and one foot still firmly in the aristocratic, Alexis de Tocqueville perceived himself in the center of a tectonic shift—neither a reflexive defender of the monarchy and an aristocracy based on privilege, nor a systematic adversary, lending him a position of particular impartiality. "Democracy had seduced the aristocrat, although the aristocrat never did yield himself entirely."[2] Tocqueville compared and ultimately attempted to reconcile as much of the two worldviews as possible, one in the process of fading to a distant past, the other riding a coming wave of popularity. Originally tasked with writing a report on penitentiary reform, along with his colleague and travel companion Gustave de Beaumont, with time Tocqueville's true interest became American democratic political institutions, writing primarily for a French audience to understand a newer kind of society and the forces which shaped it and held it together.[3] How did such a fledgling

[1] Quoted in Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008, second cover.
[2] Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny: From Plato to Arendt*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996, p. 202.
[3] This position made him particularly well-suited to search for virtues lost in the political transition from aristocracy to democracy. For the convincing argument that Tocqueville wrote on America but always thought of his audience as European, see Cushing Strout, "Tocqueville's Duality: Describing America and Thinking of Europe," American Quarterly 21 (1969): 87-99; furthermore, Tocqueville wrote in a letter to John Stuart Mill: "America was only the frame; my picture was Democracy." He writes similarly in a letter to a friend on the eve of the publication of Book I of *Democracy in America*: "Nearly ten years ago I was already thinking about part of the things I have just set forth. I was in America only to become clear on this point. The penitentiary system was just a pretext" (Quoted in Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 199). It seems as though Tocqueville arrived in America to confirm what he already suspected. "America was merely the pretext for studying modern society and the woes of France" (Quoted in Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, p. 1).

nation hold together the traditions of democratic freedom in a way that the French, despite their revolution, could not? Tocqueville arrived in the middle of the American experiment in Jacksonian Democracy—his journey straddled the years 1831-32—a movement which, rhetorically at least, sided with the common man against the corrupting forces of America's aristocrats. The well-heeled aristocrat collided head-first with America's heretofore most egalitarian mainstream political movement, refusing to be a flatterer of democracy even as he was a friend of democracy.

Yet, Tocqueville's foremost concern was not American democracy itself; liberty, how we may best use it, and the rarity of its preservation and practice "was his lifelong passion."[4] "It cannot be repeated too often: nothing is more fertile in marvels than the art of being free, but nothing is harder than freedom's apprenticeship."[5] Owing to his aristocratic origins but also to his main concern for how we use and preserve our liberty, we may expect to find in his writing a detailed discussion of the types of virtues and/or character qualities necessary for doing so. *A fortiori*, we may expect to find some mention of the virtue of courage for its role in Tocqueville's repeated concern for distinction, excellence, taste, greatness, and flourishing. In *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, he speaks of "some of the great qualities of the aristocracy" having to do with "manly habits" and "manly virtues" existing in far greater abundance than in other classes. No other class of people had such "unchallenged familiarity with greatness."[6] Courage also possesses a historical nexus to aristocratic obligations of chivalry and knighthood. Since Roman times, Tocqueville notes, the virtue was one of the most important, and to be courageous one had to prove it in battle. Courage was called "virtus, using a generic term for one particular

[4] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, trans. Gerald Bevan, London: Penguin, 2008, p. xvi.
[5] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Trans. George Lawrence, Ed. J.P. Mayer, New York: Harper Perennial, 2006, p. 240.
[6] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, p. 115.

quality."[7] There is a possible uneasiness between the American ideal of democratic equality and the existence of a virtue aimed at elevation and distinction, which Tocqueville, as a highly observant aristocrat writing about a young country more concerned with equality than his own, is one of the first to capture and analyze. Indeed, if Book I of *Democracy in America* can be summarized broadly as an exposition of the structure and political institutions of American democracy, Book II dedicates itself entirely to the cultural life of America and the differences between democracy and aristocracy as regime types, aiming to reveal American (and French) society to itself.

In his observations on courage, Tocqueville compares what he finds in America to a more familiar pre-modern concept of courage, tied to notions of honor and military service. Tocqueville came from European nobility which "reckoned military valor as the greatest of all the virtues, and indeed let it take the place of many of them."[8] The aristocratic positioning of courage atop the virtue hierarchy served the necessities and peculiarities of the feudal aristocracy, that is to say, its own self-interest, which "was born of war and for war; it won its power by force of arms and maintained it thereby. So nothing was more important to it than military courage. It was therefore natural to glorify courage above all other virtues," says Tocqueville—even when such glorification led to slaughter, violence, or offenses against common sense.[9] Stitched into the aristocratic social order was a desire to zealously guard one's sense of honor and to strike back against any affronts, perceived or real, up to but not further than was necessary for the restoration of one's honor. "It is…to some extent true to say that the laws of honor were capricious, but such caprices were always confined within certain necessary

[7] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 620.
[8] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 618.
[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 618.

limits."[10] Tocqueville is reticent to declare the honor dynamics of feudal aristocracies arbitrary and violent, instead focusing on the practical effects of their social stability and their reliable production of necessary virtues, particularly the virtue of courage. He observes that the Americans inhabiting the democratic world, however, have very different understandings and uses for courage, which are not oriented towards military glory or politics. Contrary to the aristocratic placement of martial courage atop the virtue hierarchy, "in the United States martial valor is little esteemed."[11] In democratic America, on the other hand, the virtue of courage has been subsumed largely by the opportunities presented in the economic realm through a nascent market economy and its quotidian struggle of rising and falling fortunes.

As a keen observer of the coming age of equality—and as the rare aristocrat who did not summarily reject it out of hand—Tocqueville observes the uses of courage in a world where broad inequalities and deep distinctions have become no longer socially justifiable. He hastens to emphasize that if Americans are to continue benefitting from the presence of the virtue of courage in an age of greater equality, they must integrate courage and find productive outlets for it, even if the resulting virtue bears little resemblance to the one the average aristocrat would recognize. Throughout his travels, Tocqueville observed in America how courage has become a virtue for distinction in economic pursuits, bringing it into an age of greater equality by disassociating its possession as the exclusive province of a certain social class (or as the very metric whose possession justified social inequality), while also permitting its possessors to elevate themselves in one of the few realms amenable to distinction in the age of equality. America's strict mores and Puritan history have caused its people to value self-reliance and labor, and these mores coexist with a regard for the pursuit of self-interest in the realm of

[10] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 618-619.
[11] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 622.

commerce as virtuous.[12] In addition to courage, Tocqueville frequently employs vocabulary such as "audacity" and "boldness," which could be considered analogues to describe the level of energy with which Americans pursue a "taste for well-being."[13] Commenting on the American elevation of the entrepreneur, he says, "There is something wonderful in his resourcefulness and a sort of heroism in his greed for gain."[14] This has contributed to a reorientation of the ends of courage: "I know no other country where love of money has such a grip on men's hearts."[15] "Nature and circumstances have made the inhabitant of the United States a bold man, as is sufficiently attested by the enterprising spirit with which he seeks his fortune."[16] And in the American democratic world, "nothing has brighter luster than commerce; it attracts the attention of the public and fills the imagination of the crowd; all passionate energies are directed that way."[17] Such passages describing the migration of courage away from the military and political world and into the economic, and extolling the bold American spirit therein, abound in *Democracy in America*. As a European aristocrat and a keen observer of American democracy, Tocqueville is uniquely suited to offer commentary on this newfound emergence of courage in the economic realm, while also theorizing about how this migration to the commercial sphere made sense given the contours of the emerging age of equality.

Yet, Tocqueville understands that courage, a virtue intimately associated with distinction, difference, and elevation cannot be wholeheartedly adopted by the age of equality, nor can it be

[12] This is contrary to the aristocratic constitution, which tends to view work as an inherently degrading activity. Tocqueville's analysis reveals a nascent line of argumentation that eventually became Max Weber's in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). While Weber examines the spirit of capitalism in the 18th century, Tocqueville provides us with a vivid picture of its status in the early 19th century.
[13] I do not wish to get bogged down in semantic games regarding various analogues each thinker may rely upon for the virtue of courage; such an exercise, besides the short distinctions I drew between courage, bravery, and valor in the Introduction, are out of the scope of this thesis.
[14] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 347.
[15] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 54.
[16] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 292.
[17] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 553.

confined exclusively to the commercial sphere. Courage is a necessity not only for the economic sphere in America, but in order to maintain a vibrant political life as well. Tocqueville highlights the potential role of courage as a remedy for a problem he views as acutely associated with the new system of participatory democracy: the so-called "tyranny of the majority." In passages outlining his reservations with respect to democracy, which would later be echoed by John Stuart Mill, Tocqueville demonstrates grave concern for the sheer power given to the majority through American institutions, both politically *and* socially, simply by dint of numerical power, and the concomitant stifling of debate and the diffusing of heterodox opinions. Even as Tocqueville discovers a multitude of potential applications and contexts for the virtue of courage in American democracy, he is skeptical about its actual cultivation and application in American *political* life. His doubts owe themselves to the observation that firstly, Americans are too eager to recede into the private sphere and harness the virtue of courage only in the pursuit of well-being, and secondly, the equality of conditions which constitutes America's fundamental dogma is most prevalent in American political life, frustrating the employment of courage in political contexts. The acquiescence of Americans to distinction and difference in the economic realm simply does not extend to the same degree in the political realm. This begs the question of what kind of courage Tocqueville identifies in Americans—or thinks he identifies—since as we saw in Chapter I, courage tends to aim, quite uniquely, at public ends and not at private gains. By the historical definitions of courage, then, a man would not be called courageous for going out of his way to save the precious cargo of his fast sinking ship.[18] Tocqueville's observations on America in an age of equality help us to understand the historical development of courage as a modern virtue which distinguishes those in the commercial realm, open even to citizens of democracies

[18] The often public nature of courage points us to Arendt's claim, seen in Chapter IV, that courage is the "political virtue *par excellence*."

whose political creed came about in the age of equality. Like many critics of modernity, Tocqueville is well-positioned to identify insights from an earlier time lost in the age of equality, and like Arendt a century later, Tocqueville hints at the maintenance of traditional values and old lines of authority as one potential remedy wherever equality of condition reigns and the dominant political trend is for each citizen to play next to no role in public affairs. The aristocratic supplement is to build a "public spirit which will endow each citizen with some of those interests which influence the behavior of nobles in aristocratic lands."[19]

II. Courage in an Age of Equality: An Oxymoron?

Like John Stuart Mill writing shortly after him, Tocqueville identifies equality as the new and unshakeable feature of the modern age. As a movement, it is beyond all of our control and to fight against it would be rather fruitless. "Equality [Tocqueville] had long thought to be inevitable…though he was full of nostalgia for a (largely imaginary) age of aristocratic freedom."[20] While embarking on this difficult undertaking aimed partly at his aristocratic brethren—informing them that the fall of their class superiority was nigh—Tocqueville presents his thesis in a straightforward way. He opens *Democracy in America* with the following memorable line: "No novelty in the United States struck me more vividly during my stay there than the equality of conditions."[21] That Tocqueville is resigned to this fact and its inevitability is evident in how he describes the coming age of equality as "something fated."[22] Concluding his main argument in Book I of *Democracy in America*, he cautions those pining for a restoration of European monarchies in the vein of Louis XIV and instead points to the cultivation of a set of virtues: "When I consider the state already reached by several European nations and that toward

[19] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 663.
[20] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, p. xvi.
[21] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 9.
[22] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 12.

which all are tending, I am led to believe that there will soon be no room except for either democratic freedom or the tyranny of the Caesars…Should we not, then, consider the gradual development of democratic institutions and mores not as the best but as the only means remaining to us in order to remain free?"[23] Tocqueville believes that, before long, the lights will run out on the aristocracy and that equality of conditions will be the permanent reality. The equality of conditions is here to stay and indeed the "primary fact" about America; the self-described "nodal point" to which all other observations about American democracy return; and the "creative element" from which all of Tocqueville's observations seem to derive.[24]

Thus, Tocqueville takes an impartial stance towards the inevitability of the age of equality—though he of course has opinions on it which he shares with his readers—for if the spread of equality is inevitable, it makes no sense to take a strong normative stand for or against it. Instead, it makes more sense for political scientists and historians to understand and explain this phenomenon. On the so-called "inevitability thesis," Avramenko remarks: "Tocqueville is offering his European brethren a twofold lesson. First, the spread of equality is…a permanent tendency in history. Second, nothing can be done to halt this historical movement…get on board with the coming equality or get swept away by it."[25] Steven Smith argues that the inevitability thesis that represents Tocqueville's stance toward modernity in part contributes to his enduring relevance as a thinker. "The best critics of modernity—those from whom we have the most to learn—are not those who have engaged in a kind of 'negative dialectic' but those like Alexis de

[23] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 314.
[24] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 9.
[25] Richard Avramenko, *Courage: the Politics of Life and Limb*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame P, 2011, pp. 196-197.

Tocqueville, who accepted modern democracy as a given but hoped to deepen it with practices and values from earlier moral, political, and religious traditions."[26] He continues:

> Perhaps because he was an aristocrat, he displayed none of the bourgeois sense of anxiety and alienation exhibited by the likes of Rousseau, Flaubert, Marx, and Nietzsche. Tocqueville gave vivid expression to the fears about the age of equality…Yet Tocqueville's work contains nothing of the spirit of *ressentiment*—the incurable desire for revenge—that Nietzsche saw as the besetting sin of the modern age. He saw democracy as a historical inevitability, but one that could still be moderated by practices and institutions favorable to liberty.[27]

However, we must also read Tocqueville's work as a warning for the future, not just about the inevitability of a coming age of equality, but about prevailing trends which may be epiphenomenal on it, unless citizens act to resist and reform, after the establishment of an age of equality and democracy in much of the world. Put another way, the coming modern age is not a problem to overcome, as it is for Hannah Arendt, so much as a challenge to be met. And at a time when the past has lost contact with the present, "a new political science is needed for a world itself quite new."[28] Democracy needed to be revealed to itself in order to avoid succumbing to its internal demons.

What makes Tocqueville so intriguing, then, is that his analysis of the future form which the age of equality will take and the type of man the age of democracy will produce, suggests the necessity of the preservation or restoration of some facets of aristocratic life in order to ensure liberty under this new regime. "There was no point in lamenting the bygone age of aristocracy. Rather, one should try to *transfer* some of its noble values to a society driven by the powerful and irrepressible engine of equality," in an effort to ensure the continuation of purportedly

[26] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. xii.
[27] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 21.
[28] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 12.

"aristocratic sources of liberty."[29] In other words, Tocqueville's writing keenly charts the fate of pre-modern concepts like the virtue of courage in an age of equality—even describing how Americans have attempted to weave it into the new fabric of an age of equality—in ways that later writers such as John Stuart Mill, who wholeheartedly shares the belief that equality is ascendant as the dominant political principle and inherits much of Tocqueville's project, does not attempt to do. Tocqueville refuses to abandon his advocacy of the traditional virtues like courage in the face of ever-greater equality, even drawing on themes from classical antiquity to advocate for the necessity of sources outside of modernity to sustain itself and preserve liberty (similar to Hannah Arendt a century later), whereas Mill appears to cast aside classical concepts like the virtue of courage as a fatality of the age, an argument I continue to develop in the next two chapters of the thesis.

That Tocqueville seeks to highlight the new applications/contexts and uses of virtue in the age of equality and democracy has important consequences for the existence and practice of a virtue like courage, associated since ancient Greece with concepts like "distinction," "honor," "manliness," and "excellence." Pre-modern conceptions of courage, as we saw in Chapter I, fit neatly into the principles of the old order because hierarchy, distinction, and honor were acceptable tools of social organization in these societies. Tocqueville recognizes that concepts like honor have a "close and necessary connection" with "inequality of conditions" and that "dissimilarities and inequalities among men" give rise to honor and distinction.[30] According to Sharon Krause, Tocqueville sees "the inequalities of recognition entailed by honor that make it

[29] Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, p. 7. Jaume continues: "For Tocqueville, this meant the feudal era, as we will see: a time of honor, loyalty coupled with moral independence, chivalry in war, feudal patronage of the peasantry, etc."
[30] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 626-627.

objectionable from the standpoint of modern democracy."[31] The concept of aristocratic honor was nearly unrecognizable in Tocqueville's America, not because the Americans had brought it with them from Europe and had now suppressed it, but rather the prevailing equality of conditions tended to eradicate all conceptions and the very practice of it.[32] Americans had rejected the love of honor and, as part of their gradual social embedding, came to cultivate a love of liberty. Tocqueville sees in this project the cultivation of new political and social values, with one immutable exception: human beings remain self-interested. Even the Americans had not found a way to reverse that aspect of human nature, and had, in fact, elevated its level of praise: "Personal interest…provides the only stable point in the human heart."[33] Combining these two facts together, then, Tocqueville observes the self-interest of democratic man severed from the concerns of aristocratic hierarchy, and yet as a human constant, finding another focus instead.

III. The American Creed

For Tocqueville, the march towards universal equality and the democratic age produces a certain type of "democratic man." "The transition from a medieval world based on hierarchy, status, and honor to a new bourgeois or commercial world based on equality, contract, and interest has been described in a number of ways," but "Tocqueville called it the transition from the age of aristocracy to the age of democracy."[34] Lucien Jaume argues that Tocqueville's use of the word "democracy" is threefold: it signifies devolution of power to the local, a substitute for religion or a kind of "public religion" in itself which is focused on equality, and as the promise

[31] Sharon R. Krause, *Liberalism with Honor*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002, p. 19.
[32] Richard Avramenko suggests that this observation allows Tocqueville to construe the violence of aristocratic societies not as an anthropological problem, but as a sociological one, otherwise the European immigrants to America would have brought these same mores of aristocratic society with them. "If violence had been a natural part of the human constitution, it should have been shipped over on the *Mayflower* with the rest of the European baggage" (Avramenko 201).
[33] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 239.
[34] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, pp. 210-211.

of material enjoyments.[35] Therefore, when Tocqueville uses the term democracy, he means it not only as the mere absence of aristocracy (constituted by political privilege, or by superiority in individual status and social power), but also as more or less synonymous with the growing reality of an equality of conditions and the broad ethical and cultural changes that this phenomenon engenders.

Tocqueville observes greater and greater equality in the economic, political, and social realm, and it is *the* central reality indicative of a movement first observed in America but spreading throughout the world. What was unique about America for Tocqueville is that it arrived at democracy while obviating the need to destroy an already existing aristocracy, meaning that the transition to an age of equality was more complete and had taken a deeper hold in America during his time than anywhere else (by dint of not having to tear down to build up). Americans were fortunate "to have this great advantage, that they attained democracy without the sufferings of a democratic revolution and that they were born equal instead of becoming so."[36] If this "transition from the age of aristocracy to the age of democracy" has produced a new, "democratic man," in Tocqueville's words, different in many ways from his brethren living under other regime types, I believe it makes sense to call democratic man's novel conception and uses of courage by the term "democratic courage." Recall that Chapter 1 used the idea of different contexts and applications of courage, and in this way, Tocqueville's "democratic

[35] Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, p. 3.
[36] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 509. Though Tocqueville does not elaborate in relation to this idea, he must have interpreted the American Revolution as a struggle for independence of an already democratic power, taking the New England townships with which he was so enamored as an archetype, over its colonial ruler. The French Revolution, on the other hand, represents "the completion of a long travail, the sudden and violent termination of a work in which ten generations of man had toiled." It was such a disruptive process precisely because it began as an attack on the bonds of dependence and the hierarchy of the previous social and political order (quoted in Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, trans. John Waggoner, Boston, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, pp. 110, 123-124).

courage" is one of the first and most insightful observations of a new context for courage in the modern era marked by bourgeois tastes and delight in acquisition.

Democratic man, at least in America, is marked by an attachment of his self-interest to a variety of new concerns, primarily focused on his own well-being. Tocqueville identifies these interests as "reputation, power, and above all, wealth."[37] While these cares might not appear to be mutually exclusive with the aristocratic mindset, the American citizen cares most about what Tocqueville calls "love of comfort," which "has become the dominant national taste."[38] By contrast, "The men of the eighteenth century were hardly aware of that form of passion for material comfort."[39] The extent to which this embrace of economic gain represents an inversion of the traditional tenets of pre-modern courage will become clear in due course: what was employed as an antidote to overcome the abiding problem of self-interest becomes co-opted in the interest of wealth accumulation—a thoroughly self-interested activity. Tocqueville provides us with a powerful portrait: the proverbial hero whose martial courage on the battlefield is replaced by the risk-taking of the entrepreneur. In this way, America has managed to extricate courage from its pre-modern context by transforming it and placing it firmly within the more placid confines of the economic sphere.

Americans have done this by socializing these values into their communities. Gone are the occasional outbursts of an aristocratic society seeking redress for the slights of others and a return of the social order to its natural state of being. "A noble should not tranquilly suffer an insult, and was dishonored if he let himself be struck without fighting"[40]; in other cases, "feudal

[37] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 655.
[38] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 532.
[39] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, p. 122.
[40] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 619.

honor enjoined revenge and stigmatized forgiveness of insults."[41] Rather than concerning themselves with honor and status, Americans, initially encountering an "empty cradle of a great nation,"[42] decided to construct (and maintain through subsequent generations of socialization), a society that "gives every man a chance to bring his little undertaking quietly to a conclusion."[43] Even in the present day, the well-known American creed sings the praises of the entrepreneurial spirit of risk-taking.

We might wonder at this point what relationship democratic courage has with the virtue as traditionally defined. Yet, it is here that remembering Tocqueville's principal audience is of paramount importance: to make descriptions of the democratic world and a coming democratic age, which he viewed as nearly a *fait accompli*, appear more palatable to his European readership, Tocqueville imbues democratic courage with some of the qualities familiar to earlier conceptions. He even employs a vocabulary that might appeal to aristocrats by stating that Americans "honor" the possession of certain character traits—conflating the noun with the verb, in order to maintain the rhetoric—declaring that honor is "nothing but this particular rule, based on a particular state of society, by means of which a people distributes praise or blame."[44] The character qualities which lend themselves to the satisfaction of the new care for wealth and well-being—hard-work, industriousness, and creativity—are "honored," while those that inhibit trade—sloth, disorder, and apathy, *inter alia*—are shunned. "Therefore all those quiet virtues

[41] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 618.
[42] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 30.
[43] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 648.
[44] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 617. He continues, "…every time men come together to form a particular society, a conception of honor is immediately established among them, that is to say, a collection of opinions peculiar to themselves about what should be praised or blamed" (quoted in *Democracy in America*, p. 620). Tocqueville concludes, therefore, by stating that what aristocracy considered as honor was really only one of its many possible forms. "They gave the name of a genus to what was in fact only a species" (Quoted in *Democracy in America*, p. 623). I am indebted to Professor Richard Avramenko for highlighting Tocqueville's tautology here, which smuggles in the language of honor without recognizing how different honor is as a concept (noun) from honoring something as praiseworthy or blameworthy (verb) (quoted in Avramenko, *Courage: the Politics of Life and Limb*, p. 205).

which tend to regularity in the body social and which favor trade are sure to be held in special honor by this people, and to neglect them will bring one into public contempt. But all those turbulent virtues which sometimes bring glory but more often trouble to society will rank lower in the public opinion of those same people."[45] Although a minority of Americans maintain vestiges of an aristocratic honor code, Tocqueville describes the type of courage which aims at the heights of glory to be a "turbulent virtue" in the outlook of most Americans, "ranking lower in the public opinion of this people." He continues by arguing that Americans can ignore virtues encouraged in aristocratic societies "without forfeiting the esteem of one's fellow citizens, and perhaps by acquiring them one might run a risk of losing it."[46] In sum, Americans view moneymaking as a "soft," "gentle," and innocent pastime whose bourgeois virtues were an antidote to an older aristocratic code involving zealous guarding of one's honor and violent pursuits of glory, potentially "reducing a longing for the noble and the great to something so unpoetic, unaesthetic, and of course utterly materialistic."[47] Simply put, the bourgeois man has lost the passions of erstwhile regimes.

While a concern for wealth and well-being may appear trivial and even ugly to many aristocrats, as well as a radical departure from the more self-overcoming aims of traditional conceptions of courage, Tocqueville is quick to elaborate the achievements of democratic courage. Both aristocrats and democrats "rank courage first of virtues and count it the greatest moral necessity for a man."[48] Of course, Tocqueville knows full well that the type of courage considered as the greatest moral necessity is of a sizable difference—"But the two conceptions

[45] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 621.
[46] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 621.
[47] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 18.
[48] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 622.

envisage courage in a different light."[49] Democratic courage generally does not achieve any great deeds in battle or speech; its successes lie in the more prosaic fields of trade and industry. What aristocratic sensibilities may consider the vice of greed, Americans have inverted and consider the driving passion useful for economic gain. "So no stigma attaches to love of money in America, and provided it does not exceed the bounds imposed by public order, it is held in honor. The American will describe as noble and estimable ambition that which our medieval ancestors would have called base cupidity. He would consider as blind and barbarous frenzy that ardor for conquest and warlike spirit which led the latter every day into new battles."[50] Democratic courage reverses it all: what one society would consider greed is a virtue in another. In America, Tocqueville observes the most complete transformation yet of avarice from a vice to a virtue.

America was rather unique in this regard, as it was one of the first societies to instantiate and praise a new set of acquisitive virtues and a commercial ethic. Albert Hirschman's classic work, *The Passions and the Interests*, traces the conceptual shift of greed from vice to virtue beginning in the late Renaissance, a shift which laid the initial groundwork for the rise of bourgeois virtues associated with commercial activity. Hirschman demonstrates how the commercial society first had to destroy the heroic ideal for it to rise up and replace it. Thinkers began discrediting the idea of the hero as a species of vanity and the product of an overheated imagination. "All the heroic virtues were shown to be forms of mere self-preservation by Hobbes, of self-love by La Rochefoucauld, of vanity and of frantic escape from real self-knowledge by Pascal." He continues, "The heroic passions were portrayed as demeaning by

[49] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 622.
[50] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 621.

Racine after having been denounced as foolish, if not demented, by Cervantes."[51] Instead of the heroic ideal, a new ethic of benefits and self-interested behavior began to take hold. Eventually, the drive to accumulate more and more things, "and the activities connected with it, such as commerce, banking, and eventually industry, came to be widely hailed."[52] As the subtitle of the book indicates—political arguments for capitalism before its triumph—the transition to capitalism was only made possible by the foundation and emergence of certain prior arguments, commitments, and ideas. Commercial society then embedded itself within that framework of ideas.

Interestingly, in Tocqueville's time, Hirschman argues, acquisition had not completed its profound conceptual shift from vice to virtue so much as it was in a liminal state, seen as the lesser-of-two-evils that could counteract the even worse possession of the destructive passions associated with fame, honor, and glory.[53] Bourgeois society signaled the end of these dangerous and uncontrolled passions, at the expense of extreme docility and apathy, for nothing disrupts wealth accumulation like revolutions and war. Commerce served to tame the unruly passions for war, conquest, and domination, representing "a safe and sane alternative to the Ancien Régime with its visions of moral grandeur, disdain for mundane employments, and preoccupation with intangible goals like glory and honor."[54] For the new idea that passions could be used to countervail other passions—in a sense, that the passions were divisible—we ought to look to Madison's famous line in *Federalist 51*, where "ambition must be made to counteract ambition"

[51] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977, p. 11.
[52] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, p. 12.
[53] Cf. Ralph Lerner, "Commerce and Character," in *The Thinking Revolutionary: Principle and Practice in the New Republic*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987, 195-221.
[54] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 16.

in the interest of checks and balances.[55] Hirschman points out that the countervailing passions, initially seen as the lesser-of-two-evils, soon morphed themselves into the language of "interests," and eventually acquired a positive connotation because they were predictable, less disruptive, and seen, at least outwardly, as more gentle and polite. "A society devoted to moneymaking, as opposed to aristocratic practices like war, was described by such metaphors as 'polishing,' 'refining,' and 'softening' morals," comments Steven Smith.[56]

Tocqueville sees that predictability and peacefulness appeal to democratic man not only because they contribute to increased economic activity, but they fit well within the Western conception of rationality in general. As the social sciences aim to do, we can predict, at least to some degree, human behavior when we use an interests-based approach, whereas debates about the passions, as noted when mentioning aristocratic honor, have long been associated with a concern for their capriciousness and unpredictability. Tocqueville's trenchant observation, then, is what Hirschman describes as the purported harmlessness of commercial acquisition: it is unique in its "constancy, doggedness, and sameness from one day to the next and from one person to another."[57] In the American mind, according to Tocqueville, this constancy and predictability outweighs any concern for its disgracefulness. Punctuating this paradigm shift, Hirschman comments: "The passions were wild and dangerous, whereas looking after one's material interests was innocent or, as one would say today, innocuous."[58] Some authors even go so far as to argue that Tocqueville identifies the concept of democracy with the presence of a new, rising social and political group: an industrial and acquisitive middle class and the values

[55] James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, New York: Signet Classics, 2003, p. 319.
[56] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 211.
[57] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, p. 54.
[58] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, p. 58.

they represented.[59] On this view, democracy cannot be separated from "the pursuit of happiness" that is material in the first instance—i.e., expectations of material comfort and the pursuit of material pleasures.

Tocqueville's democratic courage appears as the peaceful alternative when placed side-by-side with the hero or warrior of the pre-modern age. Here, too, Tocqueville and Hirschman seem to describe the same phenomenon: "The image of the trader as a…peaceful, inoffensive fellow may have drawn some strength from comparing him with the looting armies and murderous pirates of the time."[60] America provided Tocqueville with the consummate image of such juxtaposition vis-à-vis his native France—a calming desire for the accumulation of wealth had replaced the violence and capriciousness of the revolutionary passions that had consumed several members of his extended family and seemed to hang over the head of the aristocracy in France like Damocles' proverbial sword. War, conflict, and revolution disrupted trade. It was bad for business.

Lest Tocqueville's aristocratic, French audience abandon him in his extolling of democratic courage as nothing more than man's basest desire for wealth, however, he hastens to point out that many of the characteristics of courage displayed in previous eras have permeated its display in the democratic age. Even though the Americans have toned down courage and imbued it with a safe and predictable connotation by steering it toward ends not necessarily outside of the self, Tocqueville often mentions the resolute spirit that issues from democratic courage. Democratic courage still possesses the ability to rise above challenges, and assess, accept, and respond to threats appropriately. "Chance is an element always present to the mind

[59] James Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville's Democracy in America*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P, 1980, pp. 163-174. Other interpretations of Tocqueville's democracy include democracy as local participation, democracy as equality, and democracy as a modern religion. See Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, Part 1.
[60] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, p. 63.

of those who live in the unstable conditions of a democracy, and in the end they come to love enterprises in which chance plays a part."[61] In one concrete example, Tocqueville describes democratic courage thus:

> In the United States martial valor is little esteemed; the type of courage best known and best appreciated is that which makes a man brave the fury of the ocean to reach port more quickly, and face without complaint the privations of life in the wilds and that solitude which is harder to bear than any privations, the courage which makes a man almost insensible to the loss of a fortune laboriously acquired and prompts him instantly to fresh exertions to gain another. It is courage of this sort which is needed to maintain the American community and make it prosper, and it is held by them in particular esteem and honor. To betray a lack of it brings certain shame.[62]

American success in economic endeavors has less to do with "physical advantages" and more to do with "purely intellectual and moral qualities."[63] In this instance, we can see the level of individual demand democratic courage places on the merchant. Utilizing a metaphor from the Napoleonic Wars, Tocqueville states that Americans demand more of their people in the commercial realm, while the French demanded more of their armies under Napoleon. Notice, however, that Tocqueville's description of democratic courage occasionally demands so much intrepidity that it occasionally blurs the line between courage and the impetuousness of bravery.[64] "Americans have turned rash speculation into a sort of virtue" and are unable to "stigmatize those who are thus rash" as they are judged in aristocracies.[65] As such, this form of courage also flirts on occasion with foolhardiness—all in the interest of greater economic gain. In another such passage, Tocqueville remarks on the difference between American and French sailors:

---

[61] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 553.
[62] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 622-623. Tocqueville observes social mechanisms to enforce democratic courage, just as the ancients enforced martial courage through shame.
[63] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 402.
[64] I discussed this distinction in Chapter 1.
[65] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 662.

> The European navigator is prudent about venturing out to sea; he only does so when the weather is suitable; if any unexpected accident happens, he returns to port; at night he furls some of his sails; and when the whitening billows indicate the approach of land, he checks his course and takes an observation of the sun. The American, neglecting such precautions, braves these dangers; he sets sail while the storm is still rumbling; by night as well as by day he spreads his sails to the wind; he repairs storm damage as he goes; and when at last he draws near the end of his voyage, he flies toward the coast as if he could already see the port…Throughout a voyage of eight or ten months he has drunk brackish water and eaten salted meat; he has striven continually against the sea, disease, and boredom.[66]

What distinguishes Americans who possess democratic courage is that they do not appear to believe in the inherent limits imposed by human nature (they challenge these limits as best they can), merely things that have yet to be explored or attempted.[67] For Tocqueville, this is most obvious in the courage with which Americans have settled the western frontier—some of whom, he notes, have already made a quite comfortable lives in the populated states—a reality which has given them a sense of boundless possibility.

In Tocqueville's time, democratic courage had manifested itself not only in a flurry of commercial activity, but also in the occasional possession of an adventurous and conquering disposition. Even at the height of the Revolutionary War, he notes, migratory patterns continued unabated to the West; not even a "state of peace or of war, order or anarchy" could have "perceptible influence on the continuous expansion of the Anglo-Americans."[68] To be sure, Americans practicing democratic courage appear to enjoy the "plunge into the solitudes of America" with as little as a "bible, ax, and newspapers" to aid them, as much as they enjoy the riches and resources which invariably await them once they arrive.[69] Movement which began as a necessary activity in search of further opportunities ends in "a sort of gamble, and they enjoy

[66] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 402-403.
[67] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 404.
[68] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 410. Tocqueville accompanies his observations with many population statistics to bolster his argument. One fine example is how quickly the Ohio territory grew, once demarcating the extent of the colonized American republic in the West. In 1800, Ohio had 10,000 people occupying its territory; just a decade later in 1810, it had more than 1,000,000 inhabitants.
[69] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 303.

the sensations as much as the profit."[70] In many ways, the democratic courage manifest in the orientation to explore and conquer the Western Territories dovetails with what would later be called America's "rugged individualism." With a sort of fury and passion unmet by other nations, Americans continually leave their birthplace to strike out on their own and conquer vast, far-flung domains. "It is hard to give an impression of the avidity with which the American throws himself on the vast prey offered him by fortune. To pursue it he fearlessly braves the arrows of the Indian and the diseases of the wilderness; he goes prepared to face the silence of the forest and is not afraid of the presence of wild beasts. *A passion stronger than love of life goads him on*."[71] The passion that urges Americans to risk life and limb in the wilderness of westward expansion, ignore their bodily concerns, and even enjoy the pure risk-taking of it all is another consequence of democratic courage. While this explorative and conquering disposition, practiced only by a few as opposed to the majority, might enjoy the pure risk-taking element of the entire endeavor, it, too, sets its aims mostly at the acquisitive spirit: Americans venture forth to the far corners of the world in the interest of striking it rich and augmenting their material comforts.

Americans are open and pragmatic in demonstrating a willingness to pursue any and all paths that potentially lead to fortune, even those in the far West.[72] The American "boldly follows every path to fortune that is open to him; he is equally prepared to turn into a sailor, pioneer, artisan, or cultivator, facing the labors of dangers of these various ways of life with even constancy."[73] It was far less important to discover a vocation or calling than it was to find one that provided the opportunity to live in material comfort. Once an American selects his path to

[70] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 283.
[71] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 283, emphasis mine.
[72] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 429.
[73] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 347.

fortune, he embarks upon it with gusto, and it is not uncommon to come across those who have been all of the above at various stages of their lives. That Americans managed to successfully combine courage with commerce in this way genuinely excited and also confounded Tocqueville. Such a syncretism was surely akin to a category error: one was either possessed by avarice or courageous, but not both simultaneously. "I cannot express my thoughts better than by saying that the Americans put something heroic into their way of trading."[74]

For Tocqueville, there is something interesting about such boldness in industry and the American display of courage in commercial endeavors. When material comfort is at stake, Americans take great risks to achieve economic success. This leads Tocqueville to realize that democratic man operates under a different calculus than his aristocratic brethren, that is, he is generally unmoved by any pursuit of honor or glory (at least traditionally defined). An American can go bankrupt, for instance, and miraculously emerge from such embarrassing depths without a stain on his character. Fortunes, after all, come and go as quickly as the ships in many American ports.[75] Insofar as we can speak of democratic man striving for any sort of "honor," then, it operates under a new and more fluid dynamic; "the law of honor exists, but it is often left without interpreters" because it is industriousness and courage in business pursuits that matters.[76] Tocqueville describes democratic men exhibiting great courage while pursuing well-being as so engrained that it is as if they follow an "impulse of [their] nature."[77] He concludes that "What the French did for the sake of victory," i.e., risking life and limb in revolution or on the battlefield, the American people had transformed into the commercial spirit and "are doing

[74] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 403.
[75] Interestingly, in Tocqueville's writings on Britain, he concludes that, contrary to France, its mighty aristocracy was spared any upheaval because the social system was an "open aristocracy," barely accessible enough to afford a person the hope that with industriousness, a bit of luck, and courage, he could rise in society. Cf. Book II, Chapter 9 of *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*.
[76] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 624.
[77] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 403.

for the sake of the economy." Consequently, "it will always be very difficult for a European merchant to imitate his American counterpart."[78]

The "empty cradle" initially encountered by the American upon his discovery of the open continent meant that, even if already populated by natives, it was an open question whether inequality or the new dogma of equality would prevail. We know well which path Tocqueville believes the Americans chose. The nearly universal American belief that all men were created equal remains in tension with the fact that Tocqueville observes most men striving to advance socially and economically. Quite simply, the commercial sphere is the only one in which man is permitted to distinguish himself in the age of equality: "When the prestige attached to what is old has vanished, men are no longer distinguished, or hardly distinguished, by birth, standing, or profession; there is thus hardly anything left but money which makes very clear distinctions between men or can raise some of them above the common level. Distinction based on wealth is increased by the disappearance or diminution of all other distinctions."[79] This is the cause of the agitated and relentless drive for well-being which results from the practice of democratic courage; men distinguish themselves in American democracy *primarily* through their success in economic and commercial ventures, not as they did in the past, through heroic speech and deed. The American commercial system, then, constructed as it was for an age of equality, is open to all those who possess democratic courage and a desire for distinction according to economic success.

IV. The Pleasures of Servitude

Like traditional concepts of courage, democratic courage aims at distinction, elevation, and some elements of self-sacrifice, in an age marked by the general equality of conditions. Yet,

[78] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 402.
[79] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 615.

even democratic courage itself is, in theory, open to all those (of both sexes) who possess the fortitude to venture out into new commercial activities. Tocqueville notices that because courage has been severed from its heroic, overtly "manly" connections in American democracy, it is in principle more open to female participation, even if in political, economic, and legal matters, American women had not (and still have not) attained full equality.[80] Tocqueville's astonishment at the development of American industrialism and democratic courage in the commercial sector is not unreserved, however; when the novelty of this combination of traditional virtue and a modern context subsides, he levels three broad criticisms against it. First, the life of democratic courage is trivial; second, life in an aristocracy is more secure and stable, meaning life is less agitated and feverish in its pursuits, leaving citizens with more time for thinking, reflection, and intellectual pursuits; and third and most seriously, the occasionally vulgar utilitarian outlook implied by democratic courage isolates individuals from one another by reducing their interactions to economic exchange in the form of contracts. For Tocqueville, the stakes are high: a trivial life of isolation and privatism could potentially spell the beginning of democratic despotism. I discuss each of Tocqueville's objections in turn, along with their consequences.

Tocqueville's first criticism of democratic courage is that it leads to a trivialization of American life. Tocqueville comments on the triviality and routineness of bourgeois life with a stirring statement of the passions associated with the practice of pre-modern courage: "When I return to regular habits, the monotony is fatal to me; I am possessed by an internal restlessness. *I must have bodily or mental excitement, even at the risk of my own life. The desire for strong*

[80] Delba Winthrop, "Tocqueville's American Women and 'The True Conception of Democratic Progress," *Political Theory* 14 (1986): 239-261.

emotions becomes irresistible."[81] Americans, through their practice of democratic courage in the commercial sector, have been reduced to mere societal "place-hunters." As the one sphere still open to distinction in an age of equality, when the "distinctions of rank are blurred and privileges abolished, patrimonies are divided up and education and freedom spread, the poor conceive an eager desire to acquire comfort, and the rich think of the danger of losing it."[82] In other words, wealth becomes the new sign of rank rather than excellence, and competition between classes shifts its focus accordingly. This contributes to a kind of collective lowering of society's gaze to economic and financial matters. "Everyone is preoccupied caring for the slightest needs of the body and the trivial conveniences of life."[83] Every American seems to have their "little undertaking" and nothing more. Quite simply, economic gains are not the heights of humanity. At this point, Tocqueville's criticisms begin to dovetail with the driving concerns of Hannah Arendt.[84]

In a later letter to his travel companion, Gustave de Beaumont, Tocqueville laments the lack of great or shocking events in democracies: "You know what a taste I have for great events and how tired I am of our little democratic and bourgeois pot of soup."[85] Tocqueville cannot help but feel that American democratic man is a shadow of the ancients (similar to Arendt) or even of the Frenchman during Napoleon's reign. Even if democratic courage forces man to contemplate threats and occasionally countenance risk-taking, with few exceptions, nothing earth-shattering happens owing to its practice.[86] Democratic courage does not allow man to

[81] Quoted in Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny*, p. 226, emphasis mine.
[82] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 531.
[83] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 530.
[84] What Tocqueville describes as part and parcel of American democracy, the collapse of the public into the private and a rise of privatism, Arendt depicts as an affliction of modernity in general. Arendt's views are fleshed out fully in Chapter IV.
[85] Quoted in Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny*, p. 227.
[86] One could make the argument that the discovery of the New World and the continued American exploration of the Western Territories were earth-shattering discoveries driven by a type of courage which aims at comfort as its ends.

perform heroic deeds in battle, but to seek a more calculated and consequentialist end. "Even in what is called…courage [by the Americans] there is more of calculation than is usually supposed; and though it is generally passions alone which cause the first efforts to be made, it is with a view to the outcome that they are continued."[87] The passions of well-being impulse the American to democratic courage, but the end of enjoying that wealth sustains him throughout. It is the fact that man has lost a sense of his capabilities and potential greatness which concerns Tocqueville, as his greatest means of getting there—the possession and practice of courage—has been aimed at petty, bourgeois ends like further wealth acquisition. The American has clipped his own wings: "Of his own free will he limits himself to paltry desires and dares not face any lofty enterprise; indeed, he can scarcely imagine such a possibility."[88]

Furthermore, after so much success in industry and its attendant comforts, Tocqueville thinks it is safe to say that democratic men have forgotten what it is like to exhibit great exertion in a common endeavor, and it is unlikely that they would tolerate such exertion if put to the task: "One of the characteristics of democratic times is that all men have a taste for easy successes and immediate pleasures."[89] "Their excitement about small matters" like economic questions, "makes them calm about great ones."[90] He describes the hopscotch from one industry to the next, constantly in pursuit of success, as the kind of behavior that can only be explained by a quixotic mind with instability of purpose. "The unfavorable is an immoderate desire to grow rich, and to do so rapidly; perpetual instability of purpose, and a continual longing for change; a

---

Taken even further, this pattern may explain some of the impulse to colonize vast areas of the developing world, beginning even in Tocqueville's lifetime with the French conquest of Algeria. While fascinating, these topics are beyond the scope of this thesis.

[87] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 223.
[88] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 632.
[89] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 440.
[90] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 638.

total absence of established customs and traditions; a tradition and manufacturing spirit which is carried into everything, even where it is least appropriate."[91]

Tocqueville traces the phenomenon of "many men of ambition but few lofty ambitions" and its triviality to the American dogma of equality. "Although high ambitions swell while conditions are in process of equalization, that characteristic is lost when equality is a fact…hence in democracies ambition is both eager and constant, but in general it does not look very high. For the most part life is spent in eagerly coveting small prizes within reach."[92] The passion for equality produces these leveling effects on society: it "leads the weak to want to drag the strong down to their level and…induces men to prefer equality in servitude to inequality in freedom."[93] On the contrary, this is not the case in aristocracies where, by birth, certain classes are ascribed social status that cannot be forfeited. The focus of the aristocrat, as a result, is a "constant attention" on "the great affairs of state" rather than "the petty cares of trade and industry."[94]

Tocqueville evokes the example of the American arts to prove his point about the limited horizon of feverish democratic ambition. In his frequent visits to the American theater, Tocqueville observes that Americans were at risk of losing all imagination for man's potential greatness. He describes a distinct lack of heroic protagonists on the American stage (echoing similar concerns to Rousseau, who, albeit in a different cultural context, feared the modern theater lacked sufficient treatment of the heroic ideal). Only middling types of twists and leitmotivs find their way into the plotlines of American plays. When faced with the heroic or the tragic, Americans prefer not to see a character whose deeds rise "above and beyond nature," but to "see the same medley of conditions, feelings, and opinions that occur in life. The drama

[91] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoirs, Letters, and Remains*, ed. Gustave de Beaumont, Boston, MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1862, p. 370.
[92] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 629.
[93] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 57.
[94] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 552.

becomes more striking, more vulgar, and more true."[95] The drama, in a sense, becomes less theatrical and more factual. Democratic preference is thus skewed overwhelmingly towards characters with whom the democratic man can relate, for emotional resonance above all, rather than for intellectual contemplation of human greatness or significant moral quandaries. "An aristocratic theater may survive for some time in a democracy…but soon it will fall of its own accord, not overthrown, but abandoned" by the playgoers.[96] In the one area remaining as a potential bulwark against the age of equality, with its imaginative prowess, the American theater suffers "from paltriness of aim. What frightens me most is the danger that, amid all the constant trivial preoccupations of private life, ambition may lose both its force and its greatness, that human passions may grow gentler and at the same time baser, with the result that the progress of the body social may become daily quieter and less inspiring."[97]

Tocqueville's second criticism of democratic courage is that life in an aristocracy is more stable and one's social position more secure. Tocqueville sees an important nexus between this fact and frequent democratic "status anxiety." We might call this phenomenon "keeping up with the Joneses." The perpetual fear was a drop in the standard of living, to the point where government would become the great guardian of the economy. Such agitation and anxiety (*inquiétude*) was unfamiliar to Tocqueville, who came from a more sober, aristocratic world. "The upper classes were absorbed much more in elegant living than in personal comfort, more in building their reputation than in their riches. Even in the middle classes a man did not let himself be wrapped up exclusively in a search for his own wellbeing; he often gave up its pursuit in favor of more refined and loftier pleasures; everywhere he invested in some other good

[95] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 491.
[96] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 493.
[97] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 632.

beyond money."[98] Contrarily, Americans find themselves caught in between desire and duty, living neither for others nor purely for themselves.

The inability to live purely for others is partly attributable to the feverish pitch with which Americans approach commercial activity, resembling an interminable war. There is no respite from economic competition. In America, one finds "a sort of feverish agitation which wonderfully disposes [one's mind] toward every type of exertion and keeps it, so to say, above the common level of humanity. For an American the whole of life is treated like a game of chance, a time of revolution, or the day of a battle."[99] Restiveness controls Americans' desire for well-being and prevents any legitimate resting or meditating, both of which are foundational for intellectual activity.

The perpetual pursuit of wealth inhibits the ability to pursue some of life's great gifts, most importantly for Tocqueville, intellectual activity. "In the midst of this universal tumult, this incessant conflict of jarring interests, this endless chase for wealth, where is one to find the calm for the profound researches of the intellect?"[100] In his analysis of the American intellect, Tocqueville observes that all matters of American science and invention, too, are not pursued as pleasurable ends in themselves, but have been captured (and potentially corrupted) by the interest of well-being and further wealth creation. "They think about nothing but ways of changing their lot and bettering it. For people in this frame of mind every new way of getting wealth more quickly, every machine which lessens work, every means of diminishing the costs of production, every invention which makes pleasures easier or greater, seems the most magnificent accomplishment of the human mind."[101] It seems, then, that democratic courage has not only the

[98] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, p. 122.
[99] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 404.
[100] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 460.
[101] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 462.

effect of skewing the American's idea of what constitutes science, but also obscuring its proper purpose. American science and invention does not look beyond anything that leads to greater wealth creation, greater physical well-being, or anything else that might be marketable to a consumer audience.

Tocqueville contrasts the American marketization of everything to "aristocratic ages [where] the chief function of science is to give pleasure to the mind," as the pleasures of the body were looked after by the laboring classes, while in democracies, science aims precisely to please "the body."[102] As a further result of the endless democratic desire to improve well-being, science in America focuses not on theory, but strictly on practical, commercial applications where "profit will be made out of discoveries immediately applicable to industry."[103] Similarly, the imaginative arts suffer under this same dynamic. The love of physical well-being in democracy, "the hope to better one's lot, competition, and the lure of success anticipated all goad men to activity in their chosen careers and forbid them to stray one moment from the track. The soul's chief effort goes in that direction. Imagination is not dead, but its chief function is to conceive what may be useful and to portray what is actual."[104]

Lastly, as democratic courage aims at ends unconnected to the type of distinction sought by forms of courage before the age of equality, democratic men do not always exhibit courage under the drive for greatness but out of a fear of failure or falling behind. "In democratic countries, no matter how rich a man is, he is almost always dissatisfied with his fortune, because he finds that he is less wealthy than his father was and he is afraid that his son will be less wealthy than he. So most wealthy men in democracies are dreaming of ways to increase their riches, and naturally their eyes turn to trade and industry, for these seem the quickest and best

[102] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 462.
[103] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 463.
[104] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 483.

means of getting rich. *In this respect they share the poor man's instincts without his necessities, or rather they are driven by the most imperious of all necessities, that of not sinking*."[105] Practicing democratic courage, Americans are inclined to a perpetual seeking of wealth that ceases only in death, which appears to most to fall short of stringent standards of virtue, especially that of pre-modern conceptions of courage. "For them desire for well-being has become a restless, burning passion," which, rather than decreasing with accumulation, "increases with satisfaction."[106] "In Europe we habitually regard a restless spirit, immoderate desire for wealth, and an extreme love of independence as great social dangers," but in America, these are simply negative and unavoidable byproducts of the practice of democratic courage.[107] "Death steps in in the end and stops him before he has grown tired of this futile pursuit of that complete felicity which always escapes him."[108] This agitation is only exacerbated when one reflects on the regrettable shortness of nineteenth century life expectancy: "a man who has set his heart on nothing but the good things of this world is always in a hurry, for he has only a limited time in which to find them, get them, and enjoy them."[109]

Tocqueville argues that the cumulative effects of democratic courage are to isolate individuals from one another by reducing some of their most substantial interactions to the commercial sphere. To make matters worse, the age of equality has sundered the old social bonds that once linked people—even across the immense fault lines of class—in aristocratic societies, but these bonds have not been replaced with anything but a form of fleeting contract and exchange in commercial society. The aim of democratic courage, unlike its pre-modern

[105] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 522, emphasis mine.
[106] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 283.
[107] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 284. They are unavoidable byproducts, that is, so long as democratic courage aims at ends related to comfort and well-being. As will become clear in the next section, Americans practice the art of self-interest properly understood to attenuate the effects of these byproducts.
[108] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 536.
[109] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 536.

predecessors which sought to perform selfless acts of self-sacrifice for the betterment of the public, aims at circumscribed, private interests. Without the bonds and obligations inherent in aristocratic societies, which Tocqueville likens to a kind of generational "chain," he worries that citizens no longer have the incentive to sacrifice for "things outside of themselves."[110] Therefore, Tocqueville's concern is a well-known danger of modernity: citizens who give short shrift to public actions and instead recede into the private realm where they remain content in their complete sovereignty over their personal affairs. The pursuit of wealth pushes citizens to live apart from one another. The danger is not only a weak public spirit leading to an under-powered citizenry, but a baleful solipsism leading to an over-powered state in the form of administrative despotism.

Tocqueville defines this individualism as "a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself."[111] The scourge of individualism does not refer to society's eccentrics—whom Tocqueville, and certainly Mill, might have admired—but to the solitary person isolated from the body politic. It is a modern word for a modern phenomenon. "That word 'individualism' which we have coined for our requirements, was unknown to our ancestors, for the good reason that in their days every individual necessarily belonged to a group and no one could regard himself as an isolated unit."[112] Individualism, an ill unknown in aristocracies and hence born of the equality of conditions within democracy, opens up this path to privatism, which weakens the pubic spirit, as well as the exercise of virtues like courage aimed at others. Compounding this

[110] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 507-508.
[111] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 506.
[112] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy, Revolution, and Society*, eds. John Stone and Stephen Mennell, Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1982, p. 208.

danger, Tocqueville argues that it is possible to maintain a patina of order and high civilization and yet lack an understanding of liberty because man is simply too enveloped in his private interests—"shut up in the solitude of his own heart."[113]

For Tocqueville, whose great concern was the maintenance of liberty, material progress does not constitute a sign of the expansion or preservation of liberty. The age of equality and democracy allows us to easily conceive of a regime or a time in history when men care more about material goods than they do for progress and enlightenment.

> When the taste for physical pleasures has grown more rapidly than either education or experience of free institutions, the time comes when men are carried away and lose control of themselves at sight of the new good things they are ready to snatch. Intent only on getting rich, they do not notice *the close connection between private fortunes and general prosperity*. There is no need to drag their rights away from citizens of this type; they themselves voluntarily let them go. They find it a tiresome inconvenience to exercise political rights which distract them from industry…They cannot waste their precious time in unrewarding work. Such things are all right for idlers to play at, but they do not become men of weight occupied with the serious business of life.[114]

The problem with the general orientation of the bourgeois trader, for Tocqueville, is that they risk losing the civic spirit in exchange for their love of order and tranquility. While we can view our desire for order, tranquility, and gentler habits in the democratic age as a sign of our moral progress, Tocqueville believes that this trend has rendered us more subject to manipulation and despotism in the form of an altogether unprecedented, paternalistic, and "immense tutelary" administrative state. "A nation which asks nothing from the government beyond the maintenance of order is already a slave in the bottom of its heart."[115] Mistaking administrative order and the patina of civilization for liberty, men "console themselves for being under schoolmasters by thinking that they have chosen them themselves."[116] Much of Tocqueville's

[113] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 508.
[114] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 540, emphasis mine.
[115] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 540.
[116] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 693.

work on the *Ancien Régime and the Revolution* occupies itself with liberty's inability to take root and grow under the yoke of administrative despotism. Tocqueville concludes that we should direct our corrective efforts "not against anarchy or despotism" flowing from individualism, "but against the apathy" which precedes it and "could engender one or the other [anarchy or despotism] almost indifferently."[117]

Luckily, Tocqueville observes that Americans have formed a practice to attenuate the greatest dangers associated with such selfishness as a byproduct of democratic courage, a form of moderation that directs the privatism of American's democratic courage away from their business ventures and occasionally onto their fellow men in the body politic. In other words, Americans have found ways to enlarge their hearts and expand their circle of concern. Even though such moderation may not permit man to reach the heights of pre-modern courage, it at least avoids the greatest pitfalls associated with some of the negative byproducts of the privatism encouraged by the pursuit of democratic courage. Tocqueville famously labels this practice as "self-interest properly understood."

V. "Self-Interest Properly Understood:" the Antidote to Privatism

At this point, after explaining its underlying interest in well-being and lamenting its shortcomings, we might ask why Tocqueville insists on classifying democratic courage by the rather demanding standards of virtue at all. After all, a virtue aimed at self-interested ends would have been something entirely unfamiliar to an aristocratic audience, almost a contradiction in terms: "The men of the eighteenth century were hardly aware of that form of passion for material comfort which is tantamount to being the mother of servitude."[118] Tocqueville finds that in America, this seeming contradiction exists without tension: Americans tolerate the pursuit of

[117] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 736.
[118] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, p. 122.

self-interest and yet are quick to extol virtuous behavior and condemn what they think immoral. "[America] is particularly hard on bad morals."[119] This concern for broader conduct and mores has prevented Americans from slipping into a state of moral turpitude and, oddly enough, infused their pursuit of material well-being with a broader care for their community. While Americans are pursuing their economic interests, they evince a concern for communal prosperity that is directed toward positive developments in the body politic. In other words, Tocqueville does not encounter in America the purely *homo economicus*, extremely vulgar, utility-maximizing mindset one would expect from the elevation of self-interest and greed to the height of virtue. The America of Tocqueville's time did not display obvious or flagrant moral failings. By and large, Americans do not "leave the greater society to look after itself."[120] They do not seek to exploit one another in the marketplace and then return to the private sphere to enjoy the spoils of their ill-gotten gains. Tocqueville finds instead acts of occasional selflessness that can mirror the outcomes typically associated with pre-modern concepts of courage in aristocracies, i.e., Americans have the ability to overcome the self-interestedness of democratic courage and expand their circle of care. Rather than communal apathy, Tocqueville experiences communal vibrancy. How is it possible that Americans, who first brought courage into the commercial sphere and encouraged the self-interested pursuit of wealth and well-being, also demonstrated an understanding of the importance of the reciprocal aspects of political life with their fellow citizens? The answer to this question is imperative to understanding why Tocqueville believes democratic courage is properly classed as a virtue, even if its threshold is lower than that of pre-modern forms of courage.

[119] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 622.
[120] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 506.

In aristocracies, Tocqueville notes, the aristocrat's temporal frame of reference is by necessity longer and more inclusive—"there is a sense in which all the generations are contemporaneous"—given that family histories and family names bear reputations that preserve legacies for years.[121] This feeling of noble duty and obligation—so-called *noblesse oblige*—extends out from the family to the community and, Tocqueville argues, acts as a barrier against any slide into solipsism. Although an age of equality and democracy has a potentially wider breadth of concern for one's fellow citizens than an aristocracy, "the bonds of human affection are…more relaxed," they are not couched in terms of duty and obligation, and a "man's interests are limited to those near himself."[122] Thus, American democracy runs the risk of generating citizens who "form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands."[123] It is at this point that Tocqueville posits that Americans, though they demonstrate great courage in industrial endeavors, have managed to avoid a potentially devastating separation from the concerns of the body politic. They attenuate the self-interestedness of democratic courage through political institutions and practices that widen their interests, thereby mitigating the negative byproduct of privatism.

Tocqueville argues that America's democratic institutions, which afford relatively greater participatory opportunity than most (for their time period), mitigate citizen's tendency inward when practicing democratic courage and have beneficial effects on individuals who partake. "Citizens who are bound to take part in public affairs must turn from the private interests and occasionally take a look at something other than themselves."[124] By vesting political legitimacy in popular support, "ambition makes a man care for his fellows, and, in a sense, he often finds his

[121] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 507.
[122] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 507.
[123] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 508.
[124] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 510.

self-interest in forgetting about himself."[125] And just as in the economic sphere, the Americans socialize this so well, he theorizes, that "what had been calculation becomes instinct."[126]

Not only America's democratic institutions, but its many free associations, possess the ability to fill these gaps of noble duty and obligation sundered by democracy, which are fulfilled without *legal* or aristocratic obligation. Tocqueville admires the proliferation of associations engendered by the decentralization of American federalism (an admiration he shares wholeheartedly with Arendt), whose existence aids the formation of new types of relationships in the age of democracy. He observes that Americans have applied this "new science of politics"—by which he means a political science of the age of equality and democracy—to the "greatest number of purposes."[127] The threat of Cartesian thinking and narcissism are effectively curtailed because of the intermediary role played by free associations between citizens and their concern for communal prosperity. Through free associations men cooperate by coming together laterally (i.e., fellowship) to ensure these American qualities prevail, such as freedom of assembly. "If men are to remain civilized or to become civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them at the same speed as equality of conditions spreads."[128]

Associational life was so integral to the well-functioning of American democracy that Tocqueville deems it a natural right. "The most natural right of man, after that of acting on his own, is that of combining his efforts with those of his fellows and acting together. Therefore the right of association seems to me by nature almost as inalienable as individual liberty. Short of attacking society itself, no lawgiver can wish to abolish it."[129] Yet even more important than the *right* to association is the *experience* of association, through which we exert reciprocal influence

[125] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 510.
[126] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 512.
[127] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 514.
[128] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 517.
[129] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 193.

upon one another and develop greater levels of mutual understanding. Through political participation and membership in local associations, "Feelings and ideas are renewed, *the heart enlarged*, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another."[130] Association "becomes the mother of every other technique; everyone studies and applies it." In another passage, Tocqueville identifies association as the "mother" of all political action.[131] Tocqueville displays a belief in the educative function of political participation, especially at the local level, by belonging to various free associations. Local participation allows Americans to gain a sense of their own strength, while also requiring them to act together in concert, demonstrating to citizens that they do not need to rely on an outside power. Political participation is therefore essential to realizing freedom within American democracy. "Far more may be done by entrusting citizens with the management of minor affairs than by handing over control of great matters, toward interesting them in the public welfare and convincing them that they constantly stand in need of one another in order to provide for it."[132] Political participation draws men out of their solipsism and away from exchanges that are purely commercial, into a space where he is "not as independent of his fellows as he used to suppose."[133] In the end, associations can help man acquire "a habit and taste for serving" his fellow citizens.[134]

In addition to the participation in free associations, one cannot underestimate the extent to which Tocqueville believes traditional sources of authority such as religious association, in particular, have a role to play as strong antidotes to democratic courage's material concern for

[130] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 515, emphasis mine.
[131] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 522. Tocqueville's use of the term action here is similar to the way Arendt would use it many years later, a connection that I explore more fully in Chapter IV.
[132] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 511.
[133] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 510.
[134] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 513. Tocqueville's fondness for the Puritan forms of local government is manifest. Of the Puritan settlers in Jamestown, he says: "Democracy more perfect than any of which antiquity had dared to dream sprang full-grown and fully armed from the midst of the old feudal society" (*Democracy in America*, p. 39).

commercial enterprises and individual isolation in the pursuit of self-interest. When effective, religion is a traditional source of authority which can supplement the age of equality to help solve the human state of restlessness owing to the unfulfilling cherishment of material things by forcing men to contemplate another realm of existence.[135] For Tocqueville, the social and political consequences of religious association are so important to facilitating the proper use of liberty and directing self-interest towards the political community that mere membership outweighs any truth value inherent in a given religion's theological doctrines (of course, if one happens to subscribe to a religion with some truth value, then one is doubly fortunate). "Though it is very important for man as an individual that his religion should be true, that is not the case for society…what is most important for it is not that all citizens should profess the true religion but that they should profess religion."[136]

These institutions, practices, mechanisms of self-sacrifice, and realization that self-interest, taken to the extreme, is corrosive of democratic community, lead to what Tocqueville labels as "self-interest properly understood."[137] He describes the phenomenon as such because he sees essential elements of self-interest still extant, but in a higher, more enlightened sense; "self-interest properly understood" is akin to Adam Smith's "invisible hand" in that it works towards the betterment of a wider sphere of concern while emanating from the same instinct as democratic courage: the American "sees that by serving his fellows man serves himself and that doing good is to his private advantage."[138] Moreover, he "sees the public fortune as his own, and he works for the good of the state, not only from duty or from pride, but I dare almost say, from

[135] Tocqueville's trust in religion to imbue man with a sense of alternative existences beyond the material world is in stark distinction to Mill's worry that religion only poisons the mind of men by curtailing their ability to think for themselves and Arendt's eschewal of religion as a distraction from the world we now inhabit. I develop both of these points in full in Chapters III and IV, respectively.
[136] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 290.
[137] The fact that Tocqueville attributes so many problems to the practice of individualism contrasts sharply with Mill, who sees the development of individualism as an essential tool in the battle against political and social tyranny.
[138] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 525.

greed."[139] The American practice of self-interest properly understood is part of a long history of bourgeois self-interest serving as the foundation for "certain civic virtues, not, to be sure, the high aristocratic virtues of beauty, nobility, and self-sacrifice, but a set of lower-order, more mundane…virtues, such as cooperation, moderation, tolerance, and self-mastery."[140] Self-interest properly understood might not goad men to elevate themselves to the heights of glory, as in pre-modern forms of courage, but it serves as a worthy antidote of the most destructive aspects of democratic courage and even the cultivation of certain excellences of the heart befitting of the democratic age. However, "every day it prompts some small ones…its discipline shapes a lot of orderly, temperate, moderate, careful, and self-controlled citizens."[141]

The bar is admittedly lower if Tocqueville equates an enlightened self-interest with what was normally associated with the full possession of virtue, but he is always clear that his praise of "self-interest properly understood" is rooted largely in pragmatic and consequentialist terms: "It does not attempt to reach great aims [like pre-modern forms of courage], but it does, without too much trouble, achieve all it sets out to do."[142] It is within this broader context that Tocqueville argues we must view democratic courage: we can speak of democratic courage in the commercial sphere as courage precisely because Americans conjoin it, through the same basic impulses, to a type of tempered self-interest—"self-interest properly understood"—which saves them from the ravages of pure individualism and drives them to mitigate the impact of privatism by making sacrifices in the name of the broader political community. By broadening their range of concerns, Americans can practice not just personal responsibility, but reciprocity, recognition, and mutual assistance.

---

[139] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 237.
[140] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 21.
[141] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 526.
[142] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 526.

VI. Despotism Waiting in the Wings

Tocqueville draws our attention to the fact that Americans have entered into a bourgeois commercial society which employs the virtue of courage on a daily basis in economic undertakings. Though Americans conceive of the virtue quite differently, Tocqueville still recognizes that basic characteristics associated with pre-modern conceptions of courage—such as a desire for distinction and an ability to refine one's self-interest to incorporate a greater range of concerns—are extant within democratic courage, too. Yet, Tocqueville's astonishment with democratic courage in the pursuit of comfort quickly gives way to a far more serious concern for its resulting isolation and privatism, which could serve as the foundation for modern despotism. American democracy invented new forms of authority that can lead to novel regimes of despotism—quite alarming given how they may go undetected. This gives rise to the illusion that individuals have control over politics through elections, when this could represent only a patina of freedom while the accumulating classes busy themselves with the acquisition of wealth.

Tocqueville's analysis hints at one of the most harrowing takeaways of all analyses of democracy, known since Plato—that the "germ of tyranny is there" in a democracy.[143] Tocqueville believes democracy and the age of equality "could lay itself peculiarly open to the establishment of a despotism" which strips man of "several of the chief attributes of humanity."[144] Democracy is not synonymous with liberty, nor does liberty flow from democracy necessarily; it is just as compatible with despotism as it is with liberty. Without the proper institutions and practices, American democracy had the ability to "drift" towards tyranny and despotism—a despotism altogether different from that of the arbitrariness inherent in the individual despot because it institutionalizes itself in the form of law and administration. It has

[143] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 252.
[144] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 690, 695.

the potential to be despotism without an identifiable despot, since it requires little force and controls subjects comfortably by keeping them isolated from their fellows and under the yoke of an administrative state.[145] Isolation means citizens retreat into their families, friends, and social circles of their own creation—too weary to fight societal conformity and too narrowly attendant to their well-being, a centralized administrative state would arise and become the new norm, "not unlike the mandarins who paralyzed imperial China."[146] If citizens are relatively inactive and private, the government remains the only active element, and eventually becomes solicited on behalf of those middle class Americans seeking to secure their private interests and the societal order in which they thrive. In sum, despotism does not face democracy in opposition but is one of its avatars.

Tocqueville did not concern himself with the exact size of the administrative state, but with the rise of a bureaucracy and its centralizing tendencies, led by a professional class educated specifically to conduct the administration of the state. The concentration on economic life and the rise of privatism issued in a creeping administrative bureaucracy eager to perform the duties normally associated with local political participation. Tocqueville's warnings of administrative despotism are intended as much for his European readers as they are for his American ones, as his interpretation of European history is one of the growth of administrative centralization and the steady concentration of state power. While democratic peoples "introduced freedom into the sphere of politics,"[147] in the French case, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution* introduces the idea that the French Revolutionaries themselves betrayed the spirit of the French Revolution

[145] Cf. Paul A. Rahe, *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville and the Modern Prospect*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.
[146] Paul A. Rahe, *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift*, p. 273.
[147] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 694.

when they traded freedom for secularism under a highly centralized government structure.[148] Fatally, the idea of progress became housed within the institutions of the French administrative state and spearheaded by it: "The aims recommended by the reformers were many and varied but their methods were the same. They wanted to borrow the strength of central government and use it to smash everything and rebuild according to a new plan of their own conception. Such a task could, they thought, be accomplished only by the central power…These ideas did not stay on the pages of books; they filtered down to all minds, fused with men's customs, entered social habits and spread everywhere, even affecting everyday life."[149]

Tocqueville also experienced a more diffuse type of tyranny, much more alienating and ostracizing, even while less overt, and aimed at social and mental authority rather than the physical.[150] "The type of oppression which threatens democracies is different from anything there has ever been in the world before. Our contemporaries will find no prototype of it in their memories. I have myself vainly searched for a word which will exactly express the whole of the conception I have formed. Such old words as 'despotism' and 'tyranny' do not fit. The thing is new, and as I cannot find a word for it, I must try to define it."[151] "Tyranny of the majority," a phenomenon caused by inherent features of democratic government, engenders an environment in which people have little to no toleration for differing opinions or viewpoints; those holding minority opinions find themselves sneered at by the majority. "In America the majority has

[148] Following Cushing Strout's theory that America was merely a mirror for Tocqueville's France, Sheldon Wolin remarks that "Centralization was a topic that seems, at first glance, yet another example of Tocqueville discovering America only to find France." See Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville between Two Worlds: the Making of a Political and Theoretical Life*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001, p. 261.
[149] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, p. 77.
[150] Tocqueville's contention that ancient tyrannies aimed at the physical harm of the body, while modern tyrannies directly targeted the soul, presages Arendt's argument in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that 20th-century totalitarianism was unprecedented in this regard. Similar to Arendt, Tocqueville views the tyranny of the majority as keeping its subjects in "perpetual childhood" and preventing them from "thinking" and even "the cares of living," so much so that it even "robs each citizen of the proper use of his own faculties." See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 692.
[151] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 691.

enclosed thought within a formidable fence."[152] Majority opinion finds legitimation merely by virtue of number, as opposed to soundness of reason or virtue; Tocqueville discovers a type of horizontal authority which allows groups of like-minded individuals to find one another, coalesce, and augment their power, at the risk of destroying the capaciousness carved out for individual autonomy and freedom of judgment by American democracy. In a modern era when traditional forms of authority were going threadbare and the contexts in which a virtue like courage, associated with holding opinions and committing to causes, were being restricted, Tocqueville ominously observes that the authority of group opinions moves in to replace the frightening situation of unlimited independence in opinion formation.

Tocqueville demonstrates great concern for this phenomenon because it contributes to an overall feeling of homogeneity in society, and confers a dangerous level of moral authority onto the majority. The holder of a heterodox opinion "believes he has supporters; but he feels that he has them no more once he stands revealed to all, for those who condemn him express their views loudly, while those who think as he does, but without his courage, retreat into silence as if ashamed of having told the truth."[153] When the majority "irrevocably pronounce[s], everyone is silent, and friends and enemies alike seem to make for its bandwagon."[154] While free expression may be a reality in America, the tyranny of the majority makes it such that there is little independence of mind because not many citizens possess the ability or the will to resist its potency. Therefore, American democracy plays a kind of cruel double game: while legally permitted and protected, dissent generally receives harsh social treatment. Over time, the tyranny of the majority has been engrained in American society not only culturally, but even augmented legally by the mechanisms of democratic institutions, so much so that new

[152] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 255.
[153] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 255.
[154] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 254.

generations risk becoming anesthetized to its ramifications or unwilling to question its foundations.[155]

Inherent features of American democracy exacerbate the tyranny of the majority. Tocqueville was much less confident than the writers of the *Federalist* that the problems associated with majority faction had been solved via clever institutional designs counter-balancing the interests of opposing factions. The institutions which comprise the most significant bodies of influence over democratic man are all predicated on majoritarian rule. For instance, legislators are elected every two years, thus making them more attentive to and enslaved by majority opinion. In the executive branch, the president serves as a "passive instrument" to the majority. The police are merely surrogates of the majority, and even some judges are elected by a majority. Tocqueville concludes that "however iniquitous or unreasonable the measure which hurts you, you must submit."[156] The tyranny of the majority is an inescapable phenomenon. In the face of injustice, there is nowhere to turn.

For Tocqueville, even more noxious than the de jure power of the majority, however, is its social power.[157] In American democracy, a feeling of greater moral authority pervades the

---

[155] Against the tyranny of the majority, Tocqueville positions the power of free associations: "In our own day freedom of association has become a necessary guarantee against the tyranny of the majority" (*Democracy in America*, p. 192). In *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville portrays free associations as breaking the bonds of actual tyranny as well: in France, both before and after the Revolution, people relied on central authority instead of becoming economically or politically active themselves. By contrast, in the United States, political action permeated to even the lower strata of society. There, private individuals formed the basis of economic and political life, but in France, the center of political gravity resided in a chaotic bureaucracy answerable only to the monarchy.

[156] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 252.

[157] In Chapter 3, I demonstrate how Mill inherited his concern for the social power of the majority from Tocqueville and assumed the responsibility of answering this question sufficiently. With respect to the tyranny of the majority, Mill believes Tocqueville ascribes to democracy "several of the effects naturally arising from the mere progress of national prosperity, in the form in which that progress manifests itself in modern times" (John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. XVIII, ed. J.M. Robson, Toronto: Toronto UP, 1977, pp. 191-192). Therefore, commercial society bears some responsibility for the homogenizing of opinion. Tocqueville, however, is well aware of the fact that "the allure of wealth, heightened by the progress of industry, always threatens to dissuade individuals from devoting their time and energy to their responsibilities as citizens" (quoted in Jean-Claude Lamberti, *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989, p. 187). Against Mill's charge that Tocqueville misses the role of modern industrialism in his analysis of the tyranny of the majority, Tocqueville says that above all, the pernicious rise of the tyranny of the majority can be

senses of those who hold the majority opinion. "The moral authority of the majority is partly based on the notion that there is more enlightenment and wisdom in a numerous assembly than in a single man, and the number of the legislators is more important than how they are chosen."[158] Essentially, this is the democratic theory of the "wisdom of crowds" or a miracle of the aggregate—each man acting alone cannot make a reasoned judgment, but the body politic as a collective entity can somehow manage to arrive at a more reasoned conclusion. Like Mill, Tocqueville very quickly dismisses this logic and expresses a concern for the crushing of independence it causes, as crowds are sometimes liable to be swept up in the passions of the moment. Men are occasionally "carried away by an imperceptible current against which they have not the courage to struggle but to which they yield with regret."[159] The misplaced sense that "might is right" in the form of greater numbers curtails one's ability to dissent and even extends into one's social and private life as well. As Tocqueville bequeaths similar views to Mill about the role of genius in society (i.e., that it is a matter of moral courage, that true genius is rare, and that it is likely to be found in heterodox opinions rather than mainstream ones), he likewise sees a profound lack of genius in American society which has its origins in the social monopoly on opinion. "I know no country in which, speaking generally, there is less independence of mind and true freedom of discussion than in America."[160]

While it is true that American democracy brings those who are living in poverty to a level of dignity and decency that is commendable, it also imposes a limit to the intellectual curiosity and cultivation of society's true "eccentrics"—to employ a turn of phrase that could be equally

---

traced to democracy writ large. Tocqueville's analysis is multi-faceted in that it combines the withering of intermediary bodies and social bonds, the rapid end of aristocratic institutions and practices, *as well as* the growth of commercial industry.

[158] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 247.

[159] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 299.

[160] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 255.

applicable to John Stuart Mill, the subject of Chapter 3—who cease to exist for fear of retribution by the majority. The consequent "leveling effects" on democratic society, through the mechanism of the tyranny of the majority, is one area where courage—the virtue most associated with distinction, greatness, and countering the effects of leveling and mediocrity—is in greatest need and shortest supply. Tocqueville uncovers a dynamic later adopted as axiom by Mill: heterodox opinions are forced to integrate into the majority opinion, buttressing their arguments by stating propositions which flow from prepackaged and unquestioned assumptions or starting points. They shift to the majority for reasons of argumentative pragmatism, or an inability to endure the social hardships associated with minority opinions. Tocqueville even portrays the Founding Fathers as men who had "greatness all their own" but nevertheless felt the pressure to "[take] part in the intellectual movement of the age."[161]

The censure given to dissenting opinions in a democracy is harsher than that in an aristocracy. The distinction revolves around the lambasting of the body versus the soul. Violence accompanied ancient forms of tyranny, to be sure; however, the full extent of this power came down on only a few. Moreover, one may be physically punished for holding views contrary to the authorities, but one's soul was able to transcend this punishment and thereby live on according to Tocqueville. In a democracy, however, despotism is of the contrary variety: "The body is left free and the soul enslaved."[162] Rather than seek recourse to force and violence as in the despotisms of the past, the tyranny of the majority lacks recourse to physical force because it operates on the mind and soul. For Tocqueville, this is far worse than the physical torture endured by the dissenter in an aristocracy. Democracy and rights preserve one's livelihood in the form of the physical corpus, but as a body with an enslaved soul, "it is a life

[161] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 257.
[162] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 257.

worse than death."[163] Tyranny of the majority results in "losing the faculty of thinking, feeling, and acting for themselves, so that they will slowly fall below the level of humanity."[164] The spirit becomes crushed and the ability to aspire and fully cultivate oneself intellectually dies with it. Summarizing his thoughts on the matter, we find the following passage in Tocqueville, in which he outlines the associated vice of timidity engendered by the tyranny of the majority, concerns echoed roughly two decades later by Mill in *On Liberty*:

> It does not break men's will, but softens, bends, and guides it; it seldom enjoins, but often inhibits, action; it does not destroy anything, but prevents much being born; it is not at all tyrannical but it hinders, restrains, enervates, stifles, *and stultifies so much that in the end each nation is no more than a flock of timid and hardworking animals with the government as its shepherd.* I have always thought that this brand of orderly, gentle, peaceful slavery which I have just described could be combined, more easily than is generally supposed, with some of the external forms of freedom, and there is a possibility of its getting itself established even under the shadow of the sovereignty of the people…They [the people] console themselves for being under schoolmasters by thinking that they have chosen them themselves. Each individual lets them put the collar on, for he sees that it is not a person, or a class of persons, but society itself which holds the end of the chain.[165]

The tyranny of the majority and its effects—the leveling of intellectual curiosity and censure of dissident voices—engrain a psychological characteristic into democratic societies. The danger is that only the few with the political courage to dissent from the majority opinion can feel and see the effects of this tyranny. That democratic courage is often nowhere to be found in the fight against majority opinion is indicative of how its focus on material comfort deriving from commercial activity may hinder its applicability in combating political cowardice.

This leads to a psychological acceptance that is passed down generationally. The disadvantages of these effects are crippling. Minority opinions and people of "taste" (to use Tocqueville's phrase) are driven to the fringe, ostracized, and homogenized into the body politic

[163] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 257.
[164] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 694.
[165] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 692-693.

of society. Like Mill, Tocqueville observes that culture and opinion that does not conform to the prevailing course, tendency, or trend are often driven from sight, debate, and thought. This makes American society particularly susceptible to stagnation and a widespread hate for ideas and theoretical knowledge in place of practical knowledge. Tocqueville is profoundly concerned with finding some sort of self-correcting mechanism to remedy this phenomenon, for fear of the slippery slope effect he envisioned.

VII. Conclusion

Tocqueville's work on the modern age of equality and democracy and its correlative effects draws our attention to the fate of pre-modern elements of society, such as traditional sources of authority and virtue, in this new age. One of the most notable changes for Tocqueville is the place of courage in modern commercial societies. He observes that in eighteenth century America, courage was a virtue whose association with wild passions and employment in martial contexts had been severed by the practice of bourgeois risk-taking nearly exclusively in the economic realm. Although occasionally democratic courage manifested itself in an explorative spirit, as in the conquest of the American West—this, too, for the eventual exploitation of resources leading to material comforts—Tocqueville presents the American practice of courage as that of the risk-taking entrepreneur, achieving his legacy in his workshop or factory, rather than on the battlefield or in the political arena. The loss of pre-modern and aristocratic elements of society in the age of equality meant that the application of courage was limited to the one context in which Americans countenanced inequality: wealth acquisition.

For Tocqueville, "democratic courage"—the type of courage practiced by the new democratic man of the modern age—and the rise of a commercial society have links to several negative phenomena: isolation from one's fellows; powerlessness and an inability to act; a rise in

centralized administration; and a willingness to submit to any government providing order and security of one's property. These phenomena give rise to contradictory desires within American democracy: a desire to be led, but also a wish to remain free. But even more important than Tocqueville's personal distaste for the consequences of a world of bourgeois acquisition were the key forces it brought forth that could transform democracy into novel forms of despotism. In the long run, democracies whose citizens possess this kind of vulgar utilitarian outlook run the grave risk of exchanging their political freedoms for the comfortable securities of bourgeois life. Could it be that democratic courage was incompatible with a robust participatory democracy? Although it did not necessarily lead to a paucity of "honest men," Tocqueville says the acquisitive nature of democratic courage in bourgeois society did contribute to a rise of "poor citizens."[166]

Tocqueville notes that Americans have armed themselves against the most baleful aspects of democratic courage by promoting an enlightened sense of self-interest. "Self-interest properly understood" does not demand the level of obligation and other-centric calculation of pre-modern conceptions of courage, nor is it a recipe for human greatness and the pursuit of glory, but rather a minimum baseline required to obviate some of the worst consequences associated with the pursuit of self-interest in bourgeois society. Americans practice self-interest properly understood very well, but the effects would be devastating if they ceased to do so. Ultimately, the new context of democratic courage which Tocqueville highlights risks citizen's isolation and political impotence, and eventually administrative centralization and despotism. Despite American strategies for obviating the negative impacts related to democratic courage in an age of equality and democracy, only a pure love of liberty can prevent against citizen's isolation and political impotence, and eventually administrative centralization and despotism.

[166] Quoted in Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny*, p. 212.

> Nor do I believe that the true love of liberty was ever born of the simple vision of material benefits it makes available, for this vision is often hidden from view. It is indeed true that, in the long term, freedom always brings with it, to those who are skilled enough to keep hold of it, personal comfort, wellbeing and often great wealth. But there are times when freedom briefly disturbs the enjoyment of such blessings; there are others when despotism alone can guarantee a fleeting exploitation of them. Men who value only those material advantages from freedom have never kept it long. What has tied the hearts of certain men to freedom throughout all history has been its own attractions, its intrinsic charm quite separate from its material advantages…Do not ask me to analyze this lofty desire; it has to be experienced. It enters of itself into those great hearts which God has prepared to receive it. It fills and impassions them. We have to abandon any attempt to enlighten those second-rate souls who have never felt it.[167]

Tocqueville's concern for the fate of traditional authority, pre-modern concepts, and aristocratic culture in the modern age presages some of the concerns dealt with in the work of both Mill and Arendt. The breakdown of traditional communal relationships, the isolation of modern man, and the rise of homogeneous society can be seen in Mill's and Arendt's fears of a mass society which swallows the opinions of individuals and destroys autonomy, encourages conformism, curtails individual greatness, and serves as a precondition for institutional decay and the introduction of illiberalism (or even outright despotism). While "Tocqueville may not have foreseen the murderous nature of twentieth-century fascism, some authors such as Hannah Arendt seem to agree that Tocqueville outlined the underlying prerequisites of totalitarianism."[168]

Therefore, Tocqueville's project of assessing modernity and its evolving standards is one whose aims and driving questions become inherited by Mill, quite explicitly in his works and enthusiastic reviews of Tocqueville's books, and later by Arendt, less explicitly but still noticeably in her work on the American Revolution and advocacy for the reinvigoration of local

---

[167] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, pp. 167-168.

[168] Roger Boesche, "Why Could Tocqueville Predict So Well?," Political Theory 11 (1983): 99. Tocqueville's comments on the horrors of the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte serve to dispel the theory that he concerned himself with so-called "soft despotism" only, leaving Arendt to discover "hard despotism" one century later. Tocqueville's horror at the treatment of African slaves and the Native Americans also called his attention to "hard" forms of despotism extant in America.

government as a solution to the problems of modernity. However, the solutions to the challenge of modernity proffered by Mill and Arendt could not be more different: peculiarly, Mill lives fully into the modern age, eschewing any sort of clinging to the old traditions, dogmas, and forms of authority of the past, including the new contexts outlined by Tocqueville for the virtue of courage, as a practice inhibiting the autonomy of individual choice and societal progress, while the latter advocates for an intentional act of recovery of traditional forms of authority, explicitly the virtue of courage, as a supplement to the shortcomings of modernity. These arguments occupy the contents of Chapter III and Chapter IV of this thesis, respectively.

Chapter 3

"Many-sidedness:" John Stuart Mill and the (Underdeveloped) Courage of Liberal Individuality

"The grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity."
—Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Spheres and Duties of Government*[1]

I. Introduction

In Chapter 2, we saw how Tocqueville discovered the existence of courage in American democracy in the robust commercial sector, absorbing the virtue from its pre-modern context into the more peaceful and predictable economic realm. The consequences associated with the pursuit of democratic courage include self-interestedness contributing to profound political apathy and privatism, loss of independence and tyranny of the majority over political and social opinion, and the risk of an activist government transforming into despotism of administrative centralization. The emphasis of Chapter 3 is on demonstrating Mill's deep concern for character and its development within the framework of his liberal political commitments, illuminating how many of Mill's driving concerns he inherits from Tocqueville and his project, and showing how Mill evades a discussion of the virtue of courage. Nevertheless, courage is particularly important to Mill's conception of political and social life and is essential to Mill's idea of liberal character, individuality, and to the advancement of public debate. It is an intrinsic part of Mill's goal of developing a character capable of self-examination, and is also required if citizens are to live in liberal, pluralist communities which strongly challenge their convictions and modes of living and may occasionally even cause them harm. In Mill's thought, it is difficult to see how societies can be liberal and progressive or individuals free without possessing and practicing the virtue of

[1] Quoted in John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991, p. 3.

courage. Courage remains frustratingly underdeveloped and curiously undermentioned in Mill's works, however, because of his desire to reduce the role of tradition and received opinions in citizen's character formation, as well as his study of ethology, a science of character formation which sought to enforce the independence of character formation.

Insofar as Mill is claimed as a key figure in the history and development of liberal political thought, we must have a more nuanced view of what his liberalism entails and requires, and one way to do that is to look at Mill's concern for virtue in political and social life. Mill's answer in *On Liberty* is that character is essential to maintaining liberal commitments, and hence, given Mill's belief in these commitments as the best means for the full development of human character (what will be introduced later, following Jeremy Waldron, as "second degree perfectionism"), character also shares an important connection with what it means to live well, which encompasses the development of one's higher, deliberative capacities and the implementation of one's own life plan. What makes Mill so worthy of our attention is his sincere belief—one shared with Tocqueville, as we saw in the last chapter—that the success or failure of a nation's political institutions depends on the character of the population which has to operate and maintain them. "If we ask ourselves on what causes and conditions good government in all its senses…depends, we find that the principal of them, the one which transcends all others, is the qualities of the human beings composing the society over which the government is exercised."[2] Unlike Tocqueville, however, for a thinker who frets so much about shedding the yoke of social opinion and living authentically in the light of one's convictions, holding and advancing beliefs passionately, and challenging the beliefs of others with equal vigor, courage—as we saw in Chapter 1, the virtue most closely associated with assessing and overcoming various kinds of risks—remains notably absent and underdeveloped in Mill's

[2] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 225.

thought. Whereas Tocqueville and Arendt fear the loss of traditional sources of authority within modernity, and the potential for man to float anchorlessly in a new world, *Mill embraces the modern spirit and seeks to define these sources of authority anew*—away from traditional founts of authority like religion and received dogma, and towards the individual and his rational faculties. Lastly, and more ironically, on the biographical level, the employment of courage is the linchpin of Mill's own intellectual transformation in the *Autobiography* from an organ of his father's pedagogy to his own independence of being. If Mill's teachings on character reflect his own character development in any way, his elision of courage is all the more striking.

This chapter therefore reads Mill so as to recognize the importance of courage in his works, despite its limited textual treatment. It also criticizes him for his failure to recognize its importance in his philosophy and to develop a stronger definition of it. Attention to the role played by courage in Mill's political philosophy also has the additional advantage of challenging the conventional exegesis of his works. Mill's well-known commitments to individual liberty and freedom of thought and speech, and his concern for the ills of social tyranny have given rise to a certain type of standard interpretation. In the recollection of Isaiah Berlin, Mill's *On Liberty* "is still the clearest, most candid, persuasive, and moving exposition of the point of view of those who desire an open and tolerant society."[3] In the words of Bernard Semmel, "He remains the almost unchallenged patron of Anglo-American liberalism,"[4] and, addressing *On Liberty* specifically, Alan Ryan believes "that it is a liberal manifesto is clear beyond doubt."[5] By categorically denying paternalistic and moralistic restrictions on liberty (with few notable exceptions) in favor of what he deems "one very simple principle" as the sole legitimate basis for

[3] Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, Ed. Henry Hardy, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002, p. 246.
[4] Bernard Semmel, *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue*, New Have: Yale UP, 1984, p. 3.
[5] Alan Ryan, "Mill in a Liberal Landscape," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, Ed. John Skorupski, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, p. 497.

interference in individual liberty (i.e., the Harm Principle), often the interpretive focus of Mill's political philosophy is given to his passionate plea for negative liberty and the liberty of the individual against state- and societal coercion. A focus on courage draws us closer to the more under-addressed, sometimes perfectionist elements of Mill's political philosophy, which exist alongside—and in some cases help to uphold—his classic case for individual liberty.

The chapter has three broad objectives. The first concerns itself with proving Mill's liberalism is dedicated to the pursuit of character development, and theorizing a role for human autonomy in determining our own characters. "Mill's concern with self-development and moral progress is a strand in his philosophy to which almost everything else is subordinate."[6] This position makes sense because the maximum amount of personal liberty is to be permitted in Mill's political philosophy, on account of its positive consequences, and citizens must be prepared for liberty with self-discipline and positive character traits. Rather than following Bentham and James Mill in propounding a utilitarianism which seeks individual happiness and the improvement primarily of man's material conditions, Mill sides with those who speak of virtue and truth as guiding values for leading one's life and the creation of political and social systems.[7] Bentham's felicific calculus was the core of a system that stressed the importance of human well-being, defined in terms of securing as much pleasure and as little pain as possible. For Bentham, nature places us under two sovereigns, pleasure and pain, which, as an anthropological statement, helps describe and explain human behavior, and morally speaking, also determine what we *ought* to do. Mill's concern for character and his distinction between

[6] Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*, 2nd ed., London: MacMillan Press, 1987, p. 255.
[7] Mill thought Bentham neglected character in his ethics, particularly in the chapters on motives and dispositions in *An Introduction to the Principles and Morals of Legislation*, cf. Chapter X and Chapter XI in Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles and Morals of Legislation*, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007.

higher and lower pleasures within utilitarianism inserted quality into a debate previously focused largely on quantity, opening up a space for individual self-development.

The best way to marshal evidence of Mill's profound concern for human character is through his specific "science of the formation of character," which he calls ethology.[8] At its most basic level, ethology is a science which aggregates knowledge gained in the fields of both psychology and sociology to predict moral decision-making, as well as to better understand the multifaceted nature of character formation in an effort to improve moral education. Beyond its picayune treatment in *A* System of *Logic*, Mill neglected a formal treatise on the subject. He provides us with only a broad outline of such a science in the *Logic*. Even if "the most effectual mode of showing how the sciences of Ethics and Politics may be constructed would be to construct them," Mill does not do so, focusing instead on the more modest aim of sketching a broad outline of ethology and clearing away logical and semantic confusions. After all, notes Mill, Bacon's work demonstrates that venturing into a topic is not always as important as providing the skeletal framework for that eventual inquiry—even if one is not ultimately prepared to venture into the inquiry oneself.[9]

Rather than acknowledging Mill's own modest aims in expounding the science of ethology, scholarly opinion, as we shall see, is critical in its consensus that Mill's ethology was not only an undeveloped and ephemeral thought, but also a failure. However, the second objective of the chapter addresses this criticism by transitioning to an analysis of Mill's principal works and highlighting the importance of Mill's emphasis on character. In the end, Mill leaves us with several blueprints of ethological study, taking the form of a very detailed character sketch of a man with whom he is intimately familiar (*Autobiography*), the reform of fully half

[8] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic: Racionative and Inductive*. Vol. II. 3rd Ed. London: John W. Parker, 1851, p. 432.
[9] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p. 403.

the human population and character writ large (*The Subjection of Women*), and the formation of political practices and institutions best-oriented towards developing liberal character (*On Liberty* and *Considerations on Representative Government*). Mill's well-known mental crisis—owing to his constant concern that, like Shelley's Frankenstein, he was nothing more than a "parroter" of what he had learned from his father, "a 'made' or manufactured man, having had a certain impress of opinion stamped on me which I could only reproduce"—and his subsequent remolding, provides us with a deeper understanding of his science of character formation.[10] The putatively "manufactured man" can revolt against his manufacturer(s), the automaton may become autonomous through assiduous effort and critical reflection. A deformed character is not fixed forever, but may be transformed and made whole again by mustering courage. The crux of Mill's *Autobiography* is an attempt to dispel any hint that the social, intellectual, and institutional forces around him curtailed his liberty in pursuit of his own character. In arguing against the so-called "abandonment thesis" of Mill's ethology, Terence Ball goes so far as to say that the *Autobiography* "can be read as—and arguably is intended to be—an ethological tale."[11] Thus, the chapter's second objective builds on Ball's thesis by reading not only the *Autobiography*, but many of Mill's major works as conscious applications of his concern for character and his belief in ethology, the science of character formation. Reading Mill in this manner accords with his own idea of the value of reading another man's work: to discover who, "above all, the man" is.[12]

After setting out Mill's ethological science, rejecting the abandonment thesis, and demonstrating the importance of character to Mill's political philosophy, the third objective of

[10] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 126.
[11] Terence Ball, "The Formation of Character," p. 37.
[12] Quoted in Janice Carlisle, *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991, p. 220. She continues, "Writing, in Mill's thought, came to stand not only as a figure for character, but also as an explanation of the relation between the individual and his or her circumstances" (Carlisle, 3).

the chapter is to demonstrate that courage is the element of character most operative in Millian social and political institutions. Yet, Mill lacks a systematic treatment of courage as a concept and barely mentions the virtue at all, even as it is clear that courage is what Millian citizens must possess in order to flourish. The word "courage" appears less than a dozen times in Mill's collected works. I contend, therefore, that there is an important difference between the label and the concept; Mill infrequently uses the label of courage, but an unmistakably recognizable yet unacknowledged concept of courage pervades Mill's argument for the possession of individuality and autonomous self-fulfillment against a general backdrop of social and political conformity by which individuals come to "like in groups." Liberal individuality exists insofar as one's character is genuinely one's own, fashioned by making choices in accordance with one's own judgments and inclinations, and through actively reflecting on how one comports oneself in relation to a plurality of other modes of being (as opposed to discovering a deep, fixed individuality laying statically within the self). It consists of the courage to live at variance with the prevailing opinions of society because the individual has assessed that the social and political risks merit the reward—and if this offends those in the majority, so much the worse for those who are so offended. By contrast, one who lacks liberal individuality does not have character of one's own insofar as one's habits and actions have exhibited an "ape-like imitation" and have been accepted blindly and uncritically from the practices of others, bequeathed from long-dead ancestors, dictated by others, or otherwise consist of undigested opinion.[13] Individuality really is the *sine qua non* helping us to avoid a mechanical existence. The process of "individualizing" such choices demonstrates our capacity for autonomy—what scholars have variously called Mill's "art of life"[14] and the "art of character"[15]—which requires the constant assessment of

[13] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 65.
[14] Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*, 1987.

various kinds of threats and responding to them appropriately so that we may experience choice in a constantly-changing and uncertain world as an adventure and not a personal ordeal.

In tackling the third objective, the chapter demonstrates Mill's reliance upon courage by venturing into the business of Millian character in practice. That is, it is easiest to parse out the precise role of courage by examining actual liberal practices as constructed by Mill, such as his conception of free thought and free speech, and its nexus to the advancement of truth. It is also important to examine these practices because Mill, while opposed to traditional paternalistic perfectionism, upholds what has been labeled, following Jeremy Waldron, as "second degree perfectionism."[16] Second degree perfectionism refers to Mill's commitment to the development of character as an appropriate objective of the liberal state—informed of course by his science of ethology—and the method of *how* individuals develop their character (shaping the social environment in which they do so), while also upholding a plurality of possible outcomes for self-actualization. That is, Mill's perfectionism ignores neutrality in procedure but maintains neutrality in outcomes. In *On Liberty*, Mill offers up his preferred method of liberal character development—impassioned exchange of ideas through well-constructed political and social institutions, at the cost of the periodic "moral distress" or "mere offense" occasioned by it. Struggle and contention are good instrumental means for robust intellectual life and sound thought, and essential and continuing aspects of it as well. The great question of the text is whether one can enlarge a sphere of individual liberty—by suspending undue political and social authority to intervene in individual affairs through the formulation of a Harm Principle—while simultaneously building a regime of character and human progress. What is most interesting from the perspective of this question, then, is not our exact definition of harm or when harm is

[15] Janice Carlisle, *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*, Athens, GA: University of Georgia P, 1991.
[16] Jeremy Waldron, Michaelmas 2013 Lectures, Week II.

sufficient grounds for intervention or in what manner such intervention ought to occur—questions that have occupied the minds of political philosophers since the inception of *On Liberty*—but when harm is readily admitted, sometimes unequivocally, and yet persists in the overriding interest of developing liberal individuality. It is often in these moments, when harm to others is perceptible and occasionally lacking their consent, where Mill relies on an unacknowledged virtue of courage.

It makes good sense that a concept like courage, with its pre-modern provenance (as we saw in Chapter 1), receives scant treatment throughout Mill's political philosophy, as *On Liberty* concerns itself with the necessary conditions for progress and avoiding stagnation in the age of increasing equality, where stagnation is presented in the form of the despotism of custom, social tyranny, conformity, and the rise of mass public opinion. "If nothing else, *On Liberty* is a vehement refutation of intellectual passivity and the 'Calvinistic' ethos of obedience to regnant norms and ideas."[17] It is my contention that this is precisely what makes the contrast between Tocqueville and Mill so worthwhile: while the last chapter demonstrated that Tocqueville seeks to rescue familiar aristocratic concepts like courage from an age of equality in order to supplement modernity—even locating a new type of courage within a the radically new political and social landscape—Mill, who wholeheartedly shares the belief that equality is ascendant as the dominant political and social principle, appears to entirely abandon the language of courage in his concerted effort to part ways with "dogmatic" practices of the past. I argue that Mill is more circumspect about the role of courage and its analogues in his political philosophy because he does not want to advocate for the maintenance of certain elements of the aristocratic worldview in the new democratic age; in responding to Tocqueville, whose *Democracy in America* had a profound impact on his thought, and in order to remain consistent with his idea of

[17] Dana Villa, *Public Freedom*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008, pp. 135-136.

individuality, Mill desires a more radical break from the politics of the past and a rejection of the idea that we need to identify elements of a romanticized, even Medieval, pre-modern past to help us maintain good political institutions in the modern world. The danger of Europe becoming an inert or stationary society when it was primed for a new period of despotism (of public opinion) was too high for citizens to be chained to obsolescent practices and concepts of traditional belief systems.

II. The Concern for Character

Mill's *System of Logic* argues that all knowledge has its provenance in experience rather than intuition. From this point, he argues for a science of character formation and envisions ethology as linking individual, micro-laws of psychology ("laws of the mind") with societal, macro-level laws of sociology and other social sciences. Psychology investigates how and why the phenomena of the mind—thoughts, emotions, volitions, even sentiments—arise and how they connect to one another, while sociology does the same on the societal, macro-level. In a sign of its ambition, Mill intends ethology to have individual as well as national scope, implying that societies can reform themselves by establishing liberty to live and practice diverse lifestyles. Proceeding deductively, Mill's ethology observes the circumstances in which certain character traits tend to emerge, and then utilizes these approximations and fits them to known psychological laws to derive "the kind of character produced in conformity to those general laws, by any set of circumstances, physical and moral."[18] Ethology has the power to explain psychological and acquired character traits not so amenable to simple causal explanation; it finds

[18] Mill says that in ethological reasoning, proceeding oppositely through induction is unfeasible given the near impossibility of the first step in the process—"of ascertaining what actually is the character of the individual, in each particular case that we examine." Cf. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, Vol. II., 3rd Ed., London: John W. Parker, 1851, p. 438. Mill's longtime correspondent, Thomas Carlyle, believes the opposite: character is formed by the self only, revealing a unique and essential nature for each person largely independent of circumstances. The "era" or historical context does not produce the man, but the man must find a way to elevate and overcome the limitations history imposes on him.

its birth in Mill's belief in the possibility and promise of a particular conception of human science, coupled with his choice methodology of empiricism brought to bear on subjects previously excluded from the "logical processes" of its method.[19]

That Mill sees character and virtue as the proper subject of science, rather than falling within the traditional remit of philosophy or even theology, is important given his envisioned relationship of the sciences and the arts working together harmoniously to reform social and political institutions.[20] In the overall scheme of rational Millian social reform, a practitioner of an art formulates the end (for science is acting out of place if it devises ends), then science uses its knowledge of the laws of social and moral change to map out a pathway to that end (for arts never stand on their own but always necessitate scientific knowledge), and once again it remains for the practitioner to implement that strategy. Mill's ethology is a "science" insofar as it refers to a disciplined method or program for pursuing knowledge; it is a science "in the only proper sense of the term, that is, inquiries into the course of nature."[21] It shares with many theories of its time the desire to leverage insights into "universal laws of nature" made in various fields of social science for the purposes of the arts of moral philosophy and education. That character is thus a proper scientific study for Mill means that ethology plays an important role in Mill's ideas on political and social life, and even offers the liberationist conclusion that the science of

[19] Mill's emphasis on individual circumstance not only makes his science of ethology more comprehensive and plausible, but potentially more predictive, too. It means Mill is not wholly or even largely guilty of what Karl Popper derides as "psychologism" (despite Popper's assertions otherwise), which is the re-interpretation of the social sciences as a science of historical prediction based on universal, pre-social laws of human behavior and motivation. Essentially, "psychologism" is a reduction (and also, derivation) of sociology to (or from) psychology. Cf. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London; Routledge, 2002, Chapter IV.

[20] As the means to achieve the ends of a particular art are sciences, the sciences are subject to constant revision. That is, the art itself may change with the process of scientific discovery, but never ceases to determine the major premise: the philosophical valuation of the given end to be pursued.

[21] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p. 516. Mill's shares the belief in the possibility of a scientific study of virtue and character with other social thinkers of his period. For instance, Durkheim says, "There is no ineluctable reason for supposing that this last barrier [i.e., that of creating a science of ethology], which people still try to oppose to the progress of reason, is more insurmountable than the others." Cf. Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education*, Trans. Everett K. Wilson and Herman Schnurer, London: Free Press, 1961, p. 5.

ethology may help to liberate individual characters and character formation from the pernicious influence of traditional dogmas and undigested opinions.

Unsurprisingly, then, Mill's one caveat regarding the scientific nature of ethology involves our free will. Scientific inquiries aim to discover law-like behavior, implying what he calls the "doctrine of Philosophical Necessity," which holds human volitions and actions to be necessary and inevitable. Philosophical Necessity, when focused on human beings and not natural phenomena, fails to account properly for our free will, even if free will itself is not inconsistent with the prediction of human behavior.[22] Imagine, for example, someone who has intimate familiarity with us; the fact that s/he may predict our behavior does not make us "less free," but it does show that knowledge of circumstances and character can lead occasionally to accurate predictions.[23] "We may be free," declares Mill, "and yet another may have reason to be perfectly certain what use we shall make of our freedom."[24] Though perhaps obvious to us, this caveat is crucial because it separates Mill from several schools of social thought in his time, particularly as it pertains to the development of character, and indicates his disdain for the influence of received opinion and authority on character formation.

The so-called "necessarian" asserts a stronger tie between human volition and its causes than warranted, flirting with outright determinism in the formation of character. Prominent theoreticians of character formation, such as the welsh social reformer and founder of the cooperative movement, Robert Owen, contend that action follows from character and character

[22] Nicholas Capaldi argues that ethology remained undeveloped *precisely because* it was at odds with the radical type of liberty and free will Mill came to espouse in *On Liberty*, though Capaldi notably fails to expound what he means by "free will." Cf. Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 175-178.

[23] Mill argues further: if free will is consistent with the divine, as per contemporaneous metaphysicians, then surely it is consistent with other forms of knowledge as well. For what it is worth, most philosophers in the tradition of Hobbes, Locke, and Mill upheld that determinism in philosophy was compatible with individual liberty; Kant, too, also thought prediction was consonant with free will, even as the latter was essential to our character choices.

[24] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, pp. 406-407.

from received education, and that this combination is what *invariably* produces human action. In Owen's *New View of Society: or, Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character,* he holds that the character of man is, "without a single exception, always formed for him and not by him; that it may be, and is chiefly, created by his predecessors" and that therefore man "never did, nor is it possible he ever can, form his own character."[25] Through his own experiments, Owen came to believe children's minds were *tabulae rasae* of a "plastic nature," oriented towards their formation by parents and teachers. They are, "without exception, passive agents, or wonderfully contrived compounds, which…may be formed collectively into any human character."[26] Rational minds, servile minds, *even entire nations*—all are "durable impressions," products of a specific type of technocratic upbringing. Although not a contemporary of Robert Owen's, James Mill echoes many of his sentiments on character formation: "as soon as the infant, *or rather the embryo*, begins to feel, the character begins to be formed; and that the habits, which are then contracted, are the most pervading and operative of all."[27] While we may sense hyperbole in the elder Mill, the general point is that the leading influences of a child's mind are the impressions made upon him in his infancy, "in such a manner, decidedly, as to present a good or bad subject for all future means of cultivation."[28] Our wishing that our character were formed differently is feckless, since we have no power whatsoever to alter it, having been passive recipients of the education that produced it, and solidified it in us, around the age of two. Rather unfortunately, by the time we can contemplate

[25] Robert Owen, *A New View of Society: or, Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character*, London: Richard Taylor and Co., 1813, p. 91. Rather than accepting the classist view that the character of man is a product of one's station at birth, Owen thinks character is malleable from birth into the early years, which ultimately gives rise to his utopic desires. Even if man's character remains fixed after the age of two, insofar as the educator can inculcate proper character in the young child, the utopic possibility still exists that previously downtrodden, excluded, and otherwise poor classes of people may raise children of moral rectitude.
[26] Robert Owen, *A New View of Society*, p. 26.
[27] James Mill, *Political Writings*, p. 176, emphasis mine.
[28] James Mill, *Political Writings*, p. 175.

the determining circumstances of our character formation, they have passed already.[29] No doubt, these are the kinds of statements regarding character formation that prime Mill to reject bequeathed wisdom and define character as the ability to see past it.

John Stuart Mill objects to the inevitability of the initial educational imprint, even as he shares the end goal with his father and Robert Owen of producing citizens of upstanding character.[30] Although Mill resisted this interpretation of the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, the existence of his science of ethology which informs and shapes character does not *ipso facto* imply Mill thinks that reforming one's character is an easy task.[31] To understand the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity properly is to recognize that differences in human character, once made, are not to be treated as innate or indelible impressions, but a product of both circumstances and human volition, the latter of which can control circumstance and thereby bring character formation under the purview of human agency. "To the Owenite, then, one's character appeared as a straightjacket constraining one's actions; to Mill it was a suit, to be altered and reshaped should it not fit what we wanted to look like."[32] "The ability to choose one's own character," as opposed to having man's character chosen for him, was "practically an obsession" for Mill.[33] As Mill's protégé Alexander Bain says, Mill "was all his life possessed of the idea that differences

---

[29] Leszek Kołakowski notes sardonically that it appears as though Owen "breaks free," *deus ex machina*, from his youthful character and "shows others the way to social reform" in the form of a utopian socialism, despite being himself "at the mercy of inherited beliefs and prejudices" about certain aspects of the industrial revolution. Cf. Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. 1, Trans. P.S. Falla, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005, p. 162.

[30] Notably, Mill's disagreement with Owen is circumscribed to character formation. In fact, Mill was receptive to some of Owen's more utopian visions of a socialist society in his writings on political economy, his idea for familial reform, and the destruction of English hereditary property rights. Cf. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 133-137, 175-176 and Book IV of *Principles of Political Economy: and Chapters on Socialism*, Ed. Jonathan Riley, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

[31] Mill also rejects the wide-ranging policy implications stemming from Philosophical Necessity improperly understood. One such example is the Owenites' rejection of society's right to inflict punishment or blame on those who had committed crimes. They saw no justice in punishing something one could not help.

[32] Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*, p. 106.

[33] Alan Ryan, "Two Concepts of Politics & Democracy," in *Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought*, Ed. Martin Fleisher, London: Croom Helm, 1973, p. 103.

of character, individual and national, were due to accidents and circumstances that might possibly be, in part, controlled."[34] That we have no power to alter our character and that we have no power to alter our character unless we have the desire to do so are obviously two very different arguments which have implications for Mill's political philosophy, namely, that politics is educative and every political interlocutor represents a potential teacher.[35] Interestingly, Tocqueville writes in a letter to Mill regarding Philosophical Necessity properly understood that he seems to be "opening a neutral terrain" or a *via media* between philosophical liberty and necessity.[36] The doctrine of Philosophical Necessity properly understood can be formulated thus: "that we have real power over the formation of our own character; that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing."[37] He continues in another context, "We are exactly as capable of making our own character, *if we will*, as others are of making it for us," he declares.[38]

Scholarly consensus about the possibility of Mill's ethology appears to be that he never made any significant progress towards developing his theory further. Alexander Bain suggests that "it never came to anything; and he seems shortly to have dropped thinking of it."[39] Mill apparently "regretted all his life that he had not been able to contribute more to its progress."[40] A modern critic asserts that "Mill enthusiastically advocates ethology but never really begins to

[34] Alexander Bain, *John Stuart Mill, A Criticism: with Personal Recollections*, London: Longmans Green & Co., 1882, p. 79.
[35] In a way, Mill's ethology attempts to bridge the divide between necessarians and those philosophers who see man as a radically free, "unencumbered self," to borrow Sandel's phrase. Cf. Michael J. Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory* 12 (1984): 81-96.
[36] Quoted in Bernard Semmel, *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue*, p. 46. For an argument against Mill's successful reconciliation of free will and determinism, cf. Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*, chapter VII.
[37] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 135.
[38] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p. 410.
[39] Alexander Bain, *John Stuart Mill, A Criticism*, p. 78.
[40] Alan Ryan, *John Stuart Mill*, London: Routledge, 1974, p. 88.

construct even the rudiments of such a science."[41] Mill outlines ethology in Book VI of the *Logic*, leaving the rest for another day—"a day which in fact never came."[42] Along similar lines, "Mill's own failure to contribute to this science was a source of disappointment and embarrassment to him," comments another.[43] It is his "forgotten,"[44] "abandoned,"[45] even "abortive"[46] science—the "greatest book Mill never wrote."[47] Mill's *Autobiography*, however, which is centrally about character formation, seeks to prove with his own life the logical proposition that if others are capable of placing us under the influence of certain circumstances, likewise we may place ourselves under the influence of other, possibly conflicting or even diametrically opposed, circumstances.[48]

Mill wrestles with the consequences of his father's influence on his early education, in a way that examines the unique circumstances which determined the course of his character formation (i.e., self-ethology). James Mill gave his son, in the words of the recipient, "an education which was unusual and remarkable," on the fear that nothing could be more fatal than the error of those who "relax in the vigilance of education"[49]—all while the elder Mill convinced his son that his considerable achievements were not the product of his own merit, but the

---

[41] Dennis Thompson, *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976, p. 152.
[42] Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand*, London: Atlantic, 2008, p. 170.
[43] John Gray, *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, London: Routledge, 1983, p. 83.
[44] Nicholas Capaldi, "Mill's Forgotten Science of Ethology," *Social Theory and Practice* 2 (1973): 409-420.
[45] Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, pp. 137, 177.
[46] John M. Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind: the Social and Political Thought of John Stuart Mill*, Toronto: University of Toronto P, 1968, p. 141; refer also to John M. Robson, "Civilization and Culture as Moral Concepts" in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, Ed. John Skorupski, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, pp. 338-371 and to Lewis Feuer, "John Stuart Mill as a Sociologist: The Unwritten Ethology," in *James and John Stuart Mill: Papers of the Centenary Conference*, Eds. John M. Robson and Michael Laine, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976, pp. 86-110.
[47] Quoted in Terence Ball, "The Formation of Character: Mill's 'Ethology' Reconsidered," *Polity* 33 (2000): 27.
[48] Although the necessarian's conception of character may seem quite deterministic to the modern reader, it finds a place in some of the finest minds of the twentieth century writing on the subject of education, virtue, and character formation. Consider, for instance, Émile Durkheim: by elementary school, if the foundations of morality "have not been laid, they never will be. From this point on, all one can do is to complete the job already begun, refining sensibilities and giving them some intellectual content, i.e., informing them increasingly with intelligence." Cf. Émile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, p. 18.
[49] James Mill, *Political Writings*, p. 160.

peculiar advantage and good fortune of his lot.[50] Mill reports learning Greek at the age of three, and Latin by the age of eight.[51] The elder Mill was fond of checking his son's progress via the Socratic Method, inculcating in him the importance of dialogue from a young age, the importance of which can be seen in Mill's political philosophy when we examine *On Liberty*. James Mill stressed above all the utility of all the works studied by his eldest child and laid the theoretical foundations for his acceptance of Benthamite utilitarianism; J.S. Mill relays his reaction upon reading Bentham at a later stage of life as being completely taken by his theories, convinced Benthamite utilitarianism had opened up new and profound moral domains, and that Bentham had taken them to the peak of that summit. Such a favorable reaction to Bentham had been woven into Mill by his father's pedagogy.

Impressive as Mill's early educational achievements were, his father's impositions led to Mill's losing interest in many of the things that previously excited him; eventually, it contributed to his well-known mental crisis, which was both emotional *and* intellectual. Mill's "depression" was not exactly clinical in a modern psychiatric parlance, but rather a lack of confidence resulting from a profound skepticism of the tenets of his intellectual inheritance, and possibly even the idea that he must have an intellectual inheritance at all. Bentham's scheme for providing universal happiness was no longer providing for his; the very idea that had been so dynamic in its appeal lost its edge in 1826, and Mill began to question how he could be sure utilitarianism would bring anyone felicity or a political education. In failing to provide for the happiness of one of its earliest adherents, a gap emerged between public and private interest, and for Mill, utilitarianism needed the addition of a private morality founded upon self-

[50] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 25.
[51] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 27-28.

development.[52] A rational guide to our relations with others focused on the external consequences of action, Benthamite utilitarianism did not go far enough for Mill in advocating the cultivation of individual virtue. It has little to say, for instance, about the inspiration and conditions for self-development because its emphasis on the consequences of action neglects the action's bearing on the moral being of the agent. "The danger of utilitarianism was that it represented human nature as essentially passive; if we are consumers of stimuli that produce pleasure or pain," and utilitarianism directs us to secure as much of the former and as little of the latter, "the value of action, self-direction, and striving is hard to explain."[53]

Therefore, Mill's intellectual convalescence depended on disavowing his previous obsession with a single end or general rule of human motivation, as well as the character formation theories of the philosophical necessarians, which he felt were gripping his existence "like an incubus. I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our own power."[54] Mill's reformation itself would serve as living proof that circumstances of one's upbringing were not decisive and entirely determining of one's character. Mill would achieve liberation by performing auto-ethological analysis, proving to himself that the desire to reform his character was a significant factor in the social determinants that produced it. In other words, Mill would feel and experience *moral*

[52] One further underpinning for Mill's emotionless existence may have been the potential callousness of utility calculations. There is no reason that utilitarian theory *qua* theory is given to cold calculation, and at first blush, it appears most benevolent as an action-guiding theory to take into account a broad swath of utility functions; indeed, Bentham's theory places selfishness as the human motive and benevolence as the human end. However, *in practice* the "felicific calculation" of strict utilitarians has the potential to be cold and callous, running roughshod over rights and failing to take seriously the idea that situations give rise to more complex accounts of higher and lower pleasures and pains. At least on a theoretical level, cultivation of the sentiments risks interference in the arithmetic impartiality—"moral arithmetic," to quote Bentham, applicable to both the private individual and the legislator—of strict utilitarian pain and pleasure calculations.

[53] Alan Ryan, *On Politics*, London: Penguin, 2013, p. 711.

[54] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 134-135.

freedom, the feeling that "his habits or his temptations are not his masters, but he theirs" and that "even in yielding to them knows that he could resist."[55] Mill had to feel "the fabric of my old and taught opinions giving way in many fresh places."[56] Through his process of self-cultivation, moreover, which involved auto-didactic efforts in music, poetry, various kinds of art, and languages, Mill demonstrates firsthand the importance of the "many-sidedness" of character he would later make a pillar of his political philosophy in *On Liberty*, and the importance of plurality of experience to relishing deep clashes of opinion.[57] *There should be no doubt of the fact that Mill's reformation, which involved the rejection of his received wisdom, left a deep impression on him that character formation must completely embrace modernity and progress, as opposed to looking to the past for sources of inspiration.* Ironically, however, in Mill's own self-ethology, he demonstrates the centrality of a pre-modern virtue like courage to cultivating his individuality and questioning his cherished ontological beliefs, even if he fails to give due appreciation to its role.

Mill began a reevaluation of his intellectual inheritance by systematically questioning each of his beliefs, holding ideas it might be said, in the "active" manner which he would later advocate in *On Liberty*. In early adulthood, some of his life's foundations crumbled and/or seemed vacuous to him. The "object" for which his entire education had been fashioned—trenchant analysis with the practical application of social reform—ceased to charm or animate him. Mill's conception of happiness was linked inextricably to his being a reformer of the world. Mill reports asking himself a hypothetical question of his happiness: would he be happy if "all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to…could be completely

[55] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p. 411.
[56] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 127.
[57] Cf. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 118-119. One relevant example is his relationship with John Sterling of the London Debating Society; after a falling out over a criticism of Bentham, Mill discovered he could not be happy without Sterling, in other words, without this intellectual exploration and living of opposites.

effected at this very instant?" His answer was unequivocally negative. The end of social reform and the benevolence of his projects for which Mill felt uniquely suited failed to move him. "I seemed to have nothing left to live for."[58] Mill's lack of confidence in Benthamite utilitarianism was all the more poignant given Bentham's role in his father's life—Bentham was the founder of the great theory, James Mill the first apostle, and John Stuart Mill the chief novitiate or popularizer. His mental crisis, therefore, represented not just a loss of faith, but also a loss of vocation, too, to borrow Gertrude Himmelfarb's analogy.[59]

Whereas before, Mill operated largely analytically, as evidenced in his early articles lacking an attempt at anything but "dry argument"—"the habit of analysis" tending to "wear away the feelings"[60]—it is the self-cultivation of both analytical skills and lost feeling and sensibility that engenders his revival and begins his self-transformation. Mill reports that the *elenchus* of the Socratic Method struck such a chord in him that, from a young age, it "became part of my own mind."[61] The Socratic Method was the unsurpassed method: "nothing in modern life and education in the smallest degree supplies its place."[62] Mill's curious intellectual cultivation itself made analysis "the inveterate habit" of his intellect, which, in the autumn of 1826, had become "irretrievably analytic," because his "education…had failed to create these feelings in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis."[63] Indeed, critical analysis itself is often opposed to the role of sentiment, as it enables the analyzer to separate ideas often found together under nothing other than *felt* association, tending to weaken those associations that are nothing but a mere matter of sentiment. It critiques and exposes these false

[58] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 112.
[59] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill*, San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1990, p. 4.
[60] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 114.
[61] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 39.
[62] Quoted in Frederick Rosen, *Mill: Founders of Modern Political and Social Thought*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013, p. 36.
[63] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 115-116.

causal nexuses as mere prejudices failing to have a logical relation. Mill recounts learning an important lesson from his discovery of Coleridge: "a questioner needs not necessarily be an enemy."[64] The natural correctives of the "analyzing spirit" were not extant in Mill before his mental crisis, and he could no longer concur with his father's belief that, left uncultivated, sentiment would "take care of itself."[65] Rather than utility as the direct end for which all activity is performed, a diversity of ends, pursued for their own sake, lead to happiness. When happiness itself was made the principal object of life, Mill found it insufficient. The implications here are profound—they are not only personal, but political in nature, for if one end does not suffice for all of man's actions, both persons *and* political institutions and practices ought to tend towards and value diversity or "many-sidedness."

Even after Mill cultivated a respect for the sentimental, he "never ceased to consider the power and practice of analysis as an essential condition both of individual and of social improvement."[66] The importance of the Socratic Method as a conduit of truth and instiller of intellectual courage never was lost on Mill. The difference, however, was his newfangled appreciation of sentiment. Imperative to Mill's self-cultivation of character is not just rational intellect—which liberal political theorists have long upheld—but the development of a fine-tuned sense of the sentiments and emotions as well.[67] Interestingly, Mill says that his new outlook learned to value "the internal culture of the individual," which most interpret as sentiments, but could also be interpreted as a concern for human virtue. In such deep introspection, moreover, Mill exemplifies the centrality of courage in leaving the comfortable,

[64] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography and Other Writings*, Ed. Jack Stillinger, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p. 260.
[65] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 97.
[66] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 118.
[67] Mill reports this journey of emotional (re)discovery transpiring almost by accident, while reading Marmontel's *Mémoires.* Perhaps we should not find this surprising, given the *Mémoires* describe the situation of a young boy, two years Mill's junior at the time of his first reading, arriving home from school one day to discover his father's death. The boy quickly assumes the role of fatherly figure in the family's affections and envisions that night, as he lies in bed, his pleading acceptance from his father for this new role in the family.

the familiar, and even the stultifying, and forming and reforming one's character free from social influence, something Mill places as the cornerstone of the liberal project in *On Liberty*. The full meaning of this questioning, individual character, therefore, will come into plainer view in the later discussion of Mill's essay *On Liberty*, but it is the virtue of courage that induces its possessor to question prevailing norms, express a unique individuality (while delighting in or at least countenancing the "moral distress" occasioned when others express theirs), and generally thrive within the environment of debate and ethical confrontation that characterizes a well-functioning free society. Mill's moral and intellectual tapestry became "renovated" and "woven" anew with the aid of courage, assimilating new ideas with old opinions withstanding the tests of truth, much as he would advocate later as a theory of truth in *On Liberty* that the utility of free speech and debate is precisely in that it allows the half-truths often possessed by individuals to become a more complete picture of the truth by grafting together various strands of commensurate beliefs. The linchpin of it all is the courage to leave the familiar, as the discussion in Section V on living within the truth and preference falsification illuminates.

Thus, we can see Mill's interest in human virtue and character formation as a desire to supplement what he saw as lacking in—though far from completely replacing it—Bentham's felicific calculus. Mill casts his lot with those who speak of virtue, progress, and truth as key concepts, and shifts to a model based on self-development as the proper political end for all. *On Liberty*, for instance, famously insists on its exclusive appeal to utility-based defenses of individual liberty, but quickly qualifies the defense upon a broader conception of utility, i.e., one grounded in man's permanent interests as a progressive being. By joining utility to the principle of progress in a logically dependent way, Mill attempts to shift the emphasis away from simple utility maximization and towards the principle of progress through self-actualization in his

political philosophy. The criteria for progress, moreover, are not obviously utilitarian, involving as they do an improvement in the quality of "inner man," rather than in "material condition," a greater accumulation of economic goods to be consumed by society.[68] Mill cares less for material happiness and more for human virtue than his father, or in his words, much less about the "art of getting on" and much more about the "art of living."[69]

Fred Rosen argues along similar lines that Mill's development of ethology achieved two related goals: first, it arose out of a realization of the insufficiency of James Mill's and Jeremy Bentham's theorizing about human motives in politics; second, if his father's and Bentham's methods were insufficient for theorizing about politics, Mill's ethology was precisely his means to rectify the method and introduce the element of human character into theorizing about politics.[70] James Mill's "Essay on Government," in which he expounds his theory of representative government, is predicated on the determination of men's actions by self-interest in maximizing utility. If self-interest determines all the actions of man, the only rulers who will govern according to the interest of the governed are those whose self-interest is aligned forcibly with the governed; only by dependence upon the will of the governed through accountability mechanisms can the self-interest of the rulers be rendered in accordance with the governed, effectively relegating them to delegates of utility maximization. The ruler's desire for retaining or fear of losing power is the sole motive for aligning his interest(s) with those of the governed.[71]

---

[68] One may object that James Mill, too, was concerned with the quality of human character, precisely through improving material conditions. This objection misses, however, the crucial differences in the character traits advocated by each. For Mill's father, we "might take pains to socialize men into industry and probity and into a calculating kind of intelligence; we should not care to make them bold, imaginative, individual, and sensitive," while these latter are precisely those J.S. Mill encourages. Cf. Alan Ryan, "Two Concepts of Politics & Democracy," p. 102.

[69] John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy: and Chapters on Socialism*, Ed. Jonathan Riley, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008, p. 129.

[70] Cf. Frederick Rosen, *Mill*, Chapter 4.

[71] Although left undefined throughout the essay, it is clear from James Mill's essay that "interest" means nothing more than self-interest.

James Mill's theory makes no great demand on the political virtue of such rulers precisely because it errs in assuming that the social phenomena of politics are not complex, seeing it "unscientifically" (in John Mill's words) as the result of one single property of human nature. This method, as in geometric proofs, commits the error of thinking that what is once proved true is true in all cases, that one force or cause engenders each human phenomenon in a tidy patchwork of phenomena and causes. In giving self-interest an unwarranted, exalted status in theorizing political rule, James Mill and Jeremy Bentham ignore the role of generous and selfless actions by rulers and the role more generally of human character in politics.[72] For J.S. Mill, if political activity represents more than mere utility maximization, and includes the potential for self-realization and development, how do representatives further the cause in which participants require direct involvement to form their characters? Moreover, if harmonization of representatives' interests with the self-interest of the people serves as a sufficient backstop to political tyranny, how does J.S. Mill's concern with societal tyranny and coercion make sense? Rosen's emphasis on the lost element of character within politics illuminates that Mill breaks from his father and Bentham and opts for a participant or self-development account of political participation, which views man as an individual agent who occasionally shares principles and goals as a member of a political community.

Practically speaking, then, Mill's political arrangements are less concerned with establishing an honest yet efficient administration in the service of utility, and more with individuals whose existence is open-ended and receptive to the many potentialities for growth,

[72] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, pp. 464-473. Mill concedes that his father and Bentham operated such a theory of government with many exceptions, but Mill's qualms are with its very foundations as a theory. It does not matter how many exceptions are granted when there is an insufficiency of breadth in its foundations.

change, and character development, eventually contributing to societal change and progress.[73] The indispensability of political life for J.S. Mill resides in both its usefulness but also its pleasure. For James Mill, participation is a cost—both in the sense of opportunity cost and the pain occasioned by the effortful work of researching and evaluating candidates and policies—and apathy may be in one's self-interest, especially in the case of an honest yet efficient administrative society. Politics was merely a source of utility for James Mill—in principle even replaceable if a more efficient means to pleasure were discovered. For J.S. Mill, however, participation, far from being a cost, is integral to character formation, liberal individuality, the advancement of truth, and public debate. Public life and the common action it requires is something altogether different from private pursuits; isolation from it can only stunt the free development of character.

III. The Content of Character

What exactly is Mill's idea of character, how is it formed, and how does it fit within his political framework? In short, Millian character is defined by possession of a unique individuality—i.e., one's character is one's own—constructed by judgments, opinions, ideas, and concepts accepted critically and only after intellectual rumination. Character within Millian liberalism is *not* a character consisting of imitation or undigested opinions. It is a further contention of Section III that the virtue of courage is an essential aspect of cultivating a liberal character, even if Mill curiously leaves much of this idea unmentioned and undeveloped. This is because Mill situates individualism in stark opposition to an individual who seeks the assistance of traditional concepts and sources of authority to guide their action. Before we can examine the

[73] For a look at the possible German influence on Mill's concern for character, filtered through the influences of Coleridge and Carlyle, cf. Rosemary Ashton's *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800-1860*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.

undeveloped nature of courage in Mill, however, the driving concern behind *On Liberty*—the limits of social coercion—must be illuminated to contextualize the social backdrop in which character struggles to cultivate itself. Here more than ever, there is a palpable influence of Tocqueville's vivid descriptions and dire warnings of societies suffering the upheaval of political and social movements for greater equality. From Tocqueville, Mill learned "the excellencies of democracy" and "the specific dangers which beset democracy, considered as the government of the numerical majority." The influence of Tocqueville, Rosen argues, can be seen most forcefully in Mill's concerns "the abuses of democracy."[74]

Although many interpretations have tended to trumpet the legislative or political limits of state intervention, *On Liberty* is as much about public opinion's impact on individual diversity and character. *On Liberty* makes clear that the tyranny, exercised not by government but by society over individuals, is far more puissant, even as its operation is less manifest. On this interpretation, the basic thrust of *On Liberty* is that the kind of individuality highly valued by Mill becomes more difficult to cultivate as "the spirit of the age" moves in the direction described first by Tocqueville, i.e. of greater social and political equality and the homogenizing of opinion and behavior it brings with it. Even exciting transition periods, in which Mill felt himself to be partaking, wherein the edifices of old opinions crumble and give way to new ones, lead eventually to renewed periods of opinion ossification.

From the outset, *On Liberty* demonstrates that running parallel to the concern for legal coercion is mindfulness of moral coercion by public opinion. Social relations and institutions have power over character formation, and society, too, must demonstrate forbearance. The collective is so formidable an antagonist that Mill positions the full weight of the Harm Principle

[74] Frederick Rosen, *Mill*, p. 154.

against not only "physical force in the form of legal penalties," but also "the moral coercion of public opinion."[75] There exist innumerable passages in *On Liberty* about the individual vis-à-vis society's ever-burgeoning encroachment. Placing *On Liberty* within the context of the eternal struggle between the individual and society, Mills speaks straight away in Chapter One of the

> increasing inclination to stretch unduly the powers of society over the individual, both by the force of opinion and even by that of legislation: and as the tendency of all the changes taking place in the world is to strengthen society, and diminish the power of the individual, this encroachment is not one of the evils which tend spontaneously to disappear, but, on the contrary, to grow more and more formidable.[76]

Once dominant, public opinion has the ability to govern the individual, his choices, and his character formation in ways not dissimilar to the raw coercive power of the state. "The government of public opinion" can place "an oppressive yoke of uniformity in opinion and practice" upon society and its individual members.[77] Protection from state coercion alone is insufficient, Mill says. "There needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them."[78]

Here, the influence Tocqueville—who occupied similar terrain as a critical but sincere friend of democracy and wanted to "lay down extensive buy clear and fixed limits to the field of social power"[79]—exerts upon Mill is manifest in envisaging the confluence of public opinion as a threat emanating from social and political developments in an age of increasing equality. Besides engaging in a deep personal correspondence with Tocqueville (whom he hosted in England, along with his English wife, Mary Mottley), Mill reviewed Volume I and Volume II of

[75] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 14.
[76] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 18.
[77] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 190.
[78] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 9.
[79] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Trans. George Lawrence, Ed. J.P. Mayer, New York: Harper Perennial, 2006, p. 701.

Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* extremely favorably in the *London Review* and the *Edinburgh Review*, respectively. Much of Mill's political thought is responding to problems brought to his attention by Tocqueville, even as they differ greatly in their solutions to the problem of the tyranny of the majority.[80] For example, Mill is far less enthusiastic about local townships, of the kind found in New England, as sources of potential political education; as a rule, he seems to place more emphasis on the structure of rationally-built political practices and institutions (and later in life, on complex electoral systems like Hare's Quota), rather than, as we saw in Chapter 2 with Tocqueville, the cultivation of local loyalties and a firm belief in the educative function of political participation through the "art of association."

Mill's 1835 review of Volume I reveals his agreement with Tocqueville that the despotic propensities of the democratic age would be a great detriment to society; he remains, however, unconvinced that the threat presented itself in equal parts on either side of the Atlantic. "Without pretending ourselves competent to judge whether our author overstates the evils as they exist in America, we can see reasons for thinking that they would exist in a far inferior degree in Europe."[81] Mill thought England possessed a leisured class which would counterbalance the stifling tendencies of the majority. Yet, by the time of his review of Volume II of *Democracy in America* in 1840, with the rise of the English middle class, Mill accepted the tyranny of the majority as a problem of equal concern for Europe and the principal force against which progressive societies must fight.

Mill's indebtedness to Tocqueville completes itself in his acceptance that stagnation and immobility were real dangers to democracies, and that the tyranny of the majority is the main

[80] Cf. Jean-Claude Lamberti, *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989.
[81] John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. XVIII, Ed. J.M. Robson, Toronto: Toronto UP, 1977, p. 83.

source of that threat. In his *Autobiography*, Mill explicitly credits Tocqueville with opening his eyes to "the specific dangers which beset democracy…[and] the defenses by which it needs to be guarded, and the correctives which must be added to it in order that while full play is given to its beneficial tendencies, those which are of a different nature may be neutralized or mitigated."[82] Therefore, we must view *On Liberty* as spellbound by the excesses of democracy and the tyranny of the majority which Tocqueville reports in *Democracy in America*, while also offering Mill's clearest rebuttal to the idea that democracy must receive supplements plucked from earlier, less egalitarian, less progressive, and more aristocratic eras.[83] The contention of this chapter is that the virtue of courage is one such democratic "corrective which must be added," to use Mill's own language, which he is unwilling to treat in full detail.

The contemporary conditions of Mill's society could not but delay the realization of the best state because society was not in a position to mitigate the harmful effects of the transition towards egalitarian social conditions. Through various "leveling" developments in history and society—shifts in political and social institutions, technological advances, and improvements in education, which "tend to raise the low and to lower the high"—public opinion has coalesced around only a handful of popular opinions, presenting the problem of "the ascendancy of public opinion in the State."[84] Popular opinion, particularly when strengthened politically by majoritarian politics, can assume a menacing and restrictive authority over citizen's choices. The dead weight of public opinion—a deference that is more social attitude than political

[82] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 150.
[83] Cf. Alan S. Kahan, *Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
[84] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 82. It ought to be noted that greater equality of conditions under social democracy does engender some phenomena worth extolling. Mill mentions an increased penetration of discussion and reasoning in society as two such phenomena in his essays on "The Spirit of the Age." At the cost of potentially stifling some of the genius of society, at least fewer find themselves in a state of abject ignorance. On the whole, however, the destruction of individuality by public opinion (*On Liberty*), the suppression of minority opinion by increasingly powerful majorities (*Considerations on Representative Government*), and the loss of spontaneity and initiative due to centralization (writings *On Socialism*) are all worrying tendencies.

attitude, but with grave political costs—results in all of us collectively oppressing all of us individually.[85]

Tocqueville's astute observations give Mill an appreciation that this is all together a new type of political problem—a paradoxical one—i.e., when society itself, as opposed to an individual sovereign or sovereign body, becomes the source of tyranny, channeling itself through means unconnected to formal state institutions. Social coercion can—though not necessarily—exercise power of a more subtle, yet corrosive form, and has plenty of resources at its disposal.[86] Mill describes this paradox of societal tyranny thus:

> When society itself is the tyrant—society collectively, over the separate individuals who compose it—its means of tyrannizing are not restricted to the acts which it may do by the hands of its political functionaries. Society can and does execute its own mandates…it practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, *penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself*.[87]

The danger of societal tyranny is that it does not aim at a quickly discernible makeover of the human person, but a more surreptitious refashioning of his character and opinions, requiring a more reflective and cognizant individual to identify its sources and impact. Mass conformity discourages "experiments in living" and limits meaningful life choices, acting as a kind of filter which deprives society of plurality in certain modes of living and varieties of character. For Mill, free societies ought to encourage many forms of character—a "many-sidedness" that Mill speaks of acquiring himself after his mental crisis—but "spontaneity is hardly recognized by the common modes of thinking as having any intrinsic worth" because, barring interaction with diverse others, the majority cannot comprehend why their ways may not be good for everyone.[88]

---

[85] Interestingly, both Mill and Tocqueville demonstrate this concern not because it contravenes an inherent right to self-expression, but on the more pragmatic grounds that it stymies moral and intellectual progress.
[86] Mill mentions prevailing opinion, moral sentiments, and worst of all, religion, as means to achieve its ends.
[87] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 8-9, emphasis mine.
[88] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 63.

In Mill's rather evocative language, citizens come to "like in crowds," while in the language of modern social science, one might label the socially-coerced as having "adaptive preferences" or engaging in "preference falsification" in that the person internalizes these opinions and "bows to its yoke."[89] Mill positions solid character as *the* prime antidote to the strong tendency in democratic societies which Tocqueville's publication helped him to appreciate: that tendency toward conformity of taste and opinion, and a concomitant distaste for those who differ from it. Taking, as Mill does, the trends observed by Tocqueville as his jumping off point, therefore, we might suspect Mill to mention the virtue of courage as critical to possessing and developing character within such a context of social coercion, yet quite inexplicably, he elides a serious treatment of it.

At its core, Mill's idea of character is linked inextricably with individuality: the idea of making one's choices one's own. Mill finds the free will of Philosophical Necessity properly understood to be ennobling in that it allows us to have real and meaningful power to form our own characters. *On Liberty* defines character precisely as "A person whose desires and impulses are his own—are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture…One whose desires and impulses are not his own has no character, no more than a steam engine has a character."[90] Indeed, to have character is to act upon a vital force within the human person.[91] The person of character, as distinct from the person lacking it, personalizes his desires; he makes his choices and habits his own, and he does not follow customs or social norms for any other reason than that he was raised that way, which lends an added depth to his life choices and existence. He knows that his "own mode of laying out his existence is the best"

[89] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 68.
[90] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 67.
[91] Robert F. Card, "Situationist Social Psychology and J.S. Mill's Conception of Character," p. 484.

precisely because "it is his own mode."[92] Since Mill's idea of character is defined as possessing individuality, and individuality the right to choose one's own path in a completely undetermined manner, it appears as though there is an inherent tension between what Mill considers character and believing in any sort of traditional ideas from the past. Besides, "the main occupation of society has changed" drastically, and we ought to embrace a dismissal of the virtues of that past, less gentle society.[93]

Without character, which aids man in liberating his decision-making from societal influence and embarking on variegated "experiments in living"—the two of which together Mill terms "eccentricity"—liberal society faces a paucity of diversity, which is necessary for it to thrive. Mill compares the necessity of liberal societies for diversity to that of a tree, which "requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing."[94] The man of character advances arguments for the unique beliefs and social conventions he practices. He may even persuade his fellow citizens in the process of these exchanges.

Mill's definition of character is rather capacious in function; for a person (or nation) to have character, it is insufficient to remove only the grossest of transgressions—fraud, theft, and murder. Mill requires a "positive" component requiring the person of character to be unrelenting in his questioning of social, political, and personal practices. Elsewhere, Mill refers to those who permit themselves to be forced into a predetermined mold formed by popular taste as guilty of "timidity;" nevertheless, he does not make explicit the nexus between the possession of character and the practice of timidity's chief antonym: courage.[95]

---

[92] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 75.
[93] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 565.
[94] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 66.
[95] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 72.

Some of the main mentions of courage can be found in Mill's idea of the utility of individual character to society. Mill notes that is essential to the existence of diversity: "the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained."[96] In the *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill outlines the active qualities—"energy, courage, originality"—that are prerequisites of progress to be promoted in good governments.[97] In another example, Mill laments how devastating it would be if we limited our intellectual disagreements simply to make peace, as it would be bought at the "sacrifice of the entire moral courage of the human mind."[98] Hinting at the importance of courage to the possession of Millian character, he notes that it is "considered a mark of spirit and courage to fly in the face of…[the] usurped authority" of received opinion, but he seems to drop any further development of the idea that courage is the quality of character most important to living lifestyles against the grain.[99] Courage responds appropriately to the threats, fears, and strong contestation likely to follow those living eccentric lives. These passages seem to hint at the possession of courage as decisive for the cultivation of Millian character, but regrettably, Mill does not flesh out the concept any further.

Mill's underdevelopment of the virtue of courage is also notable in the context of his use in *On Liberty* of Socrates and Jesus as exemplary historical figures possessing the type of character he advocates as an absolute prerequisite for human progress.[100] Socrates lived in a political community that required great courage to make his contribution to the city's intellectual life, so much so that his death sentence in old age proved the ultimate threat to the assertion of

[96] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 74-75.
[97] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 221.
[98] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 38.
[99] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 92.
[100] Nicholas Capaldi, "John Stuart Mill's Defense of Liberal Culture," ed. Eldon J. Eisenach, *Mill and the Moral Character of Liberalism*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2005, p. 107.

his individuality. Mill's writing on Socrates, in particular, demonstrates the political implications of this narrative: Socrates represents, for Mill, not just a mere agitator, but one who asserted his unique individuality over the undigested norms and practices masquerading as legitimate in the Athenian polis.[101] "Admiration for Socrates," says Rosen, "was as much due to Socrates' insistence on the search for truth as on whatever truths Socrates might have uncovered in his searches."[102] The lesson that many societies throughout history, for various reasons, have killed citizens like Socrates and Jesus, those outspoken iconoclasts possessing great courage, appears less than fully absorbed by Mill—perhaps in the latter case, owing to his qualms about the prevalence of undigested, dogmatic Christian morality and Christian theology in Britain—despite his use of the two figures as prime examples from the ancient world whose pursuit of the expression of a unique individuality is to be emulated.[103]

Despite the fact that most will fail to live up to the examples of Socrates or Jesus, or to even fully possess Millian character for that matter, Mill argues that we must nevertheless build the social and political conditions and preserve the exacting standards in which it flourishes. People of true individuality "are, and are always likely to be, a small minority; but in order to have them, it is necessary to preserve the soil in which they grow."[104] Even if true character is rare, Mill's hope is that those who fall short (i.e., most of us) will at least cultivate a character which might be deemed of moderate individuality, enough to question the reasoning behind some of our social practices—lest they become "dead dogmas"—but recognizing that the average character among us fails to blaze an original path to reform. Progress depends upon the

[101] Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*, Chicago: University of Chicago P, 2002, p. 147.
[102] Frederick Rosen, *Mill*, p. 38.
[103] Cf. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 29, 37, 57.
[104] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 72.

possession of individual character, for "a people, it appears, may be progressive for a certain length of time, and then stop; when does it stop? *When it ceases to possess individuality*."[105]

Once Mill establishes his conception of character, one based on a unique individuality capable of personalizing decisions and social practices, the remainder of *On Liberty* focuses on establishing the proper social and political institutions—some of the key components of the ethological equation—to give the best possible chance of this conception of character arising in citizens and thereby deterring the baleful effects of majority power. Mill summarizes his reason for focusing on institutions and practices in an 1846 article: "what shapes the character is not what is purposely taught, so much as the unintentional teaching of institutions and social relations."[106] Even as social and political institutions are significant contributing factors to the formation of character and components of ethology, the possession of character, in turn, contributes to the formation of social and political institutions. Character development and social and political institutions are mutually reinforcing, a fact Mill notes must be the "first element of good government… how far they [i.e., institutions] tend to foster in the members of the community the various desirable qualities."[107] One of the goals of *On Liberty* is to elucidate this mutual reinforcement, with the end goal being, as described by Mill in his *Autobiography*, a society with "a large variety in types of character, and of giving full freedom to human nature to expand itself in innumerable and conflicting directions."[108] Given that so much of *On Liberty* occupies itself with prescribing the social and political institutions which best lead to Millian character formation—what I will explain in the next section, following Waldron, as Mill's "second degree perfectionism"—it is all the more striking that courage, a virtue that receives due

[105] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 79, emphasis mine.
[106] Quoted in Janice Carlisle, *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*, p. ix.
[107] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 226. Cf. also Frederick Rosen, *Mill*, p. 87.
[108] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 189.

treatment in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, which exerted great influence upon Mill, receives only passing mention in his works, for the liberal practices meant to engender character, guided along by the social and political institutions recommended in *On Liberty*, cannot but require the possession of the virtue of courage.

IV. A Prescription for Character: "Second Degree Perfectionism"[109]

The preceding section argued that the possession of Millian character in a context characterized by the social conformity prevalent in modern, consumer societies, requires the virtue of courage to assess the significant threats associated with expressing minority opinions and living eccentric lifestyles. Mill leaves this idea crucially underdeveloped, despite being a thinker who cares deeply about engendering certain desirable character traits in citizens, possibly because individuality implies the will to choose one's path free from received concepts of the past. This section explores the ways in which courage is an extremely relevant virtue to not only the content of Millian character, but to its arising through the social and political practices prescribed by Mill in *On Liberty* as the best means for developing it. The practices most indicative of the type of unrecognized courage required for Millian character can be found in Mill's conceptions of free speech and public debate, intellectual clashes where one might expect Mill to mention the importance of courage. Participation in public debate, where speech and thought run free, may occasion "moral distress:" when the opinions of others, especially those seen as morally deprave, occasion offense in their expression. Within the context of repeated ethical confrontation that characterizes thriving liberal societies, we can come to no other conclusion than that courage is the virtue integral to: 1) holding opinions that can be considered

[109] I am indebted to several discussions that occurred in Professor Jeremy Waldron's Michaelmas 2013 special lectures, "Mill's *On Liberty*," at Oxford University for a few paragraphs of the interpretation offered throughout this section.

"heterodox" in the face the tyranny of the majority, and 2) the mental toughness required to participate in spirited exchange full of slings and arrows. Both, in turn, are necessary to thwart individual and societal stagnation by exposing citizens to a range of opinions and experiences through the use of free speech as society's best corrective mechanism.

It is clear in Mill's thought that politics ought to have a provision, institutionally guaranteed, for debate and even antagonism. Without the occasional iconoclast, society faces decay and degeneration. Quite simply, citizens living in liberal societies ought not to expect the liberty to act on their beliefs without the concomitant liberty of others to question the veracity of those beliefs.[110] Mill's liberalism therefore envisages not just confrontation and provocation in an environment of unbridled speech rights, but the intellectual courage of self-presentation against those who might challenge those "experiments in living" intellectually and forcefully. The exact role of courage in this context is in assessing threats appropriately and shrugging off the "moral distress," "mere offense," and hurt feelings occasioned by free speech, which can lead to a reluctance to participate in an adversarial environment. In addition to overcoming fears, courage also keeps citizens within reasonable and productive bounds of discursive and deliberative exchange; put another way, courage helps citizens put forth public arguments of intellectual profundity to which they are sincerely committed and to resist temptations to provoke and antagonize without intellectual merit. While Mill famously carves out an imperative for liberty in the self-regarding sphere, it is mutually reinforced and becomes better utilized as a result of participation in debate which is a never-ending process of deliberative competence building.

Mill's liberalism does not eschew all human influence over one another or avoid all relationships of influence exertion; following Tocqueville, he wants to abolish only those

[110] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 57-58.

pernicious societal influences which curtail individuality and generally involve mass taste dominating individual opinion. Mill's emphasis on the figure of Socrates and individuality may lead us to believe that character is nothing more than a matter of looking within oneself—that character does not develop from without by forces to which the individual is subjected. Yet, one of the most noteworthy aspects of Mill's *On Liberty* is that it *does* advocate for the ability to have reciprocal influence (but not coercion) upon others in the development of their characters.[111] In order to reap the benefits of this practice, unqualified speech rights must be in place to compare, criticize, and experiment—and to accept and consider criticism from others in turn. To push one another to greater heights of accomplishment and self-development, "human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse…They should be forever stimulating each other to increased exercise of their higher faculties, and increased direction of their feelings and aims towards elevating instead of degrading, objects and contemplations."[112] Mill attempts to plant the ability to exert reciprocal influence upon one another's character development into the logic espoused in his Harm Principle: "If people must be allowed, in whatever concerns only themselves, to act as seems best to themselves at their own peril, they must equally be free to consult with one another about what is fit to be so done; to exchange opinions, and give and receive suggestions."[113]

Jeremy Waldron labels this advocacy of reciprocity on the character formation of fellow citizens "second degree perfectionism" in that it is indifferent to what citizens become—and hence it remains liberal in its plurality of outcomes—but it is not indifferent on the question of *how* (i.e., method) it is that citizens should develop their character, nor, as we have seen, that the

[111] Unsurprisingly, this view appears to be informed by Mill's experience with his father's influence on his character development, as well as his reading of Tocqueville.
[112] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 84.
[113] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 109.

development of character ought to be the objective of liberal social and political institutions.[114] That is, Mill is opposed to a traditional kind of perfectionism that describes *a priori* what it is that citizens ought to become and vests in authority the coercive power to produce that character. But individuals certainly have the duty to cultivate their capacities to the best of their abilities. Freedom itself is more like a capacity which requires training and moral self-development; rather than simply the act of choosing, it involves choosing the path that most fully actualizes our humanity. Given that Mill thinks his era to be one of historical disadvantage for developing individual character, Chapter 3 of *On Liberty* does not shy from prescribing the best means of developing one's character and shaping the social environment in which it is cultivated. What Mill prescribes as the "how" of character formation is well known to us: the best way to reach our individual potentials is via vigorous debate and ethical confrontation, unapologetic expression of our individualities, and occasional clashes over the tenets of our experiments in living.

To demonstrate the extent to which Mill buys into this prescription for character formation, we ought to look at the case of "mere offense" or "moral distress."[115] Moral distress occurs when an individual takes umbrage at the individuality of another—either in its substance or in its form of expression. It is the distress occasioned by knowledge of others' conduct, speech, or views. To take the classic cases of homosexuality or pornography, for instance, some religious or traditionalist members of society may feel perturbed by the knowledge that some in the community engage in behavior which they view as contravening basic tenets of religious or moral values, and to the extent that this discovery is disquieting to their beliefs, it may cause

[114] Jeremy Waldron, Michaelmas 2013 Lectures, Week II.
[115] Jeremy Waldron, *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers, 1981-1991*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 115.

harm. Mill is stuck with a vexing case, because at the most basic level, it appears that liberty is at stake for both individuals in the case of moral distress. Those targeted by the traditionalist have the right to express their individualities just as traditionalists have the right to express their opprobrium.[116]

Ignoring the (well-founded) point that the purported "harm" caused by these experiences may result only from prejudicial views held in the first place, does this form of discursive or verbal "harm" serve as sufficient to trigger intervention on the basis of Mill's Harm Principle? Even when physical harm is not at stake, what happens if someone finds offensive the words or views of others? We must acknowledge that harm exists in many forms, and not always in ways as tangible as physical damage.[117] In this way, disturbing, offensive, degrading, or indecent discourse may constitute a form of "harm," to the extent that very few enjoy experiencing it. Mill takes a firm stance on this point, however, permitting this form of "harm" on the grounds that intervention would be too costly to the cause of progress—this form of harm is just not the type from which government should protect us. In fact, Mill sees "moral distress" as an attestation of healthy debate amongst citizens with robustly-held views, and an environment ultimately conducive to individual and societal progress. This should not surprise us, for if *On Liberty* is indeed committed to that "singular truth" of many-sidedness, there are negative liberties of thought, speech, and action required from a practical standpoint if citizens are to deliberatively choose life projects and plans from a menu of options whose grounding and comparative merits ought to be on vivid, public display.

---

[116] For a discussion of to what degree does respect for persons have to accord with the ends they pursue, see Richard C. Sinopoli, "Thick-Skinned Liberalism: Redefining Civility," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 612-620. For a strong moralist or traditionalist, Sinopoli's interpretation may be flawed to the core, since all acts of deviance may be considered harmful and warranting intervention, but following Mill, it remains liberal and plural in both its intent and consequences.

[117] In the philosophical debate on what exactly constitutes "harm," it has been defined variously as harm to human interests, hindrances to liberty, and frustration of preferences, amongst others. This section explores and attempts to reconcile some of these definitions.

We must therefore take Mill's assertion of unqualified speech rights at face value. "Human beings should be free to form opinions, and to express their opinions without reserve."[118] John Gray interprets Mill as upholding the position that "expressive acts enjoy a privileged immunity from liberty-limiting restrictions on harm-preventing grounds," even if "actions [e.g., speech] of the so-called 'self-regarding' variety may frequently affect, even harmfully, persons other than the agent."[119] It is clear that speech acts are not always innocent, self-regarding exercises, and yet Mill upholds unbridled speech practices while clearly intending his definition of harm to be robust and encompass more than physical harm (else what would be so important or attractive about it?).

Trying to reconcile unqualified speech rights with Mill's Harm Principle, Jacobson argues that contrary to common opinion, Mill's defense of a sphere of liberty broad enough to include unlimited speech rights is not in tension with the Harm Principle that supposedly justifies this sphere of liberty. Mill can defend free speech as an archetypal self-regarding act, he argues, without having to uphold the absurd claim that speech itself is a harmless act. In other words, Jacobson argues that Mill's text demonstrates that the definition of self-regarding is not equivalent to harmless, and that speech ought to be considered in the branch of self-regarding action, along with thought (hence its inclusion in the title of Chapter 2 of *On Liberty*). On this interpretation, Mill includes speech with thought because speech is the justificatory exercise of thought; "speech isn't just a handy way to express our thinking, but the medium in which we think" about factual or normative opinions.[120] The offenses occasioned by free speech are indeed bad consequences, as are the putative immoralities sometimes contained in their contents,

[118] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 62.
[119] John Gray, *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*, p. 104; J.C. Rees, "A Re-reading of Mill on Liberty," *Political Studies* VIII (1960): 116.
[120] Daniel Jacobson, "Mill on Liberty, Speech, and the Free Society," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 29 (2000): 284.

but these are not good enough reasons for intervention in free expression because speech is part of what it means to flourish and a prerequisite for the free development of liberal individuality in Mill's liberalism.

A similar reading of the Harm Principle holds harm as providing a necessary but not sufficient condition for interference, interpreting harm variously as a setback to interests or an action treating another wrongly or unjustly.[121] On this interpretation, harm places an action in the domain of public discussion, but the question of intervention is to be resolved via other considerations. The effects of interference are weighed against the purpose of the act itself, most critically, the free development of liberal individuality, "which is one of the leading essentials of well-being."[122] Thus, harm *ipso facto* does not make an act punishable, but triggers a debate and calculation about its purpose and the costs and consequences of any successful intervention.[123] An infringement on liberty, then, is when a prohibition stymies a type of action necessary for the free development of individuality, as in the prime case of free speech within Millean liberalism.

In addition to the necessary but not sufficient reading, the interpretations of Rees, Williams, and Honderich contain a rights-based claim to Mill's unqualified speech acts.[124] Notwithstanding Mill's own explicit pledge to "forgo any advantage which could be derived from the idea of abstract right," this interpretation includes a further qualification for interference: the harmful act must not be within our rights to perform.[125] Hence, this

---

[121] Cf. Chapter 2 of Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 1: Harm to Others*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.
[122] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 63.
[123] For an unconventional approach to the necessary but not sufficient condition argument, see Jonathan Wolff, who posits that once harm as a concept has been sufficiently fine-tuned, there is no conceivable way that it is not necessary and also sufficient. Cf. Jonathan Wolff, "Mill, Indecency, and the Liberty Principle," *Utilitas* 10 (1998): 1-16.
[124] J.C. Rees, "A Re-reading of Mill on Liberty," *Political Studies* VIII (1960): 113-29; G.L. Williams, "Mill's Principle of Liberty," *Political Studies* XXIV (1976): 132-40; Ted Honderich, "The Worth of J.S. Mill on Liberty," *Political Studies* XXII (1974): 463-70.
[125] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 15.

interpretation claims that the Harm Principle is subject to rights constraint *and* is not limited to harmless action. Therefore, Mill's defense of liberty does not follow a catalogue of harmless acts under the Harm Principle but rests on both rights-based claims and utility calculations about the potential costs of imposing prohibitions.[126] If one reads the defense of liberty in any other way, this argument holds, the Harm Principle is not strong enough to engender the capacious sphere of individual liberty Millean liberalism desires. The concept of self-regarding, then, is made synonymous with a rights-based interest claim (i.e., that an action is within our rights to perform and within the sphere of self-regarding liberty). The self-regarding class of actions ends abruptly when an action breaches a "distinctive or assignable obligation."[127] The evidentiary burden Mill works with on this interpretation is one of "definite damage" which falls on assignable individuals. Given that actions like hate speech do not befall all members of society equally (thereby singling out certain individuals), this interpretation clearly risks confounding interests with rights and implying that interests must be a matter of what one has a right to be protected. Therefore, an alternative attempt by Wollheim to define harm claims that, for Mill, harm must be "non-morally-dependent harm"—i.e., harm one suffers regardless of the moral beliefs one holds.[128] Harm must be independent of one's moral beliefs; for example, not experienced by the Christian believer *qua* Christian.

As the preceding interpretation shows, this does not mean we must claim speech is an innocent act, only that its regulation by political institutions is counterproductive to the development of liberal individuality (not a sufficient condition). According to Mill's Harm Principle, it is simply not the type of harm that is the state's business to regulate. Unlike

[126] For the potential danger in such an interpretation, cf. Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 1: Harm to Others*, pp. 110-111.
[127] For the opposing view that conduct can be harmful to the interests of others without necessarily violating their rights, cf. D.G. Brown, "Mill on Harm to Others' Interests," *Political Studies* XXVI (1979): 395-99.
[128] Richard Wollheim, "John Stuart Mill and the Limits of Station Action," *Social Research* XL (1973): 1-30.

theorists like Joel Feinberg, Mill does not explicitly appeal to a separate liberty-limiting principle to do his work, which Feinberg labels "the offense principal."[129] By asserting that prevention of offensive conduct *is* properly the state's business, Feinberg avoids tenuous appeals to any kind of harm principle to do the work of limiting liberty for him in cases such as free speech. Through his somewhat preposterous "ride on the bus," whose maws the rider cannot escape lest he be late for a meeting of some consequence, Feinberg demonstrates via progressively depraved stories that human experiences occasionally are harmless in themselves yet objectively so unpleasant that they demand legal protection even at the cost of other persons' liberties.[130]

The case of unfettered speech practices, despite its attendant harms and occasional unpleasantness, is even more important when balanced against Mill's imperative of individuality. For a staunch pluralist like Mill, there is no *single* right answer to the good life. This does not mean Mill is a relativist, of course; for Mill, there are certainly objectively better and worse answers to the question of the good life. But the unlikelihood that any one way of living or any one moral system—especially that which is commonly held—has captured all of the truth augments the importance of ethical confrontation and exchange in a speech environment free from state interference. Popular and widely held beliefs are likely to lack some aspects of truth which ought to limit them, while "heretical opinions, on the other hand, are generally some of these suppressed and neglected truths…either seeking reconciliation with the truth contained in the common opinion, or fronting it as enemies."[131] These types of dialogical exchanges of half-truths are the substance of social and political progress. Ideally, they proceed by incorporating the best tenets from each other and approximate, exchange-by-exchange, to a more robust

[129] Joel Feinberg, *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 2: Offense to Others*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985.
[130] By "objective," Feinberg means the *existence* of a wrong, not that the victim *feels* wronged, as in the ordinary sense of the word "offense," or the phrase "to take offense."
[131] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 52.

version of the truth. Likewise, new ideas do not spring forth *ex nihilo* in the minds of their progenitors, but often in the adversarial environment of dialogical challenge and riposte. Approaching anything like truth, Mill posits, is "a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites," which in an open society we must achieve through "the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners."[132] As a fallibilist, Mill places a certain level of confidence in dialectics; while it is highly unlikely that any individual mind arrives at the full truth on its own, ethical confrontation and agonistic exchange—*and the highly related price of damaged feelings*—are the necessary practices for not only developing and testing individuality but converging upon some semblance of truth.[133] While it is likely that "truth" is more objective than whatever emerges from the proverbial "marketplace of ideas," there is no other place where it will emerge on Mill's account.

Mill's endorsement of second degree perfectionism, therefore, is a blanket endorsement unbounded by the content of the particular ideas expressed. No doctrine, individuality, way of life, or opinion ought to occupy a privileged position free from such confrontation; that is, there ought to be no peremptory treatment of opinion or doctrines, no matter how commonplace they may be—to the point where Mill advocates the "manufacture" of dissent in cases where it does not exist.[134] Men diffuse ideas via discussion, and lack thereof serves no cause but those of the prevailing opinion, rumor, and other falsehoods. Given that we are fallible beings attempting to reach a reasonable level of certainty, even the most quotidian ideas "have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded."[135] Once we do arrive at

[132] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 54.
[133] While truth may be more objective than whatever emerges from the proverbial "marketplace of ideas," there is likely no other place where it will emerge on Mill's account.
[134] On this point, I believe, we may split reasonably with Mill, e.g., do we really need to "manufacture" the company of neo-Nazis for the simple purpose of reaffirming our egalitarian convictions?
[135] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 26.

a reasonable level of certainty, moreover, in order for ideas to contribute meaning to our lives, it is not enough that they merely be true in themselves; they must also be *held* in a certain way. Learning them by rote, for instance, irrespective of their truth value, still voids them of meaning because they fail to inform our social and political practices to any extent that is significant. In other words, they fail to be "living conviction(s)" and instead constitute "an hereditary creed…received passively, not actively—when the mind is no longer compelled…to exercise its vital powers on the questions which its belief presents to it." The uncritically-accepted ideas, taken as custom and without a choice, follow an "ape-like [pattern]…of imitation" and cease to connect themselves at all "with the inner life of the human being."[136] This follows Mill's well-known concern for the "encrusting and petrifying" nature of "dead dogma" that ensues when opinions are not fully, frequently, and courageously discussed. A belief is nothing if not held in its full and proper spirit, "a lively apprehension;" it is nothing if it simply has recourse only to hereditary belief systems and has not "penetrated" deeply enough to demonstrate real force of mastery; it is nothing without having to defend and argue for it with other citizens.[137] To hold opinions in anything less than a spirited manner is yet another form of conformity (or even intellectual inactivity) manifesting a lack of individualized, "home grown" beliefs—qualities that are, as we saw in the last section, the distinctive endowments of human beings possessing Millian character.[138]

As Mill believes in unbridled speech rights, we should not be surprised when differing opinions cause us offense *both in their substance*, as discussed already, *and occasionally in their manner of expression*. The latter is not because we should expect our opponents to provoke and

[136] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 46, 65.
[137] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 46.
[138] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 68. It is noteworthy that Mill may have filtered this conception of the ideal citizen partly through longstanding Protestant tropes about Catholic unreflective obedience and blind adherence to dogma.

flaunt their differences with us (civility is not, and ought not to be, an impediment to argumentative persuasion), but because they ought to confront us passionately and forcefully if they hold their views in the proper Millian spirit. Tip-toeing around one another's delicate sensibilities is no way to conduct a Millian debate. To confront one another "on condition that the manner be temperate," Mill argues, strips the exchange of any sense of ethical confrontation leading to progress.[139] Besides, we are bound to find most opponents who hold their contrary opinions spiritedly, who push their ideas hard, and those whom we find difficult to answer, to be to some extent "intemperate" or "offensive" (in the common sense of these words). We may condemn certain argumentative tactics as, in fact, base, intemperate, or mere provocation lacking intellectual depth, but Mill remains adamant that "law and authority have no business" in this matter.[140]

In Millian social and political institutions, the practice of free speech—where the citizen may believe he has a right not to experience offense, and yet it is sub-optimal to interfere—is the ideal crucible to reveal Mill's underappreciation of the virtue of courage.[141] As mentioned already, free speech often generates a variety of offenses to its participants and to those it addresses. We can strengthen the argument further in the most extreme example, by examining the grave offense to dignity occasioned by hate speech. The costs of hate speech are not distributed equally, falling inequitably on the shoulders of those targeted and accruing far less cost to speakers than to their targets. The harm of hate speech, Jeremy Waldron posits, is that it not only sows the seeds of hate against vulnerable segments of the population, but makes these

[139] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 59.
[140] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 61.
[141] Such examples also challenge the notion that *On Liberty* sets out a range of issues in which the state cannot interfere, socially or legislatively. It hints at Mill's more nuanced attempt to lay down "one simple principle" and build a range of exceptions, multi-dimensional harms, and practices in which it is nevertheless sub-optimal to interfere.

segments feel unwelcome, undermining the public good of inclusiveness and proper social standing (Waldron calls this "dignity").[142] The political aesthetics of a decent society, à la Edmund Burke, are valuable, not just as a show of decency to the outside observer but as a public display of "assurance" to those whose full livelihood depends on it.[143] Mill, not denying the obvious—that such speech may occasion serious offenses—nevertheless defends the practice of unfettered expression, mostly on the grounds of its consequences for the development of liberal individuality. His concern lies with both the speakers and the listeners in the public sphere (the need to hear diverse opinions being critical for the development of liberal individuality), whereas Waldron demonstrates a greater concern for the listeners and their sense of communal belonging. "Moral distress" and "mere offense" are just not the sort of "harm" the government has a charge to prohibit under the guidelines of Mill's Harm Principle. Waldron notes that were the Harm Principle to generate claims to interference in cases of moral distress, "a symptom of progress would be deployed as a justification for acting in a way that would bring progress to a halt."[144] Speech is not regulated by the liberal, well-ordered society because it forms part of an energizing diversity of thoughts in the free marketplace of ideas. For Mill, then, the consequences of Waldron's speech limits represent a potential indulgence of cowardice: the danger that limits may permit citizens' opinions to eventually go untested in the public sphere.

How Waldron squares his position on moral distress and Mill's Harm Principle with his well-known advocacy of restrictions on hate speech is unclear, but I surmise that he believes they are not in tension with one another because he interprets Mill's unqualified speech rights not as a blanket right to say what one pleases, but contingent upon the commitment of one's argument to some form of intellectual rigor and seriousness. Insofar as hate speech is not intellectually

[142] Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2012, p. 5.
[143] Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, p. 81.
[144] Jeremy Waldron, *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers, 1981-1991*, p. 125.

serious and aims mostly at provocation or attacking the dignity of its targets, thereby causing the type of harm that cannot be justified by its overriding consequences, we are justified in interfering and censuring this type of speech. In other words, moral distress has to do with offense taking and hate speech with fundamental dignity, the former of which it is not the state's duty to protect us against while the latter falls within the state's realm of protection.[145] However, Waldron's argument appears to foreclose the opportunity that a racist or bigot, for instance, could be sincere in his convictions (as opposed to merely aiming at provocation), as well as the opportunity for society to examine and correct his positions via public reflection and debate. In response to difficult questions about what constitutes "intellectual seriousness," Waldron erects predetermined standards that are best determined, in Mill's view, within the flow and exchange of argumentative dialogue itself.

In spite of the offense generated by free speech, Mill believes that the quantity and competition of ideas remedies the malady of imperfect knowledge held by citizens, and that this remedy in part justifies the occasional offense. Rather than residing within certain authority figures and the public's assenting to their beliefs, truth is best arrived at in closer approximations through a robust discussion of all the ideas in the proverbial marketplace. This position starts from the relativist one that nothing can be initially excluded from consideration, lest we slip into the dangerous trap of infallibility. To suppress any one belief is to risk curtailing what might be true—or more likely, contains kernels of truth—or, if not true either in itself or even partially, contributes importantly to testing and understanding what is true in a deeper manner.[146] Beyond

[145] Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech,* p. 15.

[146] There is potentially an even greater harm occasioned by free speech, i.e., that all the fundamental principles of a nation could erode under the constant and withering questioning that is the habitual condition of Mill's liberal society in *On Liberty*. I believe Mill would respond by arguing that the nation's principles, especially a progressive and decent nation's principles, ought to be put to the test of constant scrutiny and to withstand it, and that nations, like individuals, ought to tweak their principles in the light of the truth revealed by dialogue.

the issue of approximating truth, "complete liberty to hear what can be said for and against any moral and political opinion is the only means that fallible humans who are capable of rational persuasion have available to develop their deliberative capacities and thereby acquire competence to decide which opinions…are warranted."[147]

V. Conclusion

In sum, far from constituting a "harm" which warrants intervention by the Harm Principle, the case of "moral distress" occasioned by free speech is an unmistakable indication that liberal society contains the "many-sidedness" that Mill cherishes. It is not necessarily the battle itself which Mill relishes, as if he were some advocate of militant or combative exchange; unlike Nietzsche, ethical conflict for Mill is not an intrinsic but a derivative good. Diversity does not exist for its own sake, but to face one another in spirited debate, to put on vivid public display various life experiments and compare their relative merits, for the "improvement of mankind…demands variety, not uniformity."[148] Far from providing the grounds for interference, then, moral distress indicates that citizens take their views seriously. It may even be the harbinger of social and political progress—or at least the ingredients necessary for it, as per Mill's second degree perfectionism. For Mill, free speech is the best corrective mechanism we possess to suss out common error. Its robust practice alongside the Harm Principle is not naïve, but an essential part of Mill's science of ethology and the moral and character education of a liberal polity. Ethical confrontation is not a painless undertaking, for if citizens hold their opinions in the way Mill desires, they ought to experience some offense when they collide with the opinions of others. Mill advocates that individuals ought to be prepared to bear the social

[147] Jonathan Riley, "Mill's Neo-Athenian Model of Liberal Democracy," in Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras, eds., *J.S. Mill's Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007, p. 237.
[148] John M. Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind*, p. 200.

and political costs of their beliefs, while remaining protected against anyone going out of his way to physically harm another. And besides, says Mill, upon further reflection, many of the cases of putative moral distress are matters of choice and exaggeration: "There is no room for entertaining any such question [i.e., of intervention] when a person's conduct affects the interests of no persons besides himself, or needs not affect them *unless they like*."[149]

Mill fails to properly appreciate the essentiality of a virtue like courage in the rough and tumble atmosphere characterized by his social and political institutions as laid out in *On Liberty*, a fact that is quite glaring given the role of courage in helping Mill overcome the uncertainty in his own deep-seated beliefs during his intellectual crisis and transformation. This chapter has argued that courage is the most important virtue not only for the content of Millian character (i.e., "individuality"), but also to the way in which Mill envisions his prescribed social and political institutions contributing, procedurally, to character arising in citizens. But it has also argued that Mill defines individuality as in opposition to received wisdom, traditional concepts, and pre-modern sources of authority. This may be yet another reason why Mill makes no discernible attempts to define courage and appears to mention the virtue rather sparingly in the *Collected Works* (in fewer than ten passages, on my count), all the while exhibiting due concern for the examples in which society appears to be indulging citizens' cowardice. In other words, Mill does not display an equal concern for the courage/cowardice dichotomy, despite being a thinker who cares deeply about ethology and the acquisition of positive character traits in citizens (as opposed to the mere avoidance of negative ones). The chapter has argued that Mill's reluctance to define and address the concept of courage in a sustained manner, despite its importance to the making of his ideal citizen, can be explained through the lens of his deep relationship with Tocqueville. Quite simply, Mill thinks that pre-modern concepts like courage,

[149] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 84, emphasis mine.

addressed at length by Tocqueville, were no longer of his bourgeois world, and *On Liberty* is his clearest attempt to put forth a solution to the questions Mill inherits from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. *On Liberty* boldly breaks from everything that was too steeped in aristocratic or medieval tradition, arguing against the efficacy of their retention and highlighting their role in stymieing society's progress. Try as he might, Mill's attempts to cast away the efficacy of retaining elements of aristocratic traditions and practices, which he might lump together derisively under the category of "dead dogma," does not change the fact that what his social and political institutions most require is not just an avoidance of cowardice, but above all, a form of courage.

Although Mill has his concerns and complaints regarding certain trends in the modern age, his deep desire for humanity to shed the baggage of its overly-Romanticized past and embrace a new era where individuality entails the openness of choosing for oneself, could not be more different than Arendt's conviction that modernity's felt lack requires constant supplement from the distant past. While Mill, more often than not, scorns the intellectual crutch of received wisdom and traditions as inhibiting individual mental development, Arendt views modernity as a problem to be overcome precisely by reaching back to past practices at a time when modernity, for various historical reasons having to do with Marxism and the phenomenon of totalitarianism, found itself bereft of traditional sources of guidance. Chapter 4 concerns itself with Arendt's solution to the problem of modernity, deliberate acts of recovery from the ancient world—a historical and interpretive method that she argues is analogous to "pearl diving." As we shall see, Arendt is quite explicit that courage is one of the most important political virtues, but she is skeptical that modernity provides the soil for it to grow. Therefore, it is a prime contender for

the types of rediscovery Arendt advocates, but as we will soon see, the sources of such pearls are potentially problematic for the modern ethic of equality and democracy.

Chapter 4

"Pearl Diving:" Hannah Arendt and the Search for Sources of Modern Courage

"The ancients had heroes and put men on their stages; we, on the contrary, put only heroes on the stage and hardly have any men."
—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*[1]

I. Introduction

The preceding chapters have argued that courage experiences a tension with modernity which has been resolved in various ways. In Chapter 2, we saw in Tocqueville a strong advocate for the virtue of courage in the democratic world and yet a simultaneous skepticism that it could exist under the democratic conditions presented by the America he observed. Courage had been absorbed by and large by the new context of the bourgeois world of commercial activity. In Chapter 3, we saw Mill fall into the trap of short-changing courage through a reluctance to identify it (or any of its various analogues), even as the portrait of his liberal politics, which emerges primarily from *On Liberty*, makes clear that it requires courage. The chapter suggested that this reticence had its origins in Mill's desire to reduce the role of traditional sources of authority and inherited belief on character formation, both in his politics and his personal life, as well as in his development of the science of ethology itself, which was a means of ensuring (with scientific accuracy, no less) the ability to produce and reform various character types. In this chapter, we will see that Arendt also remains skeptical that the virtue of courage can exist in the modern context, but for wholly different reasons—i.e., it necessitates a so-called "act of recovery" of something lost from the ancient world.

[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, Ed. Allan Bloom, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1968, p. 32.

Arendt's driving concerns demonstrate considerable overlap with the questions posed by this thesis. Her main themes encompass the qualities requisite for public life and whether they can be found in the modern age, or whether modernity needs to reach back to the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans in an act of recovery aimed at rectifying our decaying political institutions.[2] Arendt's belief is that there is something distinctly lacking in the modern world, and, as it pertains to political practice in the ancient world, courage occupies pride of place in Arendt's thought as "the political virtue par excellence."[3] Arendt's idea of recovering these pearls of antiquity, moreover, means that her corpus of work speaks directly to the ancient and aristocratic provenance of courage and whether it can be recovered for a modern age.

Taking the ancient Greeks and Romans as her reference point, Arendt argues that the purpose of politics and political engagement is the survival and perpetuation of liberty. In order to comprehend Arendt's concern for a politics of freedom, we must also understand some of Arendt's biographical context. She endured the eighteen years of statelessness and eventually became an émigré to the United States, driven from her native Germany by Nazism, interned herself in a concentration camp in France, and wrote during the heights of the Cold War. Borrowing the phrase from Arthur Koestler, we may describe Arendt as an "internally bruised veteran of the totalitarian age" whose personal experience of alienation formed the basis of what she later described as a generally diffused trend throughout the modern age; she is uniquely suited to incorporate the "blessings of freedom" into her political theory, even if at times she is unable to hide her contempt for those she views as taking this precious gift for granted.[4]

---

[2] Cf. Mark Philp, "Republicanism and Liberalism: On Leadership and Political Order—A Review," *Democratization* 3 (1996): 383-419. See also J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974, p. 550.
[3] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998, p. 36.
[4] Quoted in Ian Buruma, *Murders in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, and the Limits of Tolerance*, London: Penguin, 2006, pp. 156-157.

Arendt's theory bears witness to the aftermath of totalitarian practice, which, as something wholly unprecedented, sundered traditional categories of political thought and the previous sources of judgment in politics. Jerome Kohn remarks that Arendt's experiences of totalitarianism never ceased to inform her work: she "discovered the meaning and the importance of the political by witnessing its negation in the multiform linkages of evil that were manifest in her lifetime."[5] Accordingly, Arendt utilizes her understanding of totalitarianism to theorize about politics with these lessons in mind. That is, while totalitarianism is not located entirely in her early writings, the entire corpus of Arendt's writing is mindful of the lessons of totalitarianism.[6]

Arendt remains relevant today, according to Roger Berkowitz, precisely because her studies of totalitarianism born out of her personal history give us insight into the breakdown of traditional class structures and political boundaries, and the nature of fidelity to leadership in mass political movements. Her description of twentieth-century totalitarianism revolves around a basic reality of isolation perhaps more important to understand now than ever before—that it "bases itself on loneliness"[7] and on "an alienation from political, social, and cultural life"[8]—"which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man."[9] Politics, for Arendt the only means we possess for building a common world together, has lost its esteem and seems foreign and burdensome to many. That isolation, the feeling of being "deserted by all human companionship," is no longer a fringe but commonplace experience, is paramount to Arendt's observations of the crossover between the totalitarian and post-totalitarian political eras. It is this

[5] Jerome Kohn, "Freedom: the priority of the political," *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana R. Villa, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 113-114.
[6] Cf. Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
[7] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973, p. 475.
[8] Quoted in Roger Berkowitz, "Why Arendt Matters: Revisiting 'The Origins of Totalitarianism,'" *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 18 Mar. 2017, <lareviewofbooks.org/article/arendt-matters-revisiting-origins-totalitarianism/.>
[9] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 475.

crossover which makes a section on her study of totalitarianism a useful starting point for the chapter, especially given that her study of totalitarianism informs so much of her analysis of the maladies inflicting modernity. It was Arendt herself who journeyed chronologically from studying totalitarianism as a "novel form of government," which denied traditional definitions of politics, to asking about the fundamentals of politics and political life, or what she describes as thinking about "what we are doing."[10]

The chapter's first section explains how Arendt's study of totalitarianism informs her conception of politics, particularly the irreducible importance of plurality to proper politics and the necessity of uncertainty in the political realm.[11] After explaining Arendt's conception of politics and plurality, by juxtaposing it to its antithesis in totalitarianism's attempt at "total domination"—i.e., to "organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual"—the chapter offers an explication of Arendt's method of recovering lost artifacts from the past which could reinvigorate political life in the present.[12] The chapter then presents Arendt's idea of political action, and why she believes the virtue of courage, specifically, is necessary for its completion—even as its instantiation in the modern world is highly unlikely without an act of recovery. Lastly, the chapter presents Arendt's solution of a political revitalization through local politics and problematizes her sources of courage for the modern world.

---

[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 5.
[11] Patricia Owens, "The International Origins of Hannah Arendt's Historical Method," *Political Power and Social Theory* 32 (2017): 37-62. Cf. also George Crowder, "Pluralism and Liberalism," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 293-305 for a strong counter-argument to the idea that liberalism necessarily issues in value pluralism and that it contributes to notions of tolerance, choice, and diversity. It may be that liberalism finds compatibility with pluralism, but there is nothing natural about the nexus between the two ideas. "Not only does pluralism provide no support for liberalism, it positively undermines the liberal case" (304). Crowder would later recant these arguments in *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*, New York: Continuum Books, 2002.
[12] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 438.

II. Diagnosing Modernity

Arendt believes that modernity represents a corruption of traditional political life, which was capped by a complete "moral collapse" in the tragic twentieth century experience of totalitarianism. Gone is the public space which serves as a common realm to meet one another and debate, discuss, and deliberate our shared business. Indeed, totalitarianism sought the diminution (and eventual extinction) of politics and its association with freedom; it replaced political freedom with the certainty of scientific theory all for the sake of societal unity.[13] What we might call the "plight of modernity," i.e., Arendt's deep misgivings about it, is a lack of appreciation for (and sometimes outright destruction of) plurality and the elevation of a type of science and scientific rationality as the standard of knowledge which has decimated our toleration for uncertainty and given way to a desire for certainty at all costs. Within the political tradition, Arendt traces both of these characteristics to Marxist thought. These characteristics of modernity risk confusing man as to the true definition of politics in favor of one premised on mere power and fear, creating a forceful divorce between him and the space in which he explores his shared similarities and differences with his fellows. Herein lie some of Arendt's uses of courage as a virtue which I will address later—i.e., to embrace plurality as the basis of politics, as well as accept the uncertainty and open-endedness of political action—and why she believes she is reviving the idea of plurality and a robust political sphere.

Although the causes of totalitarianism are complex and have little to do with individual national characters, Arendt identifies European imperialism writ large, which represented the bourgeois conquest for power vanquishing the republican concern for the public realm, as a

[13] It ought to be noted that, while totalitarianism helped spur some of these developments, the diminution of politics and collapse of the political sphere had begun well before the rise of twentieth century totalitarianism. Arendt comments: it was easy to destroy "the privacy and private morality of people who thought of nothing but safeguarding their private lives" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 338). I believe totalitarianism is best viewed as a catastrophic and capstone event to some of the trends which existed well before it.

major contributing factor. In turn, imperialism employed the tool of racism when colonizing Europeans came into contact with aboriginal populations, permitting racial and ethnic categories, rather than citizenship, to be the prism through which totalitarian states viewed huge numbers of their inhabitants. This began a process of delegitimization of political institutions and led to a decline of public faith in them, Arendt notes, by allowing them to become co-opted into pursuing narrow and racist interests rather than tending to the shared business of a plural society.[14]

Yet, one of the most disturbing conclusions in Arendt's inquiry into totalitarianism was the extent to which it relied, at least ostensibly, upon political institutions and mass democratic support, even if once in power, totalitarian rulers sought to subvert and destroy democratic political institutions. Strictly speaking, Arendt notes, Hitler's ascension to power was legitimate in terms of elections won by mechanisms of majority voting (though Stalin's was not). Without the support of *hoi polloi*, both Hitler and Stalin would not have survived the intra-party struggles and internal and external crises of their respective regimes. It would be a "serious mistake," she says, "to forget…that the totalitarian regimes, so long as they are in power, and the totalitarian leaders, so long as they are alive, 'command and rest upon mass support' up to the end."[15]

Once in power, however, the politics-destroying aspect of modern totalitarianism rested in its indiscriminate use of violence, rather than as an instrumental means to gain and hold power. Terror in the modern age became the *essence* of totalitarianism, marking modern totalitarianism as an entirely "novel form of government."[16] Through the seductive properties of a single, unifying ideology, totalitarian regimes yielded a unique level of explanatory power over an increasingly complex world, providing a level of comfort and a sense of purpose to those

[14] Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, part 2.
[15] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 306. Initial consent and support is thus crucial, as continuous ratcheting up of repression begets continuous adjustment to new rules and new contexts.
[16] Dana Villa, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008, p. 2.

previously struggling, displaced, or uprooted by wars, revolutions, and the Great Depression. The law-like rules generated from totalitarian ideologies gained a transcendent authority and commanded obedience through the firmness of their purported logic. In the end, totalitarian regimes created concrete forms of domination which shaped their subjects' actions and thoughts in an attempt to mold a new type of man. Through "anticipatory obedience," says Timothy Snyder, "a citizen who adapts in this way is teaching power what it can do."[17] But as we shall soon see, terror does not have political power as its provenance because, far from encouraging men to act in a plural community of others, it holds together through the ubiquity of the informer, atomizing men by constructing an environment where literally any person might be informing. (Rather than a desire to share in power, fear drives citizens to political engagement from impotence—a desire to dominate or else be dominated.)

Such violence left no space for politics, as defined by Arendt, and sought the withering away of political action, eventually devolving into the mere "administration of things."[18] The communist view of the state, for instance, yearned for a society where politics and participation were superfluous, where political practice and political action faded along with the contours of the state. The major *political* problem Arendt identifies in totalitarianism is, paradoxically, the lack of a genuinely political perspective and space for the practice of politics (rather than rule by decree), or as she describes it, a lack of understanding of political possibilities. (In a similar vein, Tocqueville warned about the destruction of the political space between men and their concomitant isolation as despotism's "best guarantee of its own permanence."[19]) In Arendt's

[17] Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017, pp. 17-18.
[18] Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978, p. 321.
[19] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Trans. George Lawrence, Ed. J.P. Mayer, New York: Harper Perennial, 2006, p. 509. For the argument that totalitarianism has become synonymous with the concepts of

thinking, it is this idea, which views political rule as deriving from and perpetuating forms of inequality, in both its colonial manifestations and in Marxist doctrine, as the source of a deep skepticism of politics and the sundering of traditional forms of political authority. By reducing state power to nothing more than an instrument of class antagonism and conceptualizing politics as another means of exploitation of oppressor over the oppressed, Arendt believes Marxism contributed to the deep void in the modern world's political imagination.

Under various instantiations of Marxist regimes, the political sphere and plurality of persons became supplanted by society as a whole—the attempt to present society as one consolidated, tidy political unit. In the words of a political prisoner, "The opposition between the interests of the individual and those of society as a whole disappears" to the point where "*society as a whole*…[is] the subject of freedom."[20] Even if it is far more likely that politics had been forbidden as an attempt to reach unity than that politics had failed to exist because unity was present already, in destroying society's plurality, totalitarianism destroyed the entire basis for politics. Judith Shklar helpfully reminds us that those practicing politics "have abandoned certainty and agreement as goals worthy of free people" in favor of the marked ethos of determined multiplicity.[21] (Indeed, the only basic agreement which we are likely to reach, short of the use of "force or fraud," is "to use political means" to govern society.[22]) A plurality of views presents the opportunity for alternative speculation about what is, but more importantly what could be. What is so unique about twentieth century totalitarianism is precisely its lack of anything recognizably approaching Arendt's conception of politics. In opposition, she declares

---

despotism, tyranny, and authoritarianism in modern political parlance, see the Introduction to Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny: From Plato to Arendt*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996.

[20] Nikolai Bukharin, *The Prison Manuscripts: Socialism and Its Culture*, trans. George Shriver, New York: Seagull, 2006, pp. 121, 151. Bukharin's description of the destruction of plurality mirrors criticisms leveled variously at Plato's *Republic* or Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

[21] Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984, p. 249.

[22] Bernard Crick, *In Defense of Politics*, 5th ed. London: Continuum, 2000, p. 55.

in the *Human Condition*, her work which best explores the conditions necessary for politics, plurality is "acting and speaking together…the condition of all forms of political organization."[23]

In Arendt's depiction, Marxists viewed the modern, bourgeois state as far too conciliatory towards a plurality of viewpoints—creating the need for peacefully governing a diverse society—which the Bolshevists eventually eliminated with the use of a single vanguard party. Stalin even removed factions within this vanguard, since "factions inside the Communist party could not possibly be anything else than the expression of the interests of 'dying classes'…[dealt with] as one would with a hostile class or with traitors."[24] And it was Marx himself who theorized that one of the indicators of a declining society with "inner contradictions" was that its citizens had to spend their time engaging in politics and political thought, as opposed to economic production, philosophy, and other leisurely activities. Politics is a superfluous activity if society can be made homogeneous. As Arendt conceives of politics, the destruction of plurality defies two of the most basic Aristotelian truths: first, that the polis is an immutable collection of diverse interests and personalities, and second, that politics is the "master science," the activity through which all of these diverse interests are brought to bear on the other sciences and activities concerning the limited resources of any society.[25] Marx's sociological science of class history vanquished Aristotle's science of politics—all for the sake of uniformity. This is precisely why Arendt associates Marx with the end of a political tradition, and why she believes herself to be reviving the idea of a dynamic public sphere whose openness and uncertainty requires the possession of particular character traits like courage.

---

[23] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 202.
[24] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books, 2005, pp. 203-204.
[25] Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, ed. R.F. Stalley, trans. Ernest Barker, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, Book II, pp. 38-39.

Arendt's advocacy of a robust, plural public sphere does not imply contempt for privacy or the private sphere. In fact, totalitarianism's will to destroy every aspect of freedom, even the destruction of men's private lives, contributed to it its unprecedented nature. Like Tocqueville's modern despotism which reaches the depths of a citizen's soul, Arendt observes totalitarianism as "never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology…totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within."[26] Firm in its belief in the ultimate plasticity of human nature, totalitarianism operates from "the conviction that everything is possible—and not just permitted, morally or otherwise, as was the case with early nihilism."[27] Their plurality annihilated, loneliness became the only thing which distinguished human beings from other animal species.

Arendt identifies the mechanism by which totalitarian movements destroyed plurality and the space for politics as a belief in historical progress.[28] Steven Smith describes progress as "the master trope by which modernity understands itself."[29] To believe in an emancipatory future or a utopia, one must believe in the concept of progress and inevitability, Arendt argues, as they are the only things keeping those laboring now for future generations' profit.[30] The concept of a higher-than-human progress under totalitarianism was both scientific and historical in nature—verging on dogma. Progress wrapped itself in the cloak of ideology, usually as a critique of society and a prophecy for a perfectly just and stable utopia based on a single, predictive,

[26] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 325.
[27] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 87.
[28] The word progress out to be deserving of a capital P to indicate the divine heights and refuge from reality that the idea reached as part of many totalitarian ideologies.
[29] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents: Making and Unmaking the Bourgeois from Machiavelli to Bellow*, New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2016, p. xi.
[30] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970, p. 27.

ineluctable, and explanatory "logic of history."[31] Arendt pins the "tremendous intellectual change" which allowed this type of dogma to emerge in the world on Darwin's understanding of nature and history as irrepressible movements of Progress and necessity—the introduction of a "natural law of all courses of events."[32]

What allowed Arendt to link the two disparate totalitarian phenomena—and their respective leaders, Hitler and Stalin—was their similar, anti-political uses of the laws of Progress to execute absolute authority and terror purportedly predicated upon either natural or historical processes. These laws, according to Arendt, which purported to govern human actions from without, fundamentally denied the plurality of politics and the open possibilities of political action that flow from it because they ascribed to "science" that which Arendt thinks only human action and freedom capable. That is, Nazism only pronounced what "science" and nature said about races and persons, while Soviet Communism did the same for classes in the historical process as outlined by Marx. Politics had become a neurotic Freudian disease whose hypertensions scientific government could "fix."

Arendt's concern is that "'scientificality' [*faux* science] is indeed the common feature of all the totalitarian regimes of our time."[33] (In addition to being products of a democratic age, then, totalitarianism is an unintended product of a scientific age where even whole societies can be remade in a more "rational" image.) The faith Nazism and Bolshevism placed in their respective leaders as the exclusive practitioners of "sciences," augmented by the increased epistemological certainty claimed by modern science and known only to those with access to *arcana imperii* (despite the existence of an infallible doctrine on the course of history and/or the

[31] While this explanation applies to Marxist historical materialism, it can apply equally to the historical and scientific theories employed by National Socialism in Germany.
[32] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 171.
[33] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 204.

pronouncements of science), belies the fact that political questions by definition do not have "right answers" because they are open-ended in nature. For Arendt, the idea of "zeitgeist theories"—that there is a true and right response to a given political situation—is itself an anti-political position to hold because it denies human plurality and the radical openness of politics. The nexus between the two great instantiations of totalitarianism, therefore, is not only their use of science and history as nothing more than power wrapped in the cloak of indubitable force, but what resulted in the greatest destruction of human plurality in the twentieth century—that Nazism assigned to nature the selfsame (dubious) pseudo-scientific logic which Marxism assigned to history.[34]

The great threats to plurality in the modern world, then, are 1) the magnetism of the level of epistemic certainty provided by modern science with its mathematically-inspired method, presenting itself as an exclusive model of epistemic certainty, and 2) the language of necessity and a desire for unity that has no place in what Arendt defines as politics.[35] "Scientism" is the seductive language of technocratic and totalitarian regimes, not societies engaged in politics; it is the desire for certainty where matters are essentially political in nature. The danger is that the quest for certainty spells the potential death of any political virtues—of prudence in decision-making, of flexibility, adaptability, and compromise in negotiation, of creativity in formulating policy solutions, and of courage in tackling complex political challenges. In fact, virtues occasionally provide the means of introducing certainty and stability into situations and contexts

[34] Perhaps most macabre in the defense of totalitarianism and its reduction of plural beings to one single man was Bertolt Brecht, who, upon visiting Russia during the Moscow Show Trials, said of the victims of Stalin's regime: "the more innocent they are, the more they deserve to die" (quoted in *Men in Dark Times*, 227). Brecht went on to write *Measures Taken*, which explores the question of when it is justified to kill large numbers of innocents in the name of the Party. See Bertolt Brecht, *Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Bloomsbury Press, 2010.

[35] What was historically unique about totalitarian ideologies was the irrevocable fusion of the previously separate concepts of understanding and action, the sundering of all difference between the two activities; understanding the world through a totalitarian ideology *demanded* action. Indeed, the Marxist vision of history as class struggle is inadequate to the possessor of such an ideology if disjointed from its call to remedy such injustices.

characterized by uncertainty. Politics is the effort to govern a polity characterized by disunity and embrace its creative potential. Arendt goes even further and says that political action has the potential to generate "miracles," and specifically rejects totalitarianism's claim that "choices" are necessarily determined.[36] As politics arises from the constraints imposed by plurality—and the idea that plurality is worthy of preservation in societies too complex for arbitrary rule—it is a conservation device, despite its uncertainty.

Arendt defines plurality, the most important underlying condition of politics, with an eye to the twentieth century's totalitarian movements and the creeping level of "scientism" in politics. But she means more by "plurality" than the simple existence of other people. "Plurality" means the existence of others who have their own unique experiences and perspectives, their own stories, and their own desire to be remembered by being witnessed publicly by others and witnessing them in turn. (We may even recall Mill's felicitous phrase "many-sidedness.") Otherness, Arendt writes, "is an important aspect of plurality, the reason why all our definitions are distinctions, why we are unable to say what anything is without distinguishing it from something else," just as her own definition of plurality possesses the lessons of totalitarianism in mind.[37] Totalitarianism highlighted the vital importance of speech acts for Arendt; acting and speaking freely not only draw our attention to society's plurality, but they serve as avenues of recognition and mutual disclosure to our fellows. Arendt comments that through action and speech, a "who" becomes tangible *ex post facto*.[38] Drawing on the Athenian idea of *parrhesia*—free speech that had its roots in the idea that all Athenian citizens had equal standing in their democracy—action could be retold only through speech, otherness could be established only through the encounter of speech, and politics could be initiated only through

[36] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 177-178.
[37] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 176.
[38] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 186.

speech. Rather than constructing a modern definition of free speech as a bulwark against tyrannical polities, for Arendt, speech is coextensive with politics: in Athens, "freedom of speech was the tool of self-government."[39] So crucial was this understanding of speech to Arendt's political theory that she begins *The Human Condition* by noting that, "wherever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes man a political being."[40]

The emphasis placed on plurality bolsters what might be termed Arendt's unique "narrative approach," which seeks deeper understanding through experience and storytelling. That is, we all have stories to tell, unique perspectives to share, and reflexive learning to do from one another. The "narrative approach"—sometimes political, sometimes literary, sometimes historical—helps illustrate the importance of inclusion and understanding. As she describes in her essay "Understanding & Politics," plurality as a necessary condition of politics gives rise to the potential of "understanding, as distinguished from having correct information and scientific knowledge…a complicated process which never produces unequivocal results. It is an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, try to be at home in the world."[41] To take the example at hand of totalitarianism, Arendt found that by increasing the number of stories to which she exposed herself—by listening to and telling stories of Nazis, Holocaust survivors, soldiers, diplomats, pacifists—she deepened her understanding of the event under consideration.

Perhaps the most poignant example which illustrates this lesson and Arendt's remarkable commitment to pluralism as the prime condition of politics is the short work *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which also generated some of the greatest controversy of her career. Arendt attended

[39] Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, p. 30.
[40] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 3.
[41] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, pp. 307-308.

Adolf Eichmann's 1961 trial in Jerusalem, and her "report on the banality of evil" shocked many people, especially her fellow Jews. In addition to faulting many Jewish authorities for collaborating with the Nazis—she argued they had the choice of nonparticipation, even if outright resistance was impossible—Arendt chastised the prosecution for their handling of the trial. The parade of witnesses who came to testify about their experiences in concentration camps offended Arendt, *not because she objected to the Jewish survivors finally having a chance to tell their stories, but because only Jews were allowed to tell their stories.* "In this respect," she wrote, "perhaps even more significantly than in others, the deliberate attempt at the trial to tell only the Jewish side of the story distorted the truth, even the Jewish truth."[42] Although Arendt suffered a reputational beating, her point was firm: the opportunity for understanding through a kind of "representative" thinking perished in the steady stream of similar witnesses.

Arendt's controversial but incisive point—that victims cannot tell the entire story themselves—reinforces her call for plurality and understanding. As she continues to remind her readers, this was no ordinary trial, and conventional wisdom and standard procedure no longer sufficed. In a more sympathetic passage about the prosecution, she comments that they faced an unprecedented dilemma in prosecuting Eichmann because they "[were] unable to understand a mass murderer who had never killed."[43] Eichmann's role in the Holocaust presented an enormous challenge to international law, to psychological understanding, and to moral judgment, not because he was the first to commit or even condone genocide but because the totalitarian system shattered "our categories of thought and standards of judgment."[44] Importantly, Eichmann suffered from "an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody

[42] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York: Penguin, 2006, p. 12.
[43] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 215.
[44] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 318.

else."[45] Telling his story not only permitted Arendt to understand him and to hold him responsible, but it also highlighted that *what Eichmann suffered from more than anything was a lack of exposure to human plurality*; his existence within a totalitarian regime, and worse yet, within the echo chamber of its leadership, prevented his exposure to diverse viewpoints and opinions, thereby curtailing his ability to think critically. Arendt casts Eichmann, then, as the epitome of the isolated, lonely man who lacks normal social relationships, produced and molded by modern mass society.

Based on her studies of totalitarianism, Arendt outlines three principle requirements which for her are fundamental to the existence of meaningful politics. First, she insists that memorable and political actions begin with an acknowledgement that "not one man, but men, inhabit the earth."[46] "One result of her magisterial study of totalitarianism," Kohn notes, "was to recognize the capacity for freedom as the source of human plurality, itself the condition through which politics is possible and without which it is not."[47] A man may fabricate something—a piece of furniture, a weapon, a novel—in isolation, but he can never act in isolation. The existence of other people—the initial and superficial definition of plurality—is what allows for speech and action, and thus for politics. "Only the experience of sharing a common human world with others who look at it from different perspectives can enable us to see reality in the round and to develop a shared common sense," she writes.[48] This point becomes all the more poignant given Arendt's observation that the typical Nazi party member was not a fanatic but

[45] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 12.
[46] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 234.
[47] Jerome Kohn, "Freedom: the priority of the political," p. 119.
[48] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. xvii.

lived a degenerate, bourgeois life of privatism with a "single-minded devotion to matters of family and career."[49]

Second, she highlights the ability to think from another's perspective. In perhaps the most unforgiving passage of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt describes what she considers Eichmann's ultimate failing: beyond his participation in some of the most evil acts man had ever seen, "a more specific, and also more decisive, flaw in Eichmann's character was his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view."[50] Eichmann's greatest sin, according to Arendt, was the all-too-common—and therefore likely to be committed by anyone—sin of refusing to think. Thinking necessitates judgment, and she based her assessment of the quality of political judgments on a person's ability to think from another's perspective.[51] This had the effect of elevating "politics and political action to the level of epic and tragedy," notes Sheldon Wolin, "not in order to exonerate actors from their misdeeds or to glorify a particular nation, but to impose a demand upon those who presumed to decide great public matters."[52]

Third, Arendt stresses not to fear the "other" but to actively seek enrichment in multiple perspectives. This obligation does not require magnanimity or empathy so much as an acceptance of plain reality. As Arendt notes, "the language of the Romans, perhaps the most

---

[49] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 338. Arendt calls these men, quite harshly, "philistines." Commenting on Arendt's use of the term philistine, Steven Smith remarks that "the term 'philistine' was a virtual curse word of German romanticism used to designate the most cowardly and despicable form of bourgeois life" (*Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 219). That Arendt associates such bourgeois privatism with cowardice presages her argument that public life is exactly the opposite: courageous.

[50] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 47-48.

[51] In the series of lectures that ultimately became Arendt's *Life of the Mind*, she reiterates the impetus for the work through the following question: "Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or to attract attention, regardless of results and specific content, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it?" Arendt argued that the ability and the commitment to think for one's self—which also encompasses a commitment to think from someone else's perspective—precluded the performance of evil actions. (Quoted in Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971, p. 5.)

[52] Sheldon S. Wolin, "Hannah Arendt and the Ordinance of Time," Social Research 44 (Spring 1977): 91.

political people we have known, used the words 'to live' and 'to be among men' (*inter homines esse*) or 'to die' and 'to cease to be among men' (*inter homines esse desinere*) as synonyms."[53] The type of solitude incurred by a withdrawal from the world, manifesting itself in various philosophical or religious schools of thought, is "a kind of death."[54] The "other" need not be the enemy, as his or her existence is a necessary condition for the generation of political meaning through the exchange of stories and viewpoints.[55]

The uncertainty of politics and political action and the desire for epistemic certainty akin to that of scientific inquiry are hallmarks of the modern age, trends that led to a "crystallization of elements of Western history" and eventually the catastrophic twentieth-century experience of totalitarianism.[56] For Arendt, the totalitarian experience demonstrates that fear and alienation from the world—the exact opposite of care for it—is fraught with danger because it makes politics impossible and totalitarianism attractive to the lonely, worldless masses. It also hints at the value of a stable political realm and the importance of constantly maintaining political institutions, whose existence is not natural but constructed, lest they fall under the spell of destructive forces. As we shall see later, courage is thus a critical virtue to maintaining plurality, to finding comfort in uncertainty, and to upholding political reasons as good reasons for doing something. Courage is the corrective measure necessary to overcome the desire for surety and to countenance the risk inherent in political action. Politics and the political process are sometimes akin to darkness preventing foresight, which requires courage to carry on despite the inability to see.

[53] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 8.
[54] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 20.
[55] The two are not mutually exclusive: the disclosure inherent in mutual exchange may reveal that two participants are in fact enemies of some kind.
[56] Jerome Kohn, "Freedom: the priority of the political," p. 114.

III. Recovering the Pearls of Antiquity

The phenomenon of totalitarianism marked the existential stakes of Arendt's political and historical project—"nothing less than human nature is at stake"—and guided her arrival at the idea of plurality as irreducible for politics.[57] Marxism and totalitarianism, for Arendt, represent irreversible and bespoke developments in modern politics, tearing asunder the previous fabric of political understanding, as a result of which modern man lives in a discrete moment in time between knowledge of the past and an uncertain future. The thread of tradition from the past which transmitted itself generation to generation for centuries has lost its authority in the modern world. The individual, in the past bound by these sources of traditional authority, has become the locus of his own political and moral authority without the requisite tools to guide him. *Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament*—"our inheritance was left to us by no testament," and the absence of testament means the rupture of tradition and a resultant infirmity of collective memory.[58] Here Arendt follows Tocqueville's observation about a modernity which has "no comparison with anything that the world has ever before witnessed…I found no parallel to what is occurring before my eyes; as the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity."[59]

Exposing a desire for epistemic and ontological certainty at all costs, and a willingness to sacrifice even politics itself, Arendt's methodology is an archaeological and historical one reaching back to the past—where sources of courage emerge as remedies to the modern cowardice displayed in the face of uncertainty. Her solution, as we shall see, is to embark on an act of "recovery" and relearning stretching back to our distant past—all the way to the Greco-Roman world—not in order to restore a world that was lost, but to supplement modernity and

[57] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 459.
[58] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 3.
[59] Quoted in Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 276.

remedy its shortcomings, once again gain appreciation for the importance of plurality, and to understand what political action and political imagination could be in the modern world. One may describe this project as similar to Nietzsche's method of "monumental history," in which the historian looks to the past for exemplary models of conduct to "illuminate" the present and to encourage certain aspects of modernity to repair themselves to their once-great status. "The purpose of monumental history is to encourage and inspire people of the present by turning to the glories of the past."[60]

Arendt's studies and training as a classicist drew her attention to what she considers to be worthwhile elements of pre-modern political life to recover for the sake of revitalizing modernity. Arendt advocates this act of recovery precisely because of her approach to history as more a record of "pearl diving" than a faithful writing of "true," chronological events. Her justification for this methodology—if one may even call it that—is that traditional tools and categories cannot capture unprecedented historical events. She adopts the beautiful image of the pearl—something whose mollusk was once alive but now glistens in the depths, waiting to be raised, examined, and cherished—as a metaphor for her approach to political theory because she understands history as a process of interpretation, not explanation. To develop the metaphor further, history only comes into being when a diver explores the depths, raises certain pearls, and leaves others behind. (Arendt's propensity for pearl diving, for selecting and examining pieces of history, for favoring certain stories over others, for discussing limited aspects of political culture, for engaging parts of texts but almost never the whole, has been maligned by some of her critics.[61]) In an article about Arendt's controversial approach to history, Judith Shklar makes the observation that Arendt's method was more than a personal preference, as it carried

[60] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 247.
[61] Cf. Jakub Novák, "Understanding and Judging History: Hannah Arendt and Philosophical Hermeneutics," Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy II (2010): 481-504.

important ramifications for her conception of politics. "[Arendt] became convinced that the notion of history as an inevitable process contributed materially to the mentality of totalitarian leaders…It is therefore hardly astonishing that she resorted to so different a way of considering the past. It is selective, dwelling only on those moments that have a constructive present bearing, and it emphasizes the avoidable in contrast to the inevitable."[62] Her goal, it seems, was to tell the tragic stories of history as if they might have been otherwise, in order for us to learn from and understand them. In a paradox that Arendt understands, hope for the future only arises from an understanding of the tragedy of the past.

In Arendt's words, "whenever an event occurs that is great enough to illuminate its own past, history comes into being. Only then does the chaotic maze of past happenings emerge as a story which can be told, because it has a beginning and an end."[63] Listening to, telling, and retelling these stories forms the basis of Arendt's theory of politics. Arendt teaches us where to begin our search for political meaning: in language, in stories, in names, in myths, and in national history. She understands that one of the most potent antidotes to political power is a people's innate ability to tell a story with a compelling narrative. As she says, "even though stories are the inevitable results of action, it is not the actor but the storyteller who perceives and 'makes' the story."[64] For Arendt, finding meaning was not a quest for some unchanging truth but rather the pursuit of understanding and acceptance.

As a strategy for the recovery of these ancient pearls, as it were, Arendt pursues as many narrative perspectives of an event as possible; she searches for countless stories, and weaves

---

[62] Judith Shklar, "Rethinking the Past," *Social Research* 44 (1977): 87. Interestingly, Tocqueville, too, wondered why "'the doctrine of necessity…is so attractive to those who write history in democratic ages.' The reason, he believed, lay in the anonymity of an egalitarian society, 'where the traces of individual action upon nations are lost,' so that 'men are led to believe that…some superior force [is] ruling over them'" (Quoted in Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 103.)

[63] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 319.

[64] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 192.

many tales together. This narrative approach to history and politics, an approach designed both to inform and to instruct, is controversial among political theorists precisely because Arendt refuses to feign social scientific neutrality. Failing to analyze from an Archimedean point, her readers always know her views on any given subject. As Lisa Disch remarks, "storytelling signals [Arendt's] resistance against the dictate that the political thinker must withdraw to a vantage point beyond the social world in order to understand its relations of power and adjudicate its conflicts of interest."[65] Arendt was simply not interested in "objectivity" as it is typically understood. In fact, she sought a redefinition of the concept of "disinterestedness" altogether. In reply to colleagues who accused her of sentimentality, moralizing, and failing to be objective, especially in works such as *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt argued that her narrative approach to history was truer to the nature of events and thus, in a sense, more "objective" than traditional history. "In this sense," she writes, "I think that a description of the [concentration] camps as hell on earth is more 'objective,' that is, more adequate to their essence than statements of a purely sociological or psychological nature." She goes further, claiming that, "to describe the concentration camps *sine ira* is not to be 'objective,' but to condone them."[66] In her definition, "objectivity" does not only refer to an absence of relationship between the object of study and the subject, but something akin to a cold, emotionless approach to historical phenomena. "Arendt seems to hold the view that emotional response caused by the phenomenon in us—such as outrage—essentially belongs to its unique nature, and should be taken into account for that reason, rather than put into brackets."[67] Arendt's redefinition of objectivity resembles her emphasis on understanding over explanation, on interpretation over the

[65] Lisa T. Disch, "More Truth than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory* 21 (1993): 668.
[66] Hannah Arendt, "[The Origins of Totalitarianism]: A Reply," Review of Politics 15 (1953): 79.
[67] Jakub Novák, "Understanding and Judging History: Hannah Arendt and Philosophical Hermeneutics," p. 486.

gathering of "facts." Her failure to be "objective" in the usual sense of the word is the crux of her narrative approach.[68]

To return to one of our earlier examples, in order to understand Eichmann's role in the Final Solution, Arendt concentrated on his mediocrity and his obedience instead of on his moral depravity and supposed political power. In her essay on Isak Dinesen in *Men in Dark Times*, Arendt praised the wisdom of Dinesen's storytelling instead of the accuracy of her reporting on a story that happened to be true.[69] Arendt frequently employs a dictum from Dinesen in favor of her preferred narrative approach: "all sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them."[70] Even in her many criticisms of Karl Marx, Arendt focuses more on the problems with his storytelling and his interpretations of history than on the "fact" that his socialistic vision did not turn out as planned.[71] The current that runs through all of her work, whether she is writing about history, politics, or literature, is the desire to capture and record stories that give meaning—to polish and preserve those cherished pearls.

IV. The Courage to *Do* Politics

Having explained Arendt's adoption of the methodology of storytelling as a means of retrieving and reifying lost but necessary political ideals, this section explains why Arendt believes the virtue of courage to be essential to *doing* politics—even if it is likely that courage will not be found in modern societies short of such an act of pearl diving. Positioning herself against the modern withering of politics and the rise of bureaucratic administration, it is no surprise that Arendt's theory of politics springs forth from the idea that politics takes place in a

[68] Arendt's approach to political theory relates to the German debate within the social sciences between *verstehen* and *erklären*, interpretive understanding vs. law-governed explanation, with Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey contributing to this debate.
[69] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970, pp. 95-109.
[70] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 175.
[71] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 159-165.

realm of human freedom that is unattainable in the private realm. Man must *create* and *maintain* the public sphere over and against nature, which tends not towards the maintenance of public institutions but towards their destruction. Arendt's main contention is that politics offers those engaged in it the opportunity, if they muster the requisite courage, to introduce novelty into the world—that "miracles" and change are possible we know because of our own natality.[72] At its best, politics represents the introduction of something spontaneous, new, and unexpected. While science prides itself on replicability and predictability, the courage of political action represents a free will and indeterminacy that even the best science cannot hope to predict; politics must resist the human tendency towards the comfort and certainty of ideologies and theories and embrace the messy world of plurality and narratives. Arendt's political world is thus one which resists the rise of intellectual problem-solvers with an authoritative "science" of political decision-making, manipulating facts to fit their intellectual theories. Her vision of politics is fundamentally at odds with the bureaucratic politics of the modern era because, like totalitarianism, it sunders our understanding of politics. Even in Western societies, if freedom is conceived as freedom from politics (North America) or freedom as the centralized administration of things constituting our basic needs (Europe), then true politics faces grave challenges.

To Arendt, technocracy follows a similar pattern to totalitarianism in terms of its reasoning and fascination with scientific solutions, though to a lesser extreme. Advocates of technocratic government envisage it as "rescuing" politics from uncertainty and the "evils" of political compromise. (On the contrary, Habermas and others claim that Arendt's most important contribution to political theory is the rescue of the intersubjective essence of political action from the threat of the technocrat.[73]) It is the belief of the technocrat that all of society's

[72] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 178.
[73] Jürgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," Social Research 44 (1977): 3.

ills are technical, hence solvable by the use of science and technology (something Heidegger, Arendt's teacher, identifies as a kind of narcissism at the species-level). Inherent in technocratic doctrine is the belief that somehow politics is not the real business of the state. Politics was precisely the activity that accentuated division and destroyed unity, so the advocate of technocracy blames politics for the very reason it exists—viz., diversity amidst order. To govern technocratically is to make decisions without utilizing the institutional infrastructure to measure the various demands of the polity. The technocrat, guided by ideology but also by science, simply knows best the priority of the challenges to address and the policy solutions to tackle them. Arendt fears a world of "compulsive egalitarianism" in which the ancient heroic ideal of the man in the public square finds itself replaced by administrators as the true heroes (even as the anonymity of these administrators is also simultaneously anti-heroic); they alone will rescue man from the dilemmas of politics and the pains of life.[74] But the harm and human degradation in such a system is that this vision of administration will occur only if technocrats see men as things, mere objects with which the bureaucracy must deal, and not agents of change and political action in their own right.[75]

Arendt attributes to modernity a rise in the belief that bureaucratic administration is the proper form of government for men living together in an equal society. Even though bureaucracy is an attempt to replace politics in favor of rule-based decision-making, it does not somehow rid the world of the conditions of political rule, while having the additional difference that it does do away with many elements of political accountability. "In the stead of the tyrant's arbitrary decisions, we find haphazard settlements of universal procedures, settlements which are

[74] Wayne F. Allen, "*Homo Aristocus*: Hannah Arendt's Elites," Idealistic Studies 13 (1983): 226.
[75] Cf. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, New York: Harper Collins, 1982.

without either malice or arbitrariness because there is no will behind them, but to which there is also no appeal."[76] Quite simply, when nobody is in charge, nobody is responsible.

In the *Human Condition*, as well as a series of essays called *Men in Dark Times*, Arendt focuses on explicating the fundamental characteristics of the political realm and delineating it from other realms, placing political action above all other activities which comprise the *vita activa*, or active life (roughly equivalent to Aristotle's *bios politikos*).[77] She is most illuminating about her concept of politics by employing a familiar Arendtian tactic: juxtaposing it against what politics is not, as she did with the contrast to Marxism and totalitarianism. Rather than remaining a space of disclosure through dialogue, the public sphere has become a dark zone of confusion. Modernity has carved out a vast private space into which many men place their most important pursuits, possibly because the "light that illuminates the public domain is much too harsh to be flattering."[78] Meanwhile, "it is the function of the public realm to throw light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in which, they can show in deed and word, for better and worse, who they are and what they can do."[79] Darkness has come in the sense that this illumination, which was always part of the disclosure inherent in the public realm, has been extinguished as the tide of modernity has given short shrift to the political significance of the *vita activa* and as the other elements of it, namely, labor and work, have subsumed it. Political action entails an "unveiling disclosure" of the self in thought and speech to others, but the modern

[76] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 78.
[77] Arendt divides the *vita activa* into three subcategories: labor, work, and action. Labor consists of the things we utilize to preserve life and meet its biological necessities. We have to be prepared to join the labor cycle if we are to enjoy the other thrills of life. The point of work is to offer a secure world for man. It differs from labor in that its goal is something durable, rather than something consumable. Normally, work involves the transformation of raw materials into goods through a means-end relationship. The most interesting part of the *vita activa* for Arendt is action.
[78] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 95.
[79] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. viii.

public realm fails to produce mutual understanding as it once did.[80] "This kind of understanding—seeing the world…from the other fellow's point of view ["representativity"]—is the political kind of insight *par excellence*."[81] "More and more people in the countries of the Western world, which since the decline of the ancient world has regarded freedom from politics as one of the basic freedoms, make use of this freedom and have retreated from the world and their obligation within it."[82] Every time man exercises this abstinence, a loss of what Arendt calls the "in-between" of men occurs. Abstention, stemming from a thorough mistrust of or lack of appreciation for the public space, means we ask no more of politics than that it demonstrate due consideration for our private interests and most importantly our personal liberty—acting as if there were other spaces and means to achieve mutual understanding via human dialogue.

Before totalitarianism severed our connection to a plural political sphere, the political itself suffered a diminution in its importance, becoming an administrative sphere for economic concerns.[83] Starting in the 19th and 20th centuries, economic concerns definitively usurped political ones and the idea of a robust public sphere became a farce as institutionally-defined spaces for debate, deliberation, and decision-making about our shared business shriveled. Happiness became a concept most associated with economic pursuits and not the political realm. Arendt depicts the rise of the household over the polis in terms eerily similar to Tocqueville's concerns for the blurring between public and private: "We see the body of people and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping."[84] As the housekeeping analogy

[80] The ability to speak freely and spontaneously in the role of disclosure cannot be overemphasized. Cf. Peter Fuss, "Hannah Arendt's Conception of Political Community," Idealistic Studies 3 (1973): 252-265.
[81] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books, 2005, p. 18.
[82] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 4.
[83] This development, Arendt notes, also traces the decline in the desire for immortality, the original impetus for ancient citizens to enter the public sphere. This impetus has declined drastically with the rise of consumer culture.
[84] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 28.

demonstrates, the diminishment of the political sphere signals the rise of a sphere characterized by material necessity and the atrophy of a sphere previously associated with freedom and equality between citizens.[85] Dana Villa comments: "the more we think of the political realm as concerned with matters of subsistence and material reproduction, the more likely we are to accept hierarchy in the place of civic equality; the more likely we are to see *rule* by elites of one sort or another as the quintessential political activity."[86] Modern attempts at politics, then, represent for Arendt an attempt to live within a polis and yet somehow outside of the political sphere. To reiterate, her methodology for rectifying this deficit is an excavation of what existed in past eras, that which has been brutally masked by modernity. A more genuine attempt at politics, therefore, involves an aforementioned act of recovery from the ancients, rather than the elaboration of any novel forms of politics. Arendt centers on ancient Athens "for the simple reason that the first flowering of democracy was among the most vivid and intense."[87] The Greek experience serves as an archetypal example of both politics and philosophy (hence thinking and judging) for Arendt, preceding the distortion of modernity; the practice of both appears most purely at their origin. "Men have never, before or since, thought so highly of political activity and given so much dignity to this field."[88]

Thus Arendtian politics "in its broadest sense…[is] the set of conditions under which men and women in their plurality, in their absolute distinctness from each other, live together and approach each other to speak in a freedom that only they can grant and guarantee each

[85] See Jane Addams, *Women and Public Housekeeping*, New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1913, for a classic argument that the tasks of housekeeping, not only figuratively but literally, translate over to make women excellent city leaders—if only they would be permitted.
[86] Dana Villa, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, p. 10.
[87] Dana Villa, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, p. 9.
[88] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 154. After the trial of Socrates, Arendt argues, politics and philosophy tended to "part company," resulting in thinkers withdrawing from the space of action. To be sure, Socrates withdrew on occasion from the sphere of action, but always to return to it in order to question what his fellow citizens believed.

other."[89] Politics and freedom are coextensive in Arendt's thought because politics is the freedom to discuss and debate with one another about the diversity that our plurality entails. Erected and maintained by us, politics occurs in an identity-revealing space as it brings out the "many-sidedness"—to borrow Mill's excellent phrase—of a given question, drawing on the plurality of the citizens who comprise the public sphere. If we begin from pure human experience, we arrive at an unimaginable diversity; Arendt starts from the assumption that plurality, as we have seen, is a necessary and even desirable fact of societies ruled by politics.

For Arendt, the greatest loss associated with the decline of a political sphere is primarily the loss of a robust communicative space for citizens. Political discussion—even occasional provocation—is "a means to bring out into the open the real and relevant conflicts we are so careful to style in polite society, to cover up with meaningless civilities, with that sham-considerateness we call 'not hurting anybody's feelings.'"[90] Arendt sees in the barriers of so-called "civilized society" that men stifle their ability to understand one another. To her, politics was a "battlefield not of bodies, but of souls and ideas, the only realm where ideas could take form and shape until they would fight each other, and in this fight emerge as the true reality of the human condition and the innermost rulers of the human heart."[91]

Communicative interaction is integral to articulating the meaning of our actions and coordinating with others. Here, Arendt draws on the importance of historians and poets in the ancient world.[92] These cultivators of remembrance help political actors become fully aware of their motives and intentions with the aid of retrospection, because they view actions after some distance has been placed between the action and its consequences. The historians and poets of

[89] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. xxx.
[90] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 258.
[91] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 259.
[92] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 197-198.

ancient Greece and Rome rescued the deeds of the glorious past for the future of humanity and preserved the memory of action, since one of action's great weaknesses is human forgetfulness. In so doing, moreover, they relied on a community of memory and organized remembrance in the polis.

Precisely because the public sphere has this memory-preserving potential, Arendt describes the original impetus for entering it in the world of the ancients "because they wanted something of their own or something they had in common with others to be more permanent than their earthly lives." Politics represented the antidote to the equality of death faced by all citizens. From the dawn of the modern age, however, much of the political tradition has rejected the use of politics for glory; as Hobbes states, a desire to be remembered for greatness is nothing but "vainglory."[93] For Arendt, Hobbes exemplifies the initial slide into a modern bourgeois tradition of theorists who confuse freedom with acquisitive individualism by advocating vertically-oriented contracts with despotic rulers in exchange for wealth accumulation and property rights, at the expense of the image of man as an active citizen and lawmaker; in exchange for security and peace, man surrenders his "political rights" and "asks the state to relieve him of the burden of caring."[94] Far from acting as a defense against tyranny, a concern for the security of one's property above all risks buttressing tyranny. "Nothing proves easier to destroy than the privacy and private morality of people who thought of nothing but safeguarding their private lives."[95] This lack of concern for the immortal, the lack of investment in a common world together, and the muddying of differences between the public and the private, according to Arendt, summarizes modernity's neglect of the public sphere.

[93] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 56-57.
[94] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 141-142.
[95] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 338.

In recovering lost remnants from the ancients, Arendt believes the public sphere possesses a unique type of human freedom. Her emphatic insistence upon the separation between the public and the private spheres means that the private must be subordinate to the public, as biological life and its necessities are considered subhuman. This harks back to a truth known since the ancients: to be tethered to bodily survival is to be reduced to a form of slavery; human freedom, on the other hand, achievable in the political sphere, is possible only when the realm of necessity has been attended to and departed from. Here Arendt follows Plato and Aristotle, both of whom argued that the existence of slaves in Greek society liberated men from the necessities of life and allowed them to participate fully in the life of the polis. Slavery also liberated some from the necessities of life, allowing them the freedom (through domination of others) to engage in worthy pursuits and aristocratic leisure—philosophy, art, poetry, and of course, politics. [96] Without the transcendence of biological need, the world would be a place unfit for mortal men. Of course, Arendt's public sphere does not deny the existence of bodily needs, but their inclusion has resulted in the corruption of the public space. As they are not distinctly human in that they do not contribute to a certain type of human freedom, it is a type of category mistake to introduce matters of biological need into the public realm.

Like John Stuart Mill, then, Arendt's political sphere is a milieu in which the virtue of courage plays a central role in the holding of beliefs, ends, and practices, potentially in competition with others, but also in collaboration with them. The two thinkers share a conception of the public sphere, in so far as robust debate is an essential component challenging

[96] Aristotle defended what he termed "natural slavery," which he defines in distinction to might over right. Aristotle makes his defense merely on prudential grounds. Such ownership is beneficial for the slave, since he lacks reason, deliberation, and foresight, has an aptitude for bodily labor, and is seen as part of his master's body. The slave lacks total reason and the reasoned control of his emotions. He is human only insofar as he shares in the human emotional experience, but he is certainly deficient in *logos*. For Aristotle's defense of "natural slavery," cf. *Politics*, I.13.1260a12, I.2.1252a32-34, I.6.1255b11-12, *et. passim*, as well as Nicholas D. Smith, "Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery," *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, Ed. David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr., Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

the permanence of our ideas, sharpening the vitality of our thinking, and questioning our inherited prejudices. She contrasts the illuminating aspects of the public sphere with the safety of our homes, depicting a "gulf between the sheltered life in the household and the *merciless exposure* of the *polis* and, consequently, of the virtue of courage as one of the most elemental political attitudes."[97] Such "merciless exposure" serves as a critical check on our opinions about reality. Echoing Mill's demonstrated concern for "dead dogma" in *On Liberty*, she argues that "the very humanity of man loses its vitality to the extent that he abstains from thinking and puts his confidence into old verities…throwing them down as if they were coins with which to balance all experiences."[98] Our public discourse, as opposed to our private conversations, has the effect of "humanizing" the world. The public exists "between men" in a way that it both binds them together and relates them, while also separating them in their plurality. Even when our discourse fails to reach depths of great profundity, Arendt says, it still maintains a performative value in that it matters that we say things in a public space where everyone can hear, "conferring upon it an illuminating power" and augmenting the understanding of our shared world.[99]

In discussing matters of import in the public sphere, men encounter the sheer diversity of opinion. Persuasively articulated opinions do not bring discussion to a conclusion but become one belief among many—contested and reformulated again and again. (Even truths in the scientific realm undergo radical revision, continual contestation, and occasional augmentation.) For Arendt, the public realm ought to be a space where we each speak our "what seems to be," where those beliefs, on the one hand, link us to other men in this common humanizing discourse,

---

[97] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 35.
[98] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 11.
[99] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 72. For the aesthetic or performative elements of Arendt's concept of political action, see Dana R. Villa, "Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action," Political Theory 20 (1992): 274-308.

while on the other hand, separate us from one another in their stark differences. The end of public discourse among men is the end of humanity itself, for such speech is obviously impossible in solitude; "it belongs to an area in which there are many voices and where the announcement of what each 'deems truth' both links and separates men, establishing in fact those distances between men which together comprise the world."[100] In other words, in Arendt's parlance, the public realm or "world" where these differences play out would not exist if men were all of the same opinion—what Arendt calls "man in the singular" when referring to totalitarianism's "band of iron" pressing human beings "so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimensions."[101] Individual speech acts and the recognition of plurality are inseparable in the Arendtian political sphere. Paradoxically, then, plurality is the common denominator that builds the world between men but also allows them to disclose their authentic selves to others in their venture into the public realm. But such individuality is meaningless in a world that can replace anyone with everyone.

The other chief faculty of the political realm is, as hinted at in connection to the Eichmann trial, that of judgment, which permits actors in the public realm to decide which courses of action ought to be undertaken, what are the objectives, as well as what is praiseworthy or blameworthy with respect to past decisions made by the political community. Again, Arendt grounds the faculty of judgment within the political condition of plurality (or what Mill calls "multi-sidedness"): "the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but from the perspective of all those who happen to be present."[102] Echoing Mill's concern for a society lacking a deep diversity of opinions, the sagacity and even validity of a judgment ought to be determined by the extent to which it encounters and considers other viewpoints, until "it is

[100] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, pp. 30-31.
[101] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 465-466.
[102] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 242.

flooded and made transparent by the full light of human comprehension."[103] For Arendt, sound judgments made "representatively"—enlarged by taking into consideration or "representing" the standpoint of others and imagining how one would feel and think in their place—are imperative to man's political wellbeing because they "enable him to orient himself in the public realm, in the common world" and engender the most typical form of political speech we have with one another—*persuading or convincing others who do not share in our judgments*.[104] Our ability to form judgments, share them, and finally, to persuade others of our own judgments is thus never a solitary activity, but one exercised in the presence of others.

V. Action and *Amor Mundi*

We have explored Arendt's understanding of politics as something aimed at the mutual exploration of our diversity in a public sphere designed for such a purpose. However, it remains for us to explore what Arendt means exactly by the term "action." Arendt defines action in the broadest sense of the word: "venturing forth in speech and deed in the company of one's peers, beginning something new whose end cannot be known in advance…none of these actions can be undertaken alone, but always and only by people in their plurality."[105] Action engenders a palpable sense of freedom arising from the ability to embark on a new sequence of events. The tone of some of Arendt's writing stands in stark contrast to the hope she has for the potential and creativity of human action. Since nothing can be more remote from being human than death in Arendt's philosophy, our earthly absolute is to overcome death not by overlooking this world and preparing a life after it, but by conquering death through life, i.e., by creating something approaching the ever-lasting *in this world*. An awareness of death is the doorway into an

[103] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 242.
[104] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 221.
[105] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. viii.

appreciation for our shared world. Arendt's imperative is to invest in the here and now—hence the proper spirit she calls "amor mundi"—and to deploy the virtue of courage to avoid the many seductive avenues of modern escapism from reality. Philosophy and science often turn man's attention to questions of the eternal, while the emergence of Christianity contributed to a devaluation of life in the here and now and made men more passive. Arendt quotes Machiavelli approvingly when he says that the question is not one of loving the world more than God but "whether one was capable of loving the world more than one's own self."[106] Love for the world can be imparted by an education through which we come to know the world, thereby accepting responsibility for it, and with the virtue of courage we can invest in life-affirming activities like politics. Arendt sees our best opportunity to invest in this world as the establishment of a public sphere that exists well after our individual, finite bodies disappear from it.

> The common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our lifespan into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us. But such a common world can survive the coming and going of the generations only to the extent that it appears in public. It is the publicity of the public realm which can absorb and make shine through the centuries whatever men may want to save from the natural ruin of time.[107]

Arendt's definition of action and advocacy for its primacy represents perhaps her best attempt at recovering something distinctly absent in liberal modernity. Action's uniqueness lies in the fact that it is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter."[108] Arendt contrasts action to its lower corollaries in the *vita activa*—labor and work—the former corresponding to our condition of life (the sustenance we need to satisfy the necessity of biological processes), and the latter to our condition of worldliness (complementing

[106] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 277.
[107] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 55
[108] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 7.

labor by building the things required for a constructed world fit for human beings). While all may be required for one to have a good life *qua* human being, Arendt clearly holds action in the highest esteem. Action provides intelligibility in relation to the rest of the hierarchical ordering, precisely because it is that which distinguishes us from the rest of the animal kingdom. Freedom, as the identifying element of our human existence, manifests itself in the activities which demarcate human from other forms of life.

Action is at its core the ability to start something new or do something unexpected and never seen before, and therefore bears relation to our own natality, as every human is by definition a new beginning by virtue of his or her own unique individuality. "The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable."[109] Arendt's contention that action relates to our own natality is a useful metaphor because it evokes the image of a newborn, full of trepidation for the new world around him, yet delighting in his experience of it; the metaphor demonstrates natality as a more politically relevant category than, for instance, mortality.[110] Perforce, novelty and plurality go hand-in-hand, as the *novum* cannot be introduced in isolation from others and independently of their varying opinions on the quality of what is being introduced by the actor. Action requires one to be in the public, not the private realm, and would cease to be meaningful in the absence of others.[111]

Action diminished in its importance when our political tradition began to view it in terms of means-ends categories, with "hardly any room for the spirit of starting an enterprise and,

[109] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 177-178.
[110] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 9.
[111] Marxist predictions on the future imperil political action, as "predictions of the future are never anything but projections of present automatic processes and procedures, that is, of occurrences that are likely to come to pass if men do not act and if nothing unexpected happens." Marxist "action," if we may use this term, is action that makes history coincide with the fundamental law of historical change. Far from laws of historical dialectics, Arendt avers that it is the very function of and radical freedom inherent in political action to interrupt the inevitable and predictable. (Quoted in Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 7.)

together with others, seeing it through to its conclusion."[112] This trend was the result of crudely transposing models of private rule onto the public-political realm. As thinking about action in terms of sets of means-end relationships colonized the political tradition and began to show its deleterious effect on the previous conception of politics, it gave rise to the concept of the legislator, whose goal was not human greatness, but an attempt to impose permanent rules on the changing affairs of men. After the industrial revolution, when complex means-ends processes of fabrication became more widespread and exacting, the political tradition began speaking of the means-ends relationship with even greater certainty—as if building a better society were as easy as an industrial manufacturing process—giving rise eventually to the political technocrat. Therefore, as something always thought of as "for the sake of something else," Arendt laments that action never again held the same esteem as it did in the ancient world.[113]

Armed with this definition of action, it is thus unsurprising that many of the events Arendt mentions as archetypal political actions are the unanticipated: revolutions, political uprisings, and popular revolts. "Revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning."[114] Political foundation requires skillful daring but also entails great dread. It is a courageous venture into the uncharted and an embrace of the uncertain, but it is often executed with the help of original principles translated into actions (hence the prefix "re" in the Latin etymology *revolutio*, suggesting a return to first principles or a restoration of a former order). Thus, a political founding is an act of double importance for Arendt: an act of Arendtian recovery of guiding principles of the past, as well as a new venture into the unknown. Arendt's favorite example is the American Revolution, where

[112] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 45.
[113] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 52. Arendt also mentions the contributing factor of philosophical definitions of man as *homo rationale* and *homo faber*, both of which have their origins in man as a singular being.
[114] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 21.

revolutionaries founded a new political space where freedom appeared as a concrete reality in the form of a constitution of liberty. In Publius and the *Federalist Papers*, Arendt discovers courage as the indispensable political virtue by which revolutionaries establish political institutions free from past ideologies. "The courage of republican American citizens lay not only in thinking differently, but also in pragmatically shaking off the burdens of historical legacies, contingencies, and ideals that no longer fit their new situation."[115] However, Arendt also mentions revolutionary clubs of the French Revolution, the French Resistance to Hitler in WWII, and the Hungarian Revolt of 1956. In each case, Arendt sees in these events the courageous action of men and women who stepped out of their private lives in order to create a freer, more ample political space, impacting the public memory as a source of future inspiration. Perhaps most importantly, in such acts the participants rediscovered a truth apparent long ago to the ancients—i.e., that there are unexpected delights in engaging in public life when action is permitted to bestow significance on the lives of the individuals participating.

As her most important political term, action lumps together Arendt with Machiavelli, breaking much of the philosophical tradition by eschewing the inward navel-gazing that marks the caring for one's soul above one's city and seeing in political activity a testimony to human initiative and creativity. Arendt credits Machiavelli as one of the few modern theorists who understood the importance of courage to rising "from circumstances common to all men to the shining glory of great deeds."[116] Along with Nietzsche, and contrary to religious tradition, she disdains the penchant for looking to an eternal, other-worldly realm of meaning, precisely because it is cowardly and pathological to retreat into a moribund transcendental realm, risking the trivialization of the world that confronts us in the present. Man ought to be able to look into

[115] Ryan K. Balot, "Transforming 'Manliness' into Courage," p. 146.
[116] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 35.

a godless "abyss of being" and nevertheless affirm a joyful existence of meaning without the assurance of an eternal afterlife.[117] To understand the concept of time as a result of reflection on the past, present, and future is, so to speak, to "suffer time" as a result of our finitude. Yet, partaking in the life of the public sphere offers sufficient meaning via its political institutions which allow for human freedom and political action—Arendt describes the experience of action as something which can "endow life with splendor"[118]—but only if the political sphere is substantive, i.e., more than the mere deliberation of our private lives.[119] Indeed, rather than *The Human Condition*, Arendt's biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl writes that she originally intended to call her major work *Amor Mundi*, in rejection of the philosophical tradition of *contemptus mundi*.[120]

By grounding us firmly in the present world, action engenders a sustainable love for it. To be sure, Arendt does not have in mind love of the erotic variety. *Eros* is best left to the private realm, as "by reason of its passion, [it] destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others" in the public sphere.[121] *Eros* urges its participants to join another in unity rather than in diversity. Likewise, religious concepts of love like *caritas* fail to provide the type of world-sustaining love Arendt envisions because it aims at everlasting life through salvation. It induces action only with the caveat of "*quamdiu mundus durat*"—as long as the world lasts.[122] Political action aims at the stewardship and lasting preservation of the world we share together. It is a kind of respect that contributes to the endurance of worldly structures. "If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the

[117] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Trans. Douglas Smith, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008, p. 35.
[118] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 285.
[119] Conversely, life becomes only more private the more a modern science without a stake in our human values becomes the exclusive substance of politics and public life.
[120] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2nd Ed., New Haven: Yale UP, 2004, p. 324.
[121] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 242.
[122] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 53.

living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men."[123] To borrow an imperfect metaphor because it is a cooperative endeavor and not a singular effort, Arendtian love for the world cares for it as it would a work of art, with our care akin to that of a museum curator whose love for a piece of art encompasses a concern for both posterity and for the future. The metaphor of art curation is an example of "something immortal achieved by mortal hands, [which] has become tangibly present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read."[124] Yet, like a work of art, the public realm can also fade or corrode if neglected.

Arendt posits *amor mundi* as integral to the fundamental act of remembrance, itself part of the maintenance of the public sphere. "The greatest event in every revolution" is the non-repeatable act of the institutional founding of a political sphere which must be preserved through conscious, ongoing acts of preservation (i.e., acts of remembrance).[125] The significance and rarity of such events are indeed worthy of remembrance, the pinnacle of political action and "man's faculty to begin something new." Arendt makes this point by noting the etymology of the word "action," in its Latin and Greek iterations, which used to mean beginning, not merely the arrival at a specified end. Radical beginning is something inherent to the modern age precisely because it grew out of the notion of revolution.[126] Our remembrance of these political events stems from our recognition that "nothing comparable in grandeur and significance had ever happened in the whole recorded history of mankind."[127] The act of remembrance itself is important not only to keep the revolutionary spirit alive, as it were, but to remind and bring the common world we share to the political sphere's natal moment, thus retaining its relevance and

[123] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 55.
[124] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 168.
[125] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 214.
[126] Arendt argues that although Jesus inaugurated a new order in the ancient world, it was not a political order because Christian freedom is otherworldly.
[127] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 24.

primacy. Revolutions aim to produce the means of their own remembrance—physical structures like political institutions and laws which outline the public realm—springing forth from revolutionary acts allowing "living spirit" of the founding to be "articulated."[128]

For those dubious that political communities would ever have such paucity of *amor mundi* that they forget their seminal historical moments, Arendt reminds us of the "very fact that so great an enterprise as the Trojan War could have been forgotten without a poet to immortalize it several hundred years later…[offers] only too good an example of what could happen to human greatness if it had nothing but poets to rely on for its permanence."[129] Fortunately for the political realm, it usually has more than one author; as the co-presence of free equals, the polis is a kind of organized form of collective remembrance where the spectators—poets, historians, fellow citizens alike—are more reliable guardians of the facts and events than those acting, even if only the aura or spirit of the original moment gets remembered in the end.[130] As humans built for freedom, our actions are fit subjects for stories which give full measure to action's spontaneity, unpredictability, and contingency.

> The *polis*—if we trust the famous words of Pericles in the Funeral Oration—gives a guarantee that those who forced every sea and land to become the scene of their daring will not remain without witness and will need neither Homer nor anyone else who knows how to turn words to praise them; without assistance from others, those who acted will be able to establish together the everlasting remembrance of their good and bad deeds, to inspire admiration in the present and in future ages. In other words, men's life together in the form of the *polis* seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, action and speech, and the least tangible and most ephemeral of man-made 'products,' the deeds and stories which are their outcome, would become imperishable.[131]

Conserving and caring for the common world established by a political revolution must be a dynamic, conscious process, with the polis as the *situ* of memory. Indeed, Arendt avers that the

[128] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 21.
[129] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 197.
[130] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 198.
[131] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 197-198.

American Constitution's authority has its provenance in the fact that it has a "capacity to be amended and augmented."[132] But where the revolutionary spirit is not cared for, it becomes obscured or covered over—either by the sadness of the failure of revolution, as in the case of the French Revolution, which traded freedom for secularity under centralized administration, or by the colonization of the political by "the rise of the social," as in the case of the rapid accumulation of wealth following the American Revolution.[133] Arendt quotes Tocqueville approvingly "when he remarks that 'of all ideas and sentiments which prepared the [American] Revolution, the notion of and the taste for public liberty strictly speaking have been the first ones to disappear."[134] When the original spirit of a revolution dissipates, it is quite difficult to recover and ensure that its novelty is on full display. Like the work of an archaeologist looking to excavate his artifact, the historian must scrub away accumulated sediment. Still, the American system owes its rather durable nature to its moorings to the constitutional founding; the American Founders understood the relationship between their revolutionary acts and shielding this beginning through the centuries so that the American Revolution's founding principles could be seen with ever-greater clarity. In the end, "foundation, augmentation, and conservation are intimately interrelated" and the inherent tensions between augmentation and preservation are a matter for discussion and resolution in the public sphere.[135] Yet, for a revolution that is remembered, these debates will necessarily make reference to an awesome but bygone moment of great courage in an original founding through political action. From this perspective, recitation of, or argument proceeding from, the words or deeds of the founding—such as the

[132] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 194.
[133] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 103-4.
[134] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 123.
[135] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 194.

Declaration of Independence or the American Constitution, for example—are themselves acts of curation and remembrance.

Arendt worries that absent the virtue of courage and given the fleetingness of memory for great human deeds, men will become "'conservative' rather than 'revolutionary,' eager to preserve what has been done and to assure its stability rather than open for new things, new developments, [and] new ideas."[136] She laments the fact that these two elements, conservation and revolution, find themselves diametrically opposed in today's political parlance—one the exclusive domain of conservative political parties, the other the mantle of progressive ones. To the extent that acts of preservation and acts of beginning have become polar opposites, these developments imperil our care for the world.

VI. The Futility of Action

As we have seen, for Arendt modernity has downgraded the importance of the *vita activa*, particularly the element of action which partly comprises it. Arendt hints at the great courage required to embark on action given its close association with natality and introducing novelty into the world. Although action represents our freedom to insert a beginning in the continuum of time and to break with the inevitable through spontaneous initiation, it also faces an infinitude of intersecting and interfering intentions, which represent the complex, plural world into which man must cast his actions; recall that no man can act alone, plurality being a fundamental condition of human action. Thus, not only does Arendt lament the conceptualization of action in terms of means-ends categories for the part this conceptualization played in relegating action below the other elements of the *vita activa*, but she declares that it makes little practical sense. Yet, it is a defining feature of modernity to believe that we are, unlike the ancients, no longer dependent on

[136] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 31.

fortuna or luck to achieve our ends, but rather that we can do so by taking "affairs into our own hands, to achieve through our own unaided efforts what in the past had been consigned to the province of wish, prayer, or even the endless cycle of history."[137] Arendt's reflections on the irreversible and unpredictable nature of political action serve to highlight the depths of this modern naïveté. She remarks: "No end and no intention has ever been achieved as it was originally intended…no acting person ever knows what he is doing…he cannot know and for the sake of man's freedom is not permitted to know. For freedom is dependent on the absolute unpredictability of human actions."[138]

Far from the modern belief that we completely control our affairs, Arendt's work contains the unfortunate conclusion that the boundlessness of political action also gives rise to its futility, precariousness, and inherent unpredictability. Action requires the virtue of courage because it almost always fails, does not understand its own ends, or otherwise wanders into pastures with which it is wholly unprepared to deal. Yet courage allows man to countenance such risk, which enables him "to get together with his peers, to act in concert, and to reach out for goals and enterprises that would never enter his mind, let alone the desires of his heart, had he not been given this gift—to embark on something new."[139] Without letting go of our desire to attain ends—whatever they may be and to which our activity is a means—and find comfort in being radically undetermined, we can never attain freedom in the Arendtian sense. The stakes could not be higher: because action is a source of human meaning and splendor, the futility of action could spell the futility of human life itself.

Confronted with the uncertainty and open-endedness of political action—simultaneously the source of its immense creative potential—some political regimes opt for certainty in a very

[137] Steven B. Smith, *Modernity and Its Discontents*, p. 7.
[138] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 148.
[139] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, p. 82.

deliberate sense. But Arendt is steadfast in declaring, based on her study of totalitarianism, that action is the very opposite of coercion, violence, or rule in the name of certainty. Neither man nor any regime can master an action from beginning to end, and attempts to do so are indications of cowardice. Inherent in action, then, is an exposure to the frailty of our actions and its consequences, requiring the virtue of courage. "The calamities of action all arise from the human condition of plurality," which is the price we pay for "the joy of inhabiting together with others a world whose reality is guaranteed for each by the presence of all."[140]

Action, which always aspires to the fulfillment of intention (as if it were equivalent to our means-end relationship with elements of the natural world) even as it rarely if ever achieves it, is so futile and fleeting that even the great political heroes of antiquity required the aid of written and oral memory to recount their deeds, lest they fade into historical anonymity. "Toward no safe harbor, spontaneous and unpredictable action steers the course of the world."[141] Indeed, political action is so unpredictable that when we set something in motion, this action binds us to a chain of unforeseeable events, variously called "fate," "providence," or more secularly, "chance."

> The uncertainty of human action, in the sense that we never quite know what we are doing when we begin to act into the web of interrelationships and mutual dependencies that constitute the field of action, was considered by ancient philosophy to be the one supreme argument against the seriousness of human affairs.[142]

And yet we must act nevertheless if the political sphere is to survive. "Human spontaneity, politically speaking, means that we do not know the ends of our actions when we act, and if we did we would not be free. When these categories are confused, especially today, politics ceases

[140] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 220, 244.
[141] Jerome Kohn, "Freedom: the priority of the political," p. 115.
[142] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 56.

to make sense."[143] Courage helps overcome the paradox that human autonomy means, to quote Mill, "philosophical necessity properly understood," but also the radical uncertainty that such a situation engenders.

As a response to the challenges of action, man has developed several remedies beyond the mustering of courage, even if these remedies are, in themselves, insufficient. Political communication is imperative to remedy the unpredictability and irreversibility of action. Since action by definition owes its occurrence to the openness of freedom and occurs in an environment marked by the condition of plurality, no single actor can control or predict the final outcome within an inextricably complex web of human agents. Regarding action's boundless potential, Arendt speaks of a "chain reaction" or a concatenation of events, to the point where "the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation."[144] Moreover, unlike the products of our labor, which can be reversed, destroyed, or taken back in the event that we find something faulty in them, action proceeds via a web of existing, plural human relationships that produce reactions and deeds that are irreversible. Action steers the course of the world. Rather than abstain from such an unpredictable and irreversible sphere, Arendt impels us to embrace the risks by advocating, in addition to the virtue of courage, the use of *promise and forgiveness* as remedies to this quandary.

Promising and forgiving are both faculties of action, the latter allowing us to ask for amnesty for the unintended consequences of our action, and the former circumscribing action by binding it to certain courses and thereby mitigating to a tolerable level the unpredictability inherent in political action. Like all political action, both remedies are bound to plurality, since a

[143] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. xxix.
[144] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 190.

community of others must forgive, while a promise must be made and kept in the presence of other acting and remembering individuals. When all these conditions are extant in a plural community, Arendt calls this "power," emphasizing the consensus aspects of communal living found in ancient thought—"the ability to agree upon a common course of action in unconstrained communication."[145] Power consists of men acting in concert together—action that has not been severed from speech and speech that has not been severed from action, "where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities."[146]

Thus, Arendt rejects the notion that what lurks behind power is always violence, since power is never the ability or sole possession of an individual but of a group of individuals to act in concert together. While it is true that violence can be the sole possession of an individual, in this case it is likely to be ineffective because it lacks the consent of the people. "Single men without others to support them never have enough power to use violence successfully."[147] Being "in power" means that others have consented to have a person rule and act in their name. Arendt theorizes that the praise of violence has its origins in the fact that power has been conceived within the political tradition as getting others to do as one wishes. But if this were a suitable definition of power, man would have never left the household, where he was absolutely and unquestionably sovereign, to enter the political sphere, where he is one among equals. The household is "primarily concerned with one's own life and survival," while the polis must be unbound from the life process altogether—a crossover into a new realm which required "courage…[to be] admitted to a fellowship that was political in content and purpose and thereby

[145] Jürgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," p. 3.
[146] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 200.
[147] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 50-51.

transcended the mere togetherness imposed on all…through the urgencies of life."[148] Indeed, courage appears present in the very act of entering the political sphere: "The connotation of courage…is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. And this courage is not necessarily or even primarily related to a willingness to suffer the consequences; courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and exposing one's self.[149] (Arendt credits Plato as the father of the modern political tradition precisely because he brings the concept of political rule out of the private sphere and into the public.) Power is then quite the opposite: because it has its origins in numbers, while violence does not, where violence is present, power is likely in short supply. (Violence as a manifestation of power only makes sense if we view the state through a Marxist lens: as an oppressive force in the hands of the ruling class.)

Given Arendt's concerns about the irreversibility and unpredictability of action, the reader might imagine an acting man standing at the precipice, pushing an object over the edge, and holding his breath to see where it might fall. The metaphor demonstrates the two frustrations of action—unpredictability and irreversibility—but it also suggests the necessity of a witness to action. "Even though stories are the inevitable results of action," Arendt explains, "it is not the actor but the storyteller who perceives and 'makes' the story."[150] This is because action does not reveal something heretofore hidden from sight; rather, it discloses character elements to others which existed well before the action which disclosed it. In other words, action and the stories which follow them do not point to a series of hidden motives, intentions, and plans, but to the character of the actor which set the actions into motion.

[148] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 36.
[149] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 186.
[150] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 192.

VII. Conclusion: Arendtian Sources of Courage

This chapter has elaborated Arendt's understanding of the human world and its plurality, which is specifically opposed to the inhuman world constructed by totalitarianism; that the value in the human world is man's active life (*vita activa*); that the culminating experience of life's activities is political action; and that freedom attained through political activity is a constitutive human experience. Meanwhile, the chapter has also highlighted the importance of one virtue in particular, i.e., courage, as essential for political action. Arendt recognizes courage as the "political virtue *par excellence*" for caring for the world in the here and now and rejecting the many forms of escapism from reality in an uncertain and insecure world; for upholding a potentially ruthless and disclosing political sphere as one of freedom and action, even though it specifically excludes our human desire to discuss matters of biological subsistence; and for acting in concert with others when intentions and designs are likely to be frustrated by the frailty of action. Arendt envisions such a political sphere existing in a highly local model of political reinvigoration. The American founders recognized the importance of promoting the bonds of civic friendship through local government. They also recognized that smaller states were likely to promote more patriotism, political daring, and human excellence. In a large republic, they conceded, the sentiments of solidarity and civic friendship would probably be diffuse and outweighed by other interests.[151]

Arendt understood that "The great and, in the long run, perhaps the greatest American innovation in politics as such was the consistent abolition of sovereignty within the body politic of the republic, the insight that in the realm of human affairs sovereignty and tyranny are the

[151] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 145.

same."[152] Following ancient theory, Arendt believes the best political society to necessarily be a small one, where citizens possess knowledge of their rulers and rulers know citizens. Not only can we see and experience public benefits more easily, but smaller states also afford greater opportunities for action. We can engage in speech on public questions, or we can listen if we prefer. On the contrary, large states mostly deny the opportunity to engage in speech acts, which leads to citizens asserting their wounded dignity by refusing to listen, confining their attention to a private sphere where their opinions matter. In other words, large republics risk weak public spirits.

Arendt greatly regrets the failure of a Jeffersonian proposal to devolve county governance into separate wards within, acting as miniature experiments in self-government. These local governments would offer a space for Americans to maintain their civic bonds and engage in the act of free self-government. For Arendt, only layered, occasionally contradictory, and plural centers of power can offer the opportunity to engage in self-government and protection from the heavy-handedness of modern states. Such a multiplication of local power structures would serve to frustrate and resist the totalizing impulses of sovereign states and divide power in a "horizontally directed" manner.[153] A local model of political reinvigoration would seek to rediscover the Jeffersonian project of local self-government, which Arendt calls the lost treasure of the American Revolution.[154] As an advocate for the local nature of a politics of freedom, Arendt is a "companion of men like de Tocqueville, Jefferson, and Machiavelli."[155]

[152] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 144.
[153] Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972, p. 230.
[154] Roger Berkowitz, "Why Arendt Matters: Revisiting 'The Origins of Totalitarianism.'" As has been argued convincingly of Tocqueville, Arendt also writes of America but thinks about Europe. Cf. Cushing Strout, "Tocqueville's Duality: Describing America and Thinking of Europe," American Quarterly 21 (1969): 87-99.
[155] Margaret Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1974, p. 15.

Like Mill before her, Arendt also appears to owe a debt to Tocqueville. His observations about isolation from one's fellows constituting the principal problem of modernity and its association with the rise of despotism, in both its soft and harsh iterations, presage hers. Jefferson's failed proposal notwithstanding, Arendt relies on Tocqueville's observation that the "municipal spirit" was still alive and well in the 1830s to argue that the experience of the "art of association" in local power centers can counter the modern isolation at the root of all despotism and encourages action.[156] Arendt claims that an association's "gift for action" resides in the ability "to unite 'into one channel the effort of *divergent* minds' (Tocqueville)."[157] Answering Tocqueville's call for a "new science of politics"—a political science of modern democracy—she emphasizes a kind of "art of association" in her politics of the public sphere, a germ cell out of which Tocqueville observes that public-spiritedness tends to grow.[158] Despite the inevitability of the crises of modernity for both Arendt and Tocqueville, they "hold out the possibility for a new beginning and look to America's system of local government and voluntary associations as opportunities for securing freedom."[159] She concludes: Tocqueville's contributions on the "art of associating together" are "still by far the best in the not very large literature on the subject."[160]

Yet, the type of courage Arendt advocates is not likely to appear in the modern world, in her view, through an emphasis on local government alone, but only through a conscious act of recovery from the ancient world. While Tocqueville solves the "mind of man wandering in

---

[156] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 231.
[157] Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, p. 98. Arendt continues: "Tocqueville's account could almost be written today: 'As soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have taken up an opinion or feeling which they wish to promote in the world,' or have found some fault they wish to correct, 'they look out for mutual assistance, and as soon as they have found one another out, they combine. *From that moment, they are no longer isolated men but a power seen from afar,* whose actions serve for an example and whose language is listened to" (*Crises of the Republic*, p. 95, emphasis in original).
[158] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 42.
[159] Margie Lloyd, "In Tocqueville's Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Liberal Republicanism." The Review of Politics 57 (1995): 51.
[160] Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, p. 94.

obscurity" with an appeal to the sociological effects of traditional religion and other traditional values existing prior to the age of democratic politics, Arendt appeals still further back to ancient tradition. Courage is one of her nostalgic losses of the modern world. If Arendt directs her pearl divers to search near the sea beds of the Greco-Roman world, as it were, this raises the question as to the desirability of such pearls. In other words, it thrusts us back to the question of the ancient conception of courage, the contexts in which the ancients employed it, and whether a reification of these conditions is even desirable.

Many of these questions have been answered at length in the Introduction. Arendt's reification of the conditions required for courage would represent the recovery of a type of courage not only applicable to political contexts, but also containing significant aspects of martial courage, with its roots in honor culture and an association with the concept of "manliness" (*andreia*). Such pining for the hard-edged aspects of ancient cultures garnered Arendt the phallocentric criticism, in the eyes of one theorist, of suffering from profound "'polis envy'—a tendency to view modern political life as a precipitous fall from the glories of a highly mythologized Periclean heyday."[161] Interpreted in a more charitable (and less misogynistic) way, this criticism highlights that Arendt's desired outcomes and her preferred method of getting there are misaligned: projects of recovery from the ancient world are no guarantee of the kind of world Arendt desires. That is to say, Arendt never answers in a convincing manner the seeming contradiction between her deep concern for the catastrophe of totalitarianism and the subjugation it visited upon other nations in the twentieth century and her love of the ancients who embarked on some of the greatest imperial conquests known to man.

[161] Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl L. Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003, p. 69.

Her examples of political action instantiated in the modern world, moreover, point to the employment of courage as an unprecedented, heroic, once-in-a-lifetime event, but exclude instances of more quotidian forms of courage. "Action can be judged only by the criterion of greatness because it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and *sui generis*."[162] But we cannot all be Pericles, nor the Founding Fathers of a new country. Although Arendt states that "the word 'hero' originally, that is, in Homer, was no more than a name given each free man who participated in the Trojan enterprise and about whom a story could be told," this definition obfuscates just how difficult it is to be a hero.[163] However much Arendt may attempt to assure us of the wider accessibility of courage, its constant association with "shining glory" and "great deeds" does not indicate that she has the courage of an everyday, modern context in mind. After all, we cannot be expected to perform "heroic deeds" on a frequent basis and neither did the ancients, nor is it required that we do so. More commonplace—but still remarkable—forms of courage manifested themselves in the daily lives of the ancients as they met in the public sphere and discussed their shared business. There must remain a more accessible type of courage of the everyday or ordinary political variety which is nevertheless highly dynamic and permits us to utilize it within modern contexts to rise to the heights of greatness when our perception of the risks involved warrants it.

[162] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 205.
[163] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 186.

Conclusion: Modern Contexts for Courage

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed…"
—John Milton, *Areopagitica*[1]

This thesis has attempted to describe the challenges brought by modernity and the tracing of one virtue, courage, through the eyes of Tocqueville, Mill, and Arendt. By crisscrossing the landscape and investigating the work of three critical observers of modernity, this thesis has sought to show that the political and social malaise we moderns feel was noted by others before. Looking to the past as a way to gain critical perspective is a common methodological turn in political theory and the history of political thought, if for no other reason than to illuminate the fact that the problems of modernity are not entirely *sui generis*—that, in some analogous ways, "we have been here before." Aside from presenting courage as possessing a problematic relationship with modernity, it has noted that, at times, it is difficult to disentangle debates about courage from the broader issues raised by modernity as a movement. Since Arendt's passing in 1975, we have entered a post-imperial world and modernity has advanced even further. Modernism and post-modernism have solidified themselves as near irreversible aspects of our current social and political order, namely, in the idea of self-determination and self-actualization and a focus on human rights that ensures absolute political equality (for peoples and individuals) as the guiding political and organizing principle of our time.[2] Yet, as modernity has continued careening down this path, the chorus of writers lamenting its felt "lack" has only increased. Insofar as liberalism represents one of the chief political traditions of modernity, still standing after the fall of fascism and communism, this chapter focuses most intently on the critiques of

[1] John Milton, *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, Eds. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon, New York: Random House, 2007, p. 939.
[2] We should not confuse aspiration with reality; however, even if self-determination is often betrayed and left unrealized in practice, it does not mitigate the force and general acceptance of the norm that peoples should determine their own futures.

liberalism and some of the responses to those critiques which involve the possession and practice of virtues. What is critical about these responses is how little they address the modern contexts for courage, despite the fact that a discussion of liberalism and virtue offers ripe opportunities for a dissection of courage. The thesis concludes by offering modern contexts for courage, focusing on specific situations which have arisen in modernity and calling for the exercise of courage in new contexts, namely, in the presence of robust and persuasive speech exchanges.

History teaches us that the self-confidence of social and political institutions can be quite cyclical.[3] These ebbs and flows in confidence have made it common practice for liberals to stop and check liberalism's pulse, examining the state of the liberal order, for as Tocqueville teaches us, societies can present themselves in the *form* of liberal democracy while falling short of the *spirit* of a liberal democracy. Like John Dewey's *Liberalism and Social Action* or Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Vital Center*, we find ourselves once again at an ineluctable crossroads—need another re-examination of modern liberalism as it matures, redefines itself, and attempts to emerge from the spasms brought on by the challenges of recent social and political developments.[4]

What followed the vanquishing of communism in 1989 was a brief period of liberal euphoria built on (what seemed at the time) firm grounds, coupled with the idea of "the end of history," issuing in a world comprised mostly of modern liberal states.[5] "In light of the resurgence of liberal capitalism in the 1980s, and the sudden collapse of communism, the so-called liberal crisis of legitimacy now appears farfetched," Stephen Macedo wrote in 1992.[6]

[3] Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015, p. xix.
[4] John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1999; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: Our Purposes and Perils on the Tightrope of American Liberalism*, New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1962.
[5] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press, 2006.
[6] Stephen Macedo, "Charting Liberal Virtues," *Nomos* 34 (1992): 229.

Owing to a variety of recent social and political developments, this idea was wrested violently from the ether by a harsh return to reality. For the past two decades, we might say that many liberal societies have been dominated by "minimal liberals" who accept no further commitments to the public order beyond paying taxes and obeying the law, tolerating difference, to a degree, and refraining from violating the rights of others, to a degree. Minimal liberals scorn debates and politics, as these activities impinge on work, family, and recreational life. Studies such as Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* shattered any façade that all was well within modern confines and the liberal community, and confirmed many fears about the prevalence of "minimal liberalism." Putnam's argument was as simple at its core as it was profound—that so-called "social capital" had steadily declined over the postwar period as measured by participation in a number of voluntary associations—political parties, labor unions, church attendance, and most famously, bowling leagues. "For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century," he writes, "a powerful tide bore Americans into ever deeper engagement in the life of their communities. But a few decades ago—silently, without warning—that tide reversed and we were overtaken by a treacherous rip current." He continues, "Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century."[7] Robert Bellah and his colleagues argue similarly, that the "habits of the heart" which make Americans empathetic and less self-centered continue to thin out under the influence of modern liberalism; when Americans do speak of high-minded principles, they nearly invariably speak the language of staunch and rugged individualism, either in the form of a utilitarian calculus of self-interest or in the less defined, new age terms of "what is right for me."[8] Given Putnam's and Bellah's

[7] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000, p. 27.
[8] Robert Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.

seminal studies took place before the rise of the digital age, we lack a complete understanding of any decline in civic dynamism since then, corresponding with the rise of ersatz "digital communities" and the Balkanization effects of social media platforms.

The shocking exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union in June 2016 and the election of President Donald Trump shortly thereafter have brought the question of the future viability of modern liberalism to the forefront. While it is true that modern liberalism's openness potentially encourages uncertainty itself, that we are now in another moment of profound self-doubt about the state of our modern liberal politics, and the internal tensions causing it to falter, is no longer a debate for many scholars, observers, and citizens. Theorists have responded to these variegated challenges by emphasizing that the character of the citizens who comprise the political community matters. One such school of thought which helped to bring back into vogue the idea of virtue was the so-called "liberal virtue theorists." Within the context of the erstwhile liberal-communitarian debates, liberal virtue theorists were instrumental in bringing virtue back into the discussion with the idea that liberalism, the chief political theory of modernity, required the possession and practice of robust virtues in order to sustain itself.

I. Virtue and Politics: A Modern Take

As we have seen, the retreat of virtues from political consideration and the aversion of courage is a distinctively modern and postmodern phenomenon. In Plato and Aristotle's time, talk of the nexus between virtue and politics, as well as courage and politics, was *de rigueur*. Indeed, at the beginning of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle declares that an inquiry into ethics leads necessarily into politics, as ethics is "a sort of political science."[9] And the Greco-Roman world had its ideal citizen, the doer of great deeds in the political realm and occasionally the hero

[9] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. Terence Irwin, Second Ed., Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999, 1094b10.

in the military realm. Although modern conceptions of citizenship differ greatly from the requirements of the ancients, political theorists often invoke the traditions of the pre-moderns to advocate solutions to what they see as lacking in the modern political order. Bryan Garsten, for instance, would reinvigorate rhetoric; Harvey Mansfield would recall *thumos*, human greatness, and manliness; and Patrick Deneen, in an earlier time, advocated for a shared vision of the common good.[10] In the modern era, it is difficult to imagine such a time when the polity's central task was to assist in the unfolding, molding, and perfection of its citizens. This is partly the work of generations of liberalism working to sunder the liberal polity from the concerns of virtue, focusing instead on rights, political procedures and processes, and institutions of fairness preventing the worst human vices from rearing their ugly heads.[11]

Particularly in vogue lately, however, are not just works seeking supplements to liberalism, but ones flirting with anti-liberalism, outright questioning the necessity of value pluralism and the wisdom of a political theory which leads to so much purported aimlessness and disorder. Perturbed by the increasing lack of shared values and moral community within liberalism, Rod Dreher calls upon Christians to form self-segregated and "intentional communities" of religious solidarity against liberalism's "moral chaos" because neither the modern liberal state nor electoral politics will allow Christians to live out their values.[12] Patrick

[10] Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009; Harvey Mansfield, "Is Manliness a Virtue?" Paper presented in the Bradley Lecture Series, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC, 1997; Harvey Mansfield, "Is Manliness Optional?," *The American Enterprise* September (2003): 32-34; Harvey Mansfield, *Manliness*, New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006; Harvey Mansfield, "How to Understand Politics: What the Humanities Can Say to Science," 2007 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, Washington, DC, The National Endowment for the Humanities, <http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/mansfield/HMlecture.html>; Patrick Deneen quoted in Wilson C. McWilliams, *Redeeming Democracy in America*, Ed. Patrick J. Deneen and Susan J. McWilliams, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas P, 2011.

[11] William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991, p. 123. See also Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*.

[12] Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, New York: Penguin, 2017.

Deneen's highly suggestive book, titled *Why Liberalism Failed*, argues that liberalism encourages an ever-expanding level of "privatism" resulting in an unsustainable and bloated liberal state. The liberal state has taken upon itself the liberation of all constraints on individuals, while liberty, once defined as freedom from "enslavement to one's own basest desires" and a kind of self-rule making a virtuous life possible, has now devolved into an endless pursuit of those very desires.[13] In liberalism, theorists like Dreher and Deneen find less of an esteemed political tradition and more of an ambitious political ideology. These theorists suggest that, rather than doubling down on a liberalism where vices have become virtues, religion unwelcome, moral truths entirely obscured, and privatism and alienation endemic, our present quandary requires an entirely new way of thinking and conceptualizing politics and community.

Many theorists have argued that liberalism not only ignores virtue but has an outright antagonism towards it. Irving Kristol laments that virtue found in liberal polities is evidence only of an older moral and religious tradition in decline, "under assault" from liberalism rather than sustained by it.[14] Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter both make well known observations on the dominance of rationalism in the "disenchanted" commercial society, which eviscerated the power of traditional virtues, beliefs, or attitudes.[15] And Albert Hirschman traces the position that liberalism does not rest on virtue back to nearly its founding, in social thought holding that virtue paled in comparison to the commercial and acquisitive "interests" of the middle class as best securing the foundations of liberal government.[16] Michal Ignatieff argues that modern virtues have declined from character traits and dispositions to "acquired practical skills in moral

[13] Patrick J. Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2018, p. 100.
[14] Irving Kristol, "The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals," *Encounter* (1979): 5-14.
[15] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, London: Routledge, 2010; Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, Trans. Gordon C. Wells, London: Penguin, 2002.
[16] Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997.

conduct and discernment" which daily struggle against "the ordinary vices: greed, lust, envy, and hatred."[17]

Over the past few decades, commentators on both sides of the political spectrum have consistently insisted that liberalism is in need of renewed invigoration; within a particular corridor, some have taken a renewed interest in a substantive theory of virtue as a possible remedy to its ills. Political leaders of all stripes invoke virtues like courage, generosity, integrity, toleration, and decency, as the solution. In 1992, President Clinton won the American presidency on a promise not just of economic and social equality, ubiquitous Democratic Party themes, but on a renewed virtue of personal responsibility (on which he later delivered in the form of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, also known as welfare reform). Clinton drew inspiration from the political theorist William Galston, author of several books on "liberal virtue theory" and member of the Democratic Leadership Council advising Clinton's campaign. On the other side of the political spectrum, former Reagan Secretary of Education, William Bennett, wrote a best-selling *Book of Virtues*, and William Kristol, his onetime chief of staff and a former lecturer in political theory at Harvard, speaks of a "sociology of virtue."[18] One may add to this mix of voices of those in the moderate middle of the political spectrum, such as popular public intellectual David Brooks, who has written for years about developing deeper virtue within American democracy.[19] In short, there has been a panoply of pronouncements from mainstream thinkers and theorists alike in favor of virtue theory as an

[17] Michael Ignatieff, *The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a Divided World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2017, pp. 27-29.
[18] William Bennett, *The Book of Virtues*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
[19] Cf. for instance, David Brooks, "Saving the System," *New York Times*, April 29, 2014, A23.

antidote to the ills of liberalism, including an occasional advocacy for the virtue of courage in the post-9/11 world.[20]

Interest in the grounding of theories of liberal virtue is quite natural, argues Will Kymlicka, since it grows out of what it means to be a good citizen, which itself "seems to integrate the demands of justice and community membership," the central concepts of political theory for many centuries.[21] The question of liberal virtues is also a natural outgrowth of the aforementioned political trends in Western liberal societies—mass voter ignorance, citizen apathy, political corruption, populism, and citizen anger over the elected leadership of their nations. Many theorists believe that by dint of focusing on citizen's virtues, they can avoid an overemphasis on political structures and institutions to maintain political stability and vibrancy, which has characterized recent political theory, as well as theories of the educative function of political participation.[22] Talking about virtues also permits us to move away from discussions of the dependence on rights (and whether these must precede responsibilities) in old theories of citizenship, and into the realm of active performance of character qualities and responsibilities.

The liberal virtues literature is an attempt by liberal political theorists and defenders of liberalism to respond to criticisms that it has neglected a focus on the virtues—in favor of rights, for instance. In other words, liberal virtue theory is a story about liberal commitments potentially failing to sustain themselves; citizens of liberal polities cannot merely explore their own interests or behave as they please, so long as they exercise forbearance and respect the rights of others. They must have a set of virtues, and the idea of liberal virtue acknowledges that

[20] See for example, John McCain and Martha Salter, *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life*, New York: Penguin, 2004.
[21] Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, "Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory," *Ethics* 104 (1994): 365.
[22] See, for example, Adrian Oldfield, "Citizenship: An Unnatural Practice?," *Political Quarterly* 61 (1990): 177-187.

the question of identifying these virtues and the role they play is not one of choice, but one imposed by the discipline of its study: liberal politics.

II. Theories of Liberal Virtue

In one of the modern iterations of the debate over the relationship of the individual to the state and community in which he or she lives, two distinct views emerged as dominant: liberalism and communitarianism. Liberalism holds that common political life exists within a community that protects individual rights and abides by institutional procedures that aim at ideals like justice, while the state remains fervently neutral with regard to individuals' respective conceptions of the good life. That is, in the parlance of this debate, liberals place primacy on the just before the good. To safeguard such notions of private morality and a sphere of personal liberty, liberals have formed precepts such as Mill's Harm Principle to declare the individual sovereign over self-regarding decisions. "The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection," says Mill in *On Liberty*.

> His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right.[23]

Meanwhile, communitarianism, which arose mainly as a forceful response to John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, advocates that the good ought to receive primacy over the just by all or most citizens attaching themselves to a common political ideal or project, as opposed to individual conceptions of what constitutes the good life. The community is not a voluntary association of pre-communal individuals but a prior existence that defines and shapes them. After all,

[23] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991, p. 12.

communitarians argue, we cannot come to an understanding of an ideal like justice without first bringing our "shared conceptions" to bear on the question. "Membership is important because of what the members of a political community owe to one another and to no one else, or to no one else in the same degree," says Michael Walzer. "If we recognized no distinction between members and strangers, we would have no reason to form and maintain political communities."[24] It would seem, then, that communitarians have the upper hand in laying claim to the mantle of virtues and discussion of their importance in sustaining communities, but it is precisely on this perception that liberal virtue theorists seek to push back.

It was precisely the communitarian challenge which spurred liberal theorists to articulate a richer and more flexible liberalism than had been previously articulated. Berkowitz argues that the communitarian challenge highlighted three important weaknesses to which liberals were forced to respond: first, the maintenance of liberal institutions requires virtues, both moral and intellectual, that occasionally fall outside of the strict supervision of liberalism's own tenets. In other words, liberalism may at times undermine its own ability to produce virtue. Second, the "extraliberal" institutions from which liberalism drew to inculcate virtues (such as community associations) have undergone substantial transformations and cannot be relied upon to produce reliable amounts of virtue in the way that the classical liberal tradition holds. And third, liberal principles can at time spawn vices, ones that are the opposites of liberal virtues and which may threaten the capacity of citizens to maintain liberal institutions and practices. As a response to these distinct challenges, the so-called "liberal virtues literature" is manifestly less embarrassed to "acknowledge its dependence on institutions, practices, and beliefs falling beyond the range of the liberal theorist's special expertise and the liberal regime's assigned jurisdiction." By

[24] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic Books, 1984, p. 64.

evincing a renewed self-consciousness about the limitations of liberal political philosophy, liberal virtue theory is an approach that its proponents argue compensates for liberalism's inherent disadvantages. It provides broad-based ideals by which citizens may live, as well as the grounds for a variety of public policies aimed at furthering the vision of liberal character. After several decades of work on liberal virtues in the wake of the challenge from communitarians, liberal theorists have come to a renewed appreciation for the liberal framework as one which respects the virtues, civic associations, and even religious faith as integral in a society of democratic institutions.[25]

Historically, classical liberalism has demonstrated some skepticism of virtues and an unwillingness to engage with virtue literature. This is for three primary reasons: first, the tendency of liberal theorists to reside in the world of ideal theory and to engage in abstraction (a trend further solidified in the wake of Rawls's work); second, the critiques by some well-known liberals like Hobbes and Hume of metaphysics and religion, calling into question the significance of virtue; and third, the well-known political position of many liberal political philosophers against perfectionism, as the maintenance of a realm of personal freedom is more attainable as a political goal and less license for the state to do harm. To some, the mention of virtue conjures up images of an austere or prudish Victorian morality that impinges upon the time-honored liberal divide between public and private, while others associate it with the pre-Enlightenment idea that man has a *telos* or a nature to perfect and the dizzyingly complex metaphysical theories of Aristotle. To others, discussion of virtue may signal the return of a transcendent moral order, not subject to human volition, that dictates principles of right conduct, defines human happiness, and reveals man's perfection—in other words, the threat of religious dogma by a different name,

[25] Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, p. 23.

smuggled into liberal politics and contravening the principle of secularism. And for others still, the idea of a set of virtues might mean imposing rigid notions of being on citizens that deprive them of the central liberal project of autonomy and self-creation (though, as saw with Mill, he made exactly the opposite case). Interestingly, Berkowitz declares that both the enthusiasm for and the aversion to virtue derive support from various and sundry aspects of the liberal tradition and that the structure of liberal thought itself ensures that liberalism will forever struggle with the question of virtue. "Strange as it may sound, a certain ambivalence in regard to virtue is a mark in the liberal spirit of sobriety and vitality," he says.[26]

A look at the work of John Rawls exemplifies this tendency towards abstraction and the ambivalence towards virtues which has placed many liberal theorists in precarious positions vis-à-vis the liberal virtues. In the neglected third part of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls defines the virtues as "sentiments, that is, related families of dispositions and propensities regulated by a higher-order desire, in this case a desire to act from the corresponding moral principles."[27] In particular, political stability in a well-ordered liberal society, Rawls holds, depends upon citizens with grounds for mutual trust, a capacity for friendship, and a shared sense of justice. One of the chief benefits of political liberalism is a sense of tolerance based on the doctrine of "reasonable pluralism" stemming from what Rawls labels "the burdens of judgment."[28] It is antithetical to Rawlsian liberalism, then, to use the coercive power of the state to inculcate a conception of human virtue, even in a seemingly benign way (say, in the interest of liberal virtues), with which some may reasonably disagree. The virtues are, in his account, partly *the happy by-product of life under just institutions*, which he declares to be theoretically true while mustering little

[26] Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, p. xii.
[27] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971, p. 42.
[28] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia UP, 2005, pp. 47-62.

empirical evidence for this position. Thus, there appears to be an unsettling disconnect in Rawlsian liberalism between the virtues he deems necessary (and not luxuries) for political stability and the maintenance of liberal institutions and the inability of those institutions to provision for their own survival because of strict state neutrality.

The most important thing to note in Rawls's theoretical account of how citizens acquire virtues are that they are all—private virtues, cooperative virtues, and the virtues associated with justice—not optional but necessary for liberal citizens. In a world where only a minority of the body politic was endowed with the requisite liberal virtues, a liberal state risks political instability and the inability to maintain its institutions. Given Rawls's well-known position in favor of virtues contributing to the ideal society, then, "would not the importance of virtue be greater still in an imperfect liberal democracy where citizens would find it necessary to negotiate mutual distrust, formal inequities, and structural defects in basic political institutions?"[29] It appears that Rawls's own logic implies the critical importance of virtue to the sort of imperfect liberal democracy in which we live today. His theoretical conclusion that ordered and just political institutions are the sources of liberal virtues entails, *a fortiori*, that in our imperfectly ordered liberal society we would not encounter liberal virtues with such frequency.

Liberal virtue theorists normally proceed on the belief that liberalism is a unique lifestyle and an achievement to be preserved—albeit a fragile one existing in an imperfect world. Central to their theories are US Supreme Court Justice Learned Hand's dictum that liberal practices "lie in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it."[30] Thus, both the logic and the achievements of liberalism demand of liberal citizens certain

[29] Peter Berkowitz, *Virtues and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, p. 26.
[30] Quoted in Anthony Lewis, *Freedom for the Thought We Hate: a Biography of the First Amendment*, New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 107.

qualities of character for the fair administration of liberal political institutions and the preservation of liberal political practices. While most liberals believe that the establishment of the political conditions for individuals to choose their life alone represents the liberal vision, these conditions and the process of making these life-shaping choices are profoundly dependent upon a distinct set of virtues. Indeed, anti-perfectionism in liberal thought provides sound reasons for seeking to evade a politics whose end is the inculcation of virtue, but this avoidance, taken to an extreme, is deleterious to liberalism's prospects for survival. For liberal virtue theorists, the declining ability or willingness of many liberals to theorize about virtue, much less ensure that it is a lived, practiced feature of liberalism—sometimes as a result of the internal dynamics of liberalism itself—is the most worrying trend for the future of liberalism.

By returning to Aristotle briefly, we can put it another way. Aristotle's great insight, according to the liberal virtue theorists, came in the *Politics*: the best medium of preserving any type of regime is to educate citizens in the virtues that support its main principles and counteract the bad tendencies to which that specific regime leads. (Of course, liberal virtue theorists try to thread the needle by doing this without making the perpetuation of the state such an overriding focus that it becomes "a black hole into which all…virtues collapse."[31]) Too many liberal theorists associate Aristotle with the idea that the proper end of politics is the unfolding of the virtues, in an ideal polity where the virtues of man coincide with the virtues of the political regime's specific end. This was indeed the mark of a perfect polity for Aristotle; however, he recognized a range of different political regimes with variegated ends and thus diverse sets of virtues. Besides, very few actual regimes embrace the inculcation of virtue as their first and guiding political principle, liberalism foremost among them. Thus, the liberal virtue theorists

[31] Ronald Dworkin, "Deux Conceptions de la Démocratie," in *L'Europe au soir du siècle. Identité et démocratie*, Eds. Jacques Lenoble and Nicole Dewandre, Paris: Édition Esprit, 1992, p. 132.

make us cognizant that the eschewal of virtue as the aim and end of politics ought not to be the eschewal of virtue altogether. Modern liberal theorists cannot dream of a regime centered on individual liberty and responsibility without also caring for the qualities of mind and body in both citizens and officeholders that help them achieve these goals. "It is one thing to say that it is not *government's* business to cultivate virtue, and quite another to assert that virtue is altogether irrelevant to the maintenance of peace, the protection of individual rights, and the promotion of material prosperity."[32]

Although liberal virtue theory criticizes some aspects of modern liberalism and envisions itself as responding to sundry criticism by communitarianism—such as that liberalism has a hollow center, encourages rampant individualism, or engenders a so-called "communitarian deficit" that itself threatens its achievements—it still operates within a broadly liberal framework, and hence remains properly called "liberal." Liberal virtue theorists do not criticize liberalism with the intent of advocating communitarianism; rather, they do so with the goal of strengthening liberalism from communitarian charges, making liberalism more attractive, and, without even having to admit the legitimacy of common communitarian critiques, pointing out flaws procedural liberalism can overcome with a proper theory and exercise of the virtues. "Liberalism is worth defending," declares William Galston pointedly, "and it can be substantively defended. Ironically, it is the misconceptions of liberalism's formal defenders that have rendered liberal theory vulnerable to attack."[33]

Thus, liberal virtue theory does not make any pretense to dissolving the tension between strict neutrality and a more tutelary state and is not, therefore, somehow a *via media* between liberalism and communitarianism, as has been suggested, since it maintains formal allegiance to

[32] Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, p. 16.
[33] William Galston, "Defending Liberalism," The American Political Science Review 76 (1982): 622.

liberal political practices and liberal political institutions.[34] Liberal virtue theory remains liberal in the sense that it does not require citizens to approach liberal political life with any antecedent normative concepts; rather, it requires that, *qua* citizen, they operate with a range of acceptable concepts and commitments by dint of the virtues they possess. But liberal virtues should not be taken lightly, as their inculcation requires considerable practice and self-discipline. They are "normatively structured elements of character."[35] The proponents of liberal virtues often distance themselves from advocacy of strict state neutrality regarding conceptions of virtue, but in so doing, they appear open to concerns of not only equality and freedom, but also excellence and virtue. (Every theory of human good or human virtues, however modest, will exert some pressure on the limits of state neutrality.) Some liberal virtue theorists contend that the advocacy of *strict* neutrality comes at the expense of key virtues constitutive of the liberal experience; advocacy of a small handful of virtues worthy of special attention, they contend, for the purpose of sustaining liberal democracy itself, is a far cry from a complete education in a shared conception of the good à la communitarianism. One liberal virtue theorists seeks "gentle and relatively unobtrusive ways" to inculcate them.[36]

Stopping well short of communitarianism, then, liberal virtue theorists want to provide liberalism with a "thicker" defense of itself than it can muster with its main tenets alone; the vitality of liberal politics is something worth defending for liberal virtue theorists, yet it is not supported wholly by a hollow liberal theory justified "formally" and "procedurally" through tenets like neutrality. In Galston's words, liberal virtue theory constructs a framework that includes both collective virtues and individual rights, "a non-neutral, substantive

[34] Marc Stier, "Liberal Virtue/Communitarian Virtue," paper presented at the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, 30 August 2002.
[35] Robert Audi, "A Liberal Theory of Civic Virtue," p. 149.
[36] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue, and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, p. 253.

liberalism…broadly (though not boundlessly) respectful of diversity, and supported by its own canon of virtues."[37] Liberal virtue theory attempts to expose the virtues upon which liberalism appears to lay claim surreptitiously, both for its survival and for its appeal.

Where most communitarians go wrong, according to most liberal virtue theorists, and hence why liberal virtue theorists have not become communitarians, is in seeming to argue that a community's preferred virtues are the *sole* human goods worth pursuing. To be sure, Aristotle's organic account of the state indicates that community necessitates shared human traits, but it does not follow immediately that *every trait* ought to be shared or that liberal celebration of social unity in the plurality of virtues—such as America's *e pluribus unum*—corrodes community *ipso facto*. Indeed, every society rests on some shared perception of its collective good—however thinly articulated—but in liberal virtue theory, this perception of human virtue does not purport to be the only conception *in toto*. Liberal virtue theory recognizes that pursuit of some goods occurs at the expense of others—what Isaiah Berlin termed "incommensurability"—and that individuals rightly embark on the pursuit of different goods even if some of them must be shared for the continuation and robustness of liberal practices and institutions (the fact that virtues are subject to debate and not agreement is yet another reason liberals are reluctant to discuss virtue).[38]

Therefore, the distinctiveness of liberal virtue theory lies not in the absence, but in the presence of, public virtues. The liberal state ought to foster an environment in which those virtues that sustain liberal politics, institutions, and commitments manifest themselves. Liberal virtues are not legal obligations; far from it. Even if not extant in every citizen, they are forms of excellence present in some that are conducive to flourishing in the very kind of society liberalism

[37] William Galston, *Liberal Purposes*, p. 44.
[38] Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, Ed. Henry Hardy, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

creates, i.e., sustaining public spaces—both physical and virtual—within which the robust discussion and debate endemic to liberalism can occur and a sense of community upheld.[39] Enumerating some of these virtues, Macedo comments that they encompass "broad sympathies, self-critical reflectiveness, a willingness to experiment, to try and accept new things, self-control and active, autonomous self-development, an appreciation of inherited social ideals, [and] an attachment and even an altruistic regard for one's fellow liberal citizens."[40] Liberal virtue theory accepts neither perfectionism nor solidarity as valid reasons for inculcating these virtues—as does the republicanism of Skinner, Pocock, Beiner, and Oldfield—because its justificatory defense is motivated by the decidedly instrumental function played by virtues in the stability and maintenance of basic liberal institutions in the *longue durée*.[41] Hence, it is *not republicanism or communitarianism* by a different name. Liberal virtue theory differs from the aforementioned in its aim to stake out liberalism as an attractive theory of community—not only as a hollow shell of respected rights—while remaining as true as possible to its core convictions; as its name indicates, this attraction relies on the presence of liberal virtues for its appeal. Its intent is to "reclaim a language which supposedly lies beyond the bounds of liberal politics, the language of virtue, citizenship, community, and human flourishing."[42] It rejects the idea that where virtues are discussed—or even practiced—liberalism is perforce absent.

Most distinctly from Aristotle, liberal virtue theorists do not identify virtue by dint of its application to the individual human person—does it have intrinsic worth by making people good

[39] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 4.
[40] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 272.
[41] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974; Ronald Beiner, *Liberalism, Nationalism, and Citizenship: Essays on the Problem of Political Community*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia P, 2003; Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?*, Berkeley: University of California P, 1992; Adrian Oldfield, *Citizenship and Community: Civic Republicanism and the Modern World*, London: Routledge, 1990.
[42] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 254.

or excellent and does it contribute to their happiness and well-being?—but only by whether *they function instrumentally to further the existence of liberal practices and allow citizens to better pursue their self-interest*. Likewise, they are not Kantian accounts of individual excellence in a capacity to act in accordance with precepts of duty. In practice of course, they may result in making people good or even act in accordance with the precepts of Kantian duty, but this is only a fortunate by-product for the liberal virtue theorist. Galston defines liberal virtues thus: "traits of character that individuals must possess if they are to uphold liberal institutions and to pursue their good within these institutions."[43] Note that the focus remains on the pursuit of one's (enlightened) self-interest within liberal institutions.

Given liberal aims and liberal conceptions of political community, it makes good sense that liberal virtue theorists conceive of virtue differently than Aristotle, whose theory of virtue focuses on "self-sufficient" actions chosen as ends in themselves, whereupon *eudaimonia* supervenes. After making the argument that one cannot have virtue without *phronesis* (wisdom), and wisdom without virtue, and that one must possess all the virtues simultaneously, Aristotle asks whether the virtuous individual can arise in an unvirtuous community. In Books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, his answer is clearly that possession of virtue requires virtuous community (a task he takes up in his *Politics*)—political life is largely the attainment of virtue meant not instrumentally, but as an end in itself. He concludes in Book X of the *Ethics* that virtue has a strong communal component utilizing the polis as a tutelary institution to achieve virtue: "Insofar as [man] is a human being…and hence lives together with a number of other human beings, he chooses to do the actions that accord with virtue."[44] Although liberal virtue theory shares the appellation "virtue," its conception of community prevents it from extolling

[43] William Galston, "Defending Liberalism," p. 629.
[44] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178b5.

virtue in the classical Aristotelian sense. In other words, liberal virtues are not synonymous with the classical virtues, smuggled in on a different basis of justification or in a transmuted context. In fact, liberal virtue theory reverses the Aristotelian relation between politics and virtue entirely: virtue is the means, stability of the political community the end. That is, liberal virtues are "the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living," without the pretense that they are somehow the highest of human qualities.[45] *It is thus no wonder that liberal virtue theory fails to explore in any sustained sense the virtue of courage*, for if liberal virtues are different from classical virtues, what do classical virtues like courage have to do with liberalism? Does modern liberalism also need classical virtues, and if so, how does it foster them? On these questions, Galston is conspicuously quiet.

In one major work on liberal virtue, Stephen Macedo attempts a new justificatory defense of liberalism related to the practiced virtues of liberal citizens. Macedo desires a defense of liberalism on grounds more widely-acceptable than those offered by, e.g., Rawls and Ronald Dworkin. That is, liberalism must be theorized as more attractive and stable than simply an acceptable *modus vivendi* in pluralistic societies. Macedo begins his treatment of liberal virtues with reference to a virtue appearing like courage: "free government needs its heroes, individuals prepared to make great sacrifices on behalf of liberal values."[46] But Macedo's fondness for courage ends there, as he admits that the conflict of values and value pluralism extant within liberalism may actually soften commitments and corrode the practice of courage.[47] Instead, the virtue at the center of Macedo's argument about liberalism is a commitment to public reasonableness, but he also makes mention of "impartiality, reflectiveness, self-criticism, the

[45] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991, p. 111.
[46] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 2.
[47] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, pp. 240-250.

articulation and defense of moral reason," *inter alia*.[48] Macedo argues that liberal societies are not neutral—public reasonableness itself presupposes substantive commitments about what is "reasonable"—and hence *Liberal Virtues* serves as Macedo's rejoinder to communitarians who claim liberals care neither for community nor character development.

While Macedo abandons neutrality to test other justificatory grounds of liberalism, especially those with a positive, liberal ideal, William Galston is less interested in a defense of liberal principles from a non-traditional background as he is in the imperative of cultivating virtues in the existential survival of liberalism. "The broad hypothesis," says Galston, "is that as the proportion of non-virtuous citizens increases significantly, the ability of liberal societies to function successfully progressively diminishes."[49] Galston declares himself in opposition to neutralist liberals and advocates, via a mildly tutelary liberal state (the possibility of which is somewhat taken for granted), the cultivation of such virtues as delayed gratification, temperance in denizen's democratic demands, and public reasonableness. We might also expect a discussion of courage from this purely necessarian perspective on liberal virtues to be forthcoming, but such an expectation is disappointed.

Galston takes more seriously what Macedo only hints at theoretically—that liberal regimes rely upon an extraliberal ethic whose sources, such as the role family traditionally played in American life, appear to be waning in modern society. Galston sees that the ability to recognize a need for virtue is much different than the ability to produce it; once the ability of exogenous forces to produce this need languishes, liberalism's need for virtue does not all of the sudden subside. Because liberal regimes appear to no longer produce the virtues necessary for their own survival, Galston sets out to perform a systematic empirical investigation of this

[48] Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues*, p. 276.
[49] William Galston, *Liberal Purposes*, p. 220.

hypothesis, namely, whether liberal virtues find any basis of support in liberal social and political practices. In other words, he addresses the criticisms that liberal virtues are parasitic on other, more substantive virtues. Herein lies a problematic contradiction with respect to courage: "by both recognizing the continuing need for courage and failing to treat courage explicitly as one of the liberal virtues, contemporary liberal theorists seem to have placed old-fashioned, traditional courage in a closet, trusting that it is there, ready to be hauled out in case of emergency, but otherwise neglecting it."[50] *It appears as though the liberal virtue theorists, too, have been impacted by the aversion to courage—just as the importance of the practice of courage has increased in response to the rise of modern contexts calling for its possession.*

III. Modern Contexts of Courage

Recently, many authors have lamented a so-called "crisis of civility" and "moral panic" in our speech practices. Although civility and toleration may be arguably lacking in many liberal democracies today, their importance is well known. Ortega y Gasset recognizes tolerance as a cultivated virtue which is a crux of the liberal worldview: "determination to live with an enemy, and even more, with a weak enemy."[51] Shklar comments that "the very refusal to use public coercion to impose creedal unanimity and uniform standards of behavior demands an enormous degree of self-control. Tolerance consistently applied is more difficult and morally more demanding than repression."[52] Exhibiting some measure of tolerance is to sympathize with projects and commitments not our own and to internalize value conflict and value pluralism. It requires that we practice courage to remain comfortable in the value of our life projects and

[50] Linda R. Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*, p. 19.
[51] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, Trans. Anthony Kerrigan, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame P, 1985, p. 65.
[52] Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984, p. 4-5, emphasis mine.

withstand the criticism of them by others or, conversely, to admit that one's beliefs and projects are not as persuasive as others' upon greater reflection and consideration.[53]

Many have deemed our current crisis to be "unprecedented" in its scope, but we have been here before. A tendency to retreat into enclaves of like-minded groups, even in environments long characterized by the liberty and intensity of their exchanges, such as universities, is nothing new, as the foregoing analysis of Tocqueville, Mill, and Arendt demonstrated.[54] What is possibly novel, however, are the much-remarked-upon societal tools (social media and the internet, for example) exacerbating these trends. As liberal democracies have seen the foundation for disagreement slip away, some have spoken of the necessity of cultivating the type of mental toughness required to maintain the space between people within which they can have discussions and conduct the business of politics.[55] This would represent a type of epistemic humility in recognizing the limitedness of our individual perspectives and treating others as our potential interlocutors and even worthy educators (as Mill would have it).

President Donald Trump's demotion of civility as a conversational virtue has been taken to heart and reciprocated by his opponents as a sign of their "resistance" to his administration, remarks Teresa Bejan. The problem with any efforts to tamp down on so-called incivility is that

[53] Cf. Karl Popper's notion of the "abstract society" in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. London: Routledge, 2011, p. 166.

[54] Perhaps not coincidentally, an erosion of liberal virtues like tolerance and reason amongst student activists on university campuses has coincided with doubts cast on reason from within the academic world itself. As Leon Wieseltier points out, tenured careers and stellar intellectual reputations flow to any political scientist or economist willing or able to show empirically that humans lack rational faculties in decision-making. He charges that the mean academic findings have been elevated into the norm, "the impediments to reason [confused] with the fate of reason," and he wonders aloud how sustainable it is for liberalism to hold such a pessimistic view of citizens and yet believe (in theory) in meaningful forms of public debate. Short of uncovering a social theory of reason, whereby the presence of others is often an improving influence on our reasoning capabilities, we, too, ought to be asking the same questions. Cf. Leon Wieseltier, "The Fear of Reason: In Defense of Rational Argument," *The New Republic*, 23 June 2011.

[55] For an early example, see Richard C. Sinopoli, "Thick-Skinned Liberalism: Redefining Civility," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 612-620.

its prosecution is "often a convenient pretext for persecution."[56] Disagreement over the manner of expression quickly descends into suppression of substance, and what is essentially a defensive mechanism can occasionally become an offensive weapon. Bejan's *Mere Civility* argues for an approach akin to Roger Williams', the founder of Rhode Island—open disagreement with and occasional contempt for opponents, as a stronger foundation for liberal society than any approaches rooted in Hobbes or Locke, who offer grounds for the exclusion of ideas we find repugnant when building a tolerant society. The key here is Bejan's inclusion of the word "mere," indicating a civility that conforms to a minimal baseline to engender and continue conversation (and sustain disagreement), but falling short of what might be called full mutual respect. Cultivating mental toughness is the linchpin to remaining in the arena against those we find uncivil and beyond the pale. Besides, to avoid those we find uncivil and beyond the pale, those conversations which are unpleasant and yet unavoidable, would require a retreat from the world which would severely compromise the spaces within which we practice politics, not to mention the quality of the dialogue itself. Bejan notes that even the practice of "mere civility," which at first blush is quite minimal, is actually quite demanding, all the more so given that in Williams' era, religious disagreements were akin to political ones, and occasionally turned into matters of life and death.[57]

Whatever the comprehensive solution might be, it is clear that employing the virtue of courage in a new, modern context is part of the answer to the maladies afflicting our speech practices. Obviously, political opinions are seen by many as an important part of their self-image which ought to be beyond rational scrutiny. As with any cherished beliefs,

[56] Teresa Bejan, "You Don't Have to Be Nice to Political Opponents. But You Do Have to Talk to Them." *The Washington Post*, 8 Mar. 2017, <

[57] Teresa Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2017.

disconfirmation of them is a process many resist vigorously. Modern tools like the internet exacerbate this tendency even further because they have the power to gather communities of like-minded individuals who subsequently double down on preexisting beliefs. The range of ideas to which we are routinely exposed—and relatedly, our desire or ability to countenance them—has become significantly limited. The ubiquity of social media has given rise to phenomena like the Dunning-Krueger effect, which finds that the less skilled and competent someone is, the higher their levels of confidence that they are good at what they do.[58]

The following are phenomena contributing to the siloing of like-minded individuals, which contributes to the mentality of the "right side" (allies) and "wrong side" (enemies) of any given issue; the practices of safe spaces, trigger warnings, and political correctness, which are types of epistemic closure that can breed vitriol and fail to treat our fellow citizens as worthy interlocutors; micro-aggressions, which advance the idea that small comments and remarks during a dialogical exchange are so catastrophic to one's being that the offended must withdraw immediately in the name of personal safety; and no-platforming of speakers, which *a priori* denies the need to employ courage for conversation based on the presumption of the content of a speaker's argument. The goal is to stay clear of the polemical and to avoid becoming ensconced in the minutiae of these phenomena, but rather to sketch the broad, overarching challenges of the current environment and to understand how the new context of courage which I am suggesting can significantly enhance the modern political experience. Amongst other things, one of the most important aspects of this modern context for courage is the ability to live with uncertainty—i.e., that reassurance ought to come in the form of political possibility and not in

[58] A 2015 Ohio State University study on bias discovered that participants exposed to scientific views that contradicted their worldviews, tended to doubt the validity of the findings. This held true for both liberals and conservatives. Cited in Tom Nichols, "How America Lost Faith in Expertise," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 2, pp. 60–73., <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-02-13/how-america-lost-faith-expertise>.

the lack of it.[59] In other words, modern contexts of courage incline citizens towards the possibilities of politics and exchange, and away from its polar opposite: orthodoxies. Modern contexts of courage combat the desire for ontological security at all costs and impel us to trust our fellow citizens to use their liberty responsibly, rather than licensing it.

Although the extent of these recent challenges to liberal speech practices is arguable and, in the end, unknown, with some sides claiming greater prevalence (for political purposes) than is perhaps the reality, the events of the past half-decade have, at the minimum, made us aware that we inhabit an era of occasionally "weaponized sensitivity."[60] Occasional scenes of intense protest have captured the attention of the political class with the rise of a new social and political activism—especially fervent among particular segments of society in the wake of Donald Trump's election—driven partly by students on university campuses.[61] Universities, once proudly trumpeting themselves as the bastions of free speech, inquiry, and tolerance, have occasionally been the incubators for demands of greater security, safety, and shelter. "Encouraged by forces too numerous to list to think of themselves in terms of group identities (gay, straight, Christian, Jewish, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, etc.)," comments Dana Villa, "Americans no longer look kindly…on anyone who suggests that the web of our moral customs

[59] While one of the guiding principles of philosophy since Socrates is that it does not act when it does not know what is right, politics does not have that luxury and requires that we occasionally act without the possession of full knowledge. Modern contexts of courage require that in politics, we find reasonable ways to make important decisions in the absence of firm knowledge.

[60] I have borrowed this excellent turn of phrase from a trenchant op-ed by Lionel Shriver in the *New York Times*, since I believe that most of the modern challenges facing liberalism and liberal social and political practices stem from heightened sensitivity and a proliferation of new definitions of harm. Cf. "Will the Left Survive the Millennials," the *New York Times*, published 23 September, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/23/opinion/will-the-left-survive-the-millennials>.

[61] In observing this sensitivity to inequality, perhaps we ought to be mindful of Tocqueville's astute observation that "When inequality is the general rule in society, the greatest inequalities attract no attention. When everything is more or less level, the slightest variation is noticed." Cf. to Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 538. Harvey Mansfield argues that we must pay attention to "who is allowed to get angry" about the cause of equality. Cf. Harvey C. Mansfield, "How to Understand Politics: What the Humanities Can Say to Science," 2007 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, Washington, DC, *The National Endowment for the Humanities*, 2007, National Endowment for the Humanities. <http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/mansfield/HMlecture.html>.

and beliefs is in need of constant examination, reform, and rearticulation." He continues, "We do not find ourselves in very fertile ground for the Millean idea of individuality to take root, no matter how superficially hospitable American ideas of individualism and self-reliance may look to Mill's basic message."[62] Protests have erupted over a range of issues, from distasteful Halloween costumes to classroom curricula and the names of specific alumni honored on university buildings. The following is an attempt to adumbrate some of these challenges, without making argumentative claims as to their exact prevalence within society. The point is to explicate the challenges themselves, as opposed to focusing on the details of individual incidents.

1) *Safe spaces:* Safe spaces, as their name suggests, seek to protect certain vulnerable groups from jarring experiences by erecting barriers around certain ideas and conversations. The goal is to protect potential victims from provocative ideas or persons, especially when past traumas could be triggered. However, safe spaces, by erecting fences around certain ideas, groups, and conversations in the name of security, have the potential to lead to dangerous ideological conformity. Rather than critical engagement of those we disagree with, many find it easier to simply cut out dialogical opponents from their daily interactions. Some commentators find safe spaces at universities potentially problematic precisely because of the ever-challenging role universities ought to play in the intellectual formation of their students.[63] In general, favoring dialogical exchange over a retreat into safe spaces treats others as worthy interlocutors who possess the potential to teach us something and signals to them something significant: that we trust them to tolerate differing opinions and that we trust them to responsibly wield their right to free speech. "The phrase 'not in front of the children' has traditionally been used to distinguish between what is considered fit to say or show to

[62] Dana Villa, *Public Freedom*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008, pp. 109-110.
[63] Cf. Frank Bruni, "The Dangerous Safety of College," *The New York Times,* 11 Mar. 2017, p. SR3.

adults but not to our offspring. *That line is becoming increasingly blurred*," comments Mick Hume sardonically.[64] On a more serious note, however, respect for persons seems to have morphed into a demand for the respect for their projects and ends. This transformation, which ought to be debated as opposed to presumed, has had a profound impact on the types of conversations regarding the good life and their attendant tenor that citizens find appropriate in the public sphere.[65]

2) *Trigger warnings:* Trigger warnings are statements alerting a reader, viewer, or participant that the content which follows may be considered mentally distressing or emotionally uncomfortable. They often exist before disturbing videos or articles, especially those involving murder and terrorism, in order to help people avoid disturbing content they would rather not see. At the University of Glasgow, for example, students studying Christian Theology receive advance warning about the gruesome nature of Jesus's crucifixion, with the ability to exercise their right to skip certain classes that might cause them distress (despite the centrality of this episode to the entire Christian gospel narrative).[66] Beyond the basic psychological tenet that helping people avoid what they most fear is misguided, trigger warnings can be presented as representing a challenge to traditional ideas of harm in a similar fashion to the disagreement between J.S. Mill and Jeremy Waldron: by attempting to replace a more objective standard of harm with largely emotional or "offense tests."[67] This has had the practical effect of ushering in an "age of reverse Voltaires," argues Mick Hume, where

[64] Mick Hume, *Trigger Warning: Is the Fear of Being Offensive Killing Free Speech?*, London: William Collins, 2015, p. 274, emphasis added.
[65] Cf. Richard C. Sinopoli, "Thick-Skinned Liberalism: Redefining Civility," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 612-620.
[66] Camilla Turner, "Students Who Avoid Making Eye Contact Could Be Guilty of Racism, Oxford University Says," *The Telegraph*, 22 Apr. 2017, <www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/04/22/students-avoid-making-eye-contact-could-guiltyof-racism-oxford/?WT.mc_id=tmgoff_fb_tmg.>.
[67] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind," *The Atlantic*, published September 2015 <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>.

"offense" risks becoming the new standard of harm and the trump card rendering difficult dialogical exchanges dead in their tracks.[68] As we saw in Chapter 3, J.S. Mill understood the "moral distress" occasioned by free speech and a healthy clash of ideas to be a sign that progress was present in a society and that ideas were held by citizens with a level of intellectual dynamism. Trigger warnings risk that offense once again might become a necessary and sufficient reason for intervention or prohibition on the basis of harm, with tolerance evolving into the practice of a kind of intolerance—as in, we are no longer going to tolerate speech that is "intolerant."[69] Lastly, because thoughts and their expressions through speech acts are so intertwined, the hesitance to offend others with speech acts could eventually contribute to a rise in what Orwell called "crimestop," which is the dystopian faculty or instinct of stopping short of any dangerous thought itself.

3) *Micro-aggressions:* The concept of micro-aggressions are, as their name indicates, small comments that can contribute to making an entire environment unsafe space. Asking about someone's origins is an example of a question occasionally interpreted as a micro-aggression because it intimates that one does not belong or that one is an "other" within a community. The concept of micro-aggressions risks leading to a secondary phenomenon Lukianoff and Haidt call "catastrophizing," viz., a self-infantilizing act whereby common events such as the "offense" occasioned by perceived micro-aggressions are hyperbolized into nightmarish trials from which those impacted might not emerge unscathed.[70] Put in more charitable

[68] Mick Hume, *Trigger Warning,* London: William Collins, 2015. Hume takes this concept from an interview with the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky. Asked about why he took issue with even minor reviewers giving critical voice to his performances, Stravinsky purportedly responded: "I agree that what a reviewer says may be inconsequential, even in the short run. What I protest is his right to say it—Voltaire in reverse" (cited in Hume, *Trigger Warning,* p. 54).

[69] This is an inversion of traditional notions of tolerance in the venerable act of trying to protect vulnerable citizens.

[70] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind," 2015; Cf. also Greg Lukianoff, *Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate,* New York: Encounter Books, 2014.

terms, micro-aggressions and catastrophizing risk making normally bearable events unbearable. Encountering micro-aggressions is a clear case in which the modern context of courage may help to avoid the experience of robust speech as a serious crisis. The idea that one's entire existence can be disempowered by a distasteful Halloween costume, or the idea that the question of one's origins ought to be off-limits, demonstrates levels of sensitivity and a modern context in which courage must be employed to overcome.[71]

4) *Political Correctness:* Political correctness stems from an attempt to keep certain unwelcome, uncouth, and downright dangerous ideas from entering into discussion, mostly in the name of those most negatively impacted by them. Political correctness risks implying that there are "correct" and "incorrect" opinions, or at the very least, a range of ideas within which citizens may have disagreements. Certain conversations may be circumscribed by political correctness entirely. Political correctness challenges the fundamental openness of modern courage to epistemic uncertainty and to the full expression of a plurality of opinions (even those occasionally vial, clearly disturbing ones). Political correctness tends to ratchet itself up over time, and usually, transgressors do not discover the latest limitations until after they have breached them and been properly reprimanded. At many universities today, one is likely to encounter so-called free speech codes, which determine what and often where students may speak, under threat of penalty. Under an Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (Bill C-16, 2016), for instance, the venerable desire to protect the rights of citizens to gender expression resulted in positive injunctions on speech

[71] Conor Friedersdorf, "On Being Asked, 'Where Are You From?,'" *The Atlantic*, 19 Sept. 2015, <www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/09/on-being-asked-where-are-you-from/405355/.>

and potentially prosecutable offenses for the failure to use non-binary gender pronouns such as "hir" and "zim."[72]

5) *No platforming:* No platforming is the attempt to prevent certain speakers deemed objectionable from speaking, or creating significant disruption for those speakers so as to serve as a deterrent. Like other phenomena, no platforming practices risk allowing offense to become a new standard of harm—this time, in an *a priori* manner. The practice of no platforming speakers implies that the protestors know that they will take offense at what will be expressed, and they will use almost whatever means necessary to stop one from expressing it. Recent speeches by Charles Murray and Anne Coulter were shut down at Middlebury College and the University of California: Berkeley, respectively. In the former case, students did not permit Murray to speak, shouting him down before several masked men physically assaulted him upon his exit from the building; in the latter case, Berkeley forced Coulter to cancel her speaking engagement because they could not guarantee her physical security.[73] Weeks before Coulter, masked men caused $100,000 worth of damage to Berkeley's campus to prevent gadfly Milo Yiannopoulos from speaking, ironically in the original home of the free speech movement in the United States.[74] French Presidential candidate Marine le Pen's speech at the Oxford Union Society was delayed significantly when a mass of protestors physically blocked her entrance to the debate chamber while

[72] Eugene Volokh, "At the University of Oregon, No More Free Speech for Professors on Subjects Such as Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation," *The Washington Post*, 26 Dec. 2016, <www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/12/26/at-the-university -of-oregon-no-more-free-speech-for-professors-on-subjects-such-as-race-religion-sexual-orientation/?utm_term=.91f96452d6df>.
[73] Peter Beinart, "A Violent Attack on Free Speech at Middlebury," *The Atlantic*, 6 Mar. 2017, <www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/middlebury-free-speech-violence/518667/>.
[74] Madison Park and Kyung Lah, "Berkeley Protests of Yiannopoulos Caused $100,000 in Damage," *CNN*, 3 Feb. 2017, <edition.cnn.com/2017/02/01/us/milo-yiannopoulos-berkeley/index.html>.

attempting to no platform her.[75] The no platforming tactic risks resulting in the regrettable effect of anesthetizing citizens to the many instances of injustice, racism, bigotry, or homophobia now extant in our society because it reacts before even hearing an interlocutor's arguments. We must realize that banning speech is not equivalent to, nor as optimal as, defeating speech in the form of a persuasive argument. In the end, what begins as a compassionate cry for those who are the potential victims of provocative speech risks resulting in an act of bullying.[76] As we saw in Chapter 2 on Tocqueville and Chapter 3 on Mill, both thinkers warned that the resultant inability to speak freely and challenge prevailing opinion in any sort of meaningful way can lead only to a suffocating and retrograde cloud of conformism where many issues are taken off the table and placed into suspended animation. Paradoxically, "to demand the right not to be offended is to deny everybody's freedom to offend against the accepted ethics and opinions of the age," hurting some of the most vulnerable members of society who suffer under the burden of the status quo.[77]

IV. Beyond Liberal Virtue Theory

The literature on liberal virtue theory, which began as a principled defense of liberalism against the claims of communitarians, eventually leading to concessions on the importance of virtues to liberal political institutions and political order, has now existed for more than two decades. More recently, it has even included liberal writers reinterpreting or borrowing from republican theory as a means of reinvigorating liberalism, notions of civic virtue, and "offering insight into the conditions under which the political values of liberalism…can be realized more

[75] Mick Hume, *Trigger Warning*, p. 70.
[76] Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, "Microaggression and Moral Cultures," *Comparative Sociology* 13 (2014): 692-726.
[77] Mike Hume, *Trigger Warning*, p. 53.

adequately."[78] Not many theorists today disagree with or deny liberalism's necessity for virtue. The literature has succeeded in convincing a great many people—both other theorists and sitting officeholders at some of the highest echelons of government. If nothing else, it stands to reason that the proliferation of literature on liberalism and the virtues in the last two decades admits, at least implicitly, that liberalism requires citizens to have sets of virtues and character qualities. Yet, liberal theorists have by and large not moved in the most obvious theoretical direction after establishing the thesis that "the possession and practice of virtues matters"—namely, the question of which virtues are critical, beyond a laundry list of loosely defined concepts. "Given the importance of courage to the preservation of liberal political life, we might expect to find sustained attention paid to it in the work of contemporary liberal theorists, particularly in the work of those who seek to clarify and elaborate liberal virtues," says Linda Rabieh.[79] However, "mainstream liberal thought devotes little attention to courage."[80] This is highly disappointing, as "the very premise of the project undertaken by liberal theorists like William Galston and Stephen Macedo seems to demand an investigation of courage."[81]

This thesis, in part, explored the virtue of courage in the thought of three thinkers in order to go beyond the work of the liberal virtue theorists—who have largely succeeded in convincing us of liberalism's need for virtue—to track the specific relationship to the maintenance of political traditions, institutions, and practices, thereby shedding light on some of the modern contexts in which courage is employed. We can look at the main chapters of this thesis as three different responses to the existence of various contexts for courage in the modern world. We

[78] Cf. Mark Philp, "Republicanism and Liberalism: On Leadership and Political Order—A Review," *Democratization* 3 (1996): 383.
[79] Linda R. Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*, p. 17.
[80] Linda R. Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*, p. 8.
[81] Linda R. Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*, p. 17.

saw in Tocqueville a very vocal proponent for the maintenance of tradition to supplement the challenges of modernity, but a democratic courage consumed by the concerns of the acquisitive spirit. Democratic courage possessed the ability to moderate one's self-interests on occasion and avoid the greatest negative byproducts associated with its own practice. We saw in Mill a full embrace of the idea that any clinging to tradition or the "dead dogmas" of the past inhibits the radical individual autonomy required for character formation. Just as Mill himself did during his intellectual convalescence, he thinks we ought to live fully into this experience, creating new characters for ourselves along the way, even if he neglects to mention the importance of courage to both individuals on this path and to his liberal politics involving robust exchanges about the content of one's character. Lastly, we saw in Arendt deliberate acts of recovery from the ancient world that aim to supplement the problem of modernity. The recovery of this context of courage, however, provided us only with an application of courage that is undesirable in the modern world because of its strong martial connotations. Therefore, we need a modern context for courage which helps us to address the newest political and social challenges elaborated in the previous section. For better or worse, these are some of the challenges facing liberal societies from within.

Ironically, it is Mill, the theorist who is most silent on the importance of courage in his liberal politics, who points the way for us. Neglecting courage does not somehow eliminate the need for it. The ways in which courage is absent in Mill's work draws our attention to the analogous modern contexts which demand the possession and practice of courage. Real change in liberal society ought to come from persuasion and robust speech practices, not violence or the abrogation of civil norms. We cannot expect progress in the true Millian sense—the betterment of our moral condition—as opposed to cosmetic societal changes, if we are unwilling to speak to

one another and participate in the vigorous exchange of ideas about the proliferating varieties of life. Modern contexts of courage, therefore, do not require a reinvigoration of the heroism of the ancients and resignation to all of its attendant ills. Instead, modern contexts of courage are characterized by an exchange of courage in the form of physical conflict on the battlefield for that of courage in contexts of persuasive and intense speech exchanges. A more simplistic way of putting this is that we need to thicken our skin in the face of criticisms from our fellow citizens in an era when the tools at our disposal make it all too easy to retreat to our corner of kindred spirits. The content of courage—the virtue that orients us to make proper assessments of threats—does not necessarily require a wholesale makeover, but it does require a creative employment in a proliferating amount of new contexts. In his lack of treatment of courage, then, Mill paradoxically invites us forward in the most productive way to ruminate on the many contexts of modern courage. Just as we found a treatment of courage lacking in Mill, however, we also find these contexts sufficiently underdeveloped, undermentioned, and most of all, underappreciated in the literature on liberalism and the virtues.

Bibliography

Addams, Jane. *Women and Public Housekeeping*. New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1913.

Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy: Volume 1: Inferno*. Trans. Mark Musa. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Allen, Wayne F. "*Homo Aristocus*: Hannah Arendt's Elites." Idealistic Studies 13 (1983): 226 -239.

Arendt, Hannah. *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin, 2006.

_____. *Crises of the Republic*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972.

_____. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

_____. *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*. Ed. Jerome Kohn. New York: Schocken Books, 2005.

_____. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998.

_____. *The Life of the Mind*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971.

_____. *Men in Dark Times*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970.

_____. *On Revolution*. London: Penguin, 2006.

_____. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970.

_____. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973.

_____. "[The Origins of Totalitarianism]: A Reply." Review of Politics. 15 (1953): 76 -84.

_____. *The Promise of Politics*. Ed. Jerome Kohn. New York: Schocken Books, 2005.

_____. *Responsibility and Judgment*. Ed. Jerome Kohn. New York: Schocken Books, 2003.

Aristotle. *The Eudemian Ethics*. Trans. Anthony Kenny. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.

_____. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Terence Irwin. Second ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999.

_____. *Poetics and Rhetoric*. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.

_____. *Politics*. Ed. R.F. Stalley. Trans. Ernest Barker. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Ashton, Rosemary. *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.

Avramenko, Richard. *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame P, 2011.

Audi, Robert. "A Liberal Theory of Civic Virtue." Social Philosophy and Policy 15 (1998): 149-170.

Bain, Alexander. *John Stuart Mill, A Criticism: with Personal Recollections*. London: Longmans Green & Co., 1882.

Ball, Terence. "The Formation of Character: Mill's 'Ethology' Reconsidered." Polity 33 (2000): 25-48.

Balot, Ryan K. *Courage in the Democratic Polis: Ideology and Critique in Classical Athens*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014.

_____. "Courage in the Democratic Polis." Classical Quarterly 54 (2004): 406-423.

_____. "Transforming 'Manliness' into Courage: Two Democratic Perspectives." *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*. Eds. Geoffrey Kellow and Neven Leddy. Toronto: University of Toronto P, 2016. 136-156.

Beinart, Peter. "A Violent Attack on Free Speech at Middlebury." *The Atlantic*, 6 Mar. 2017, <www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/middlebury-free-speech-violence/518667/>.

Beiner, Ronald. *Liberalism, Nationalism, and Citizenship: Essays on the Problem of Political Community*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia P, 2003.

_____. *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* Berkeley: University of California P, 1992.

Bejan, Teresa. *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2017.

_____. "You Don't Have to Be Nice to Political Opponents. But You Do Have to Talk to Them." The Washington Post, 8 Mar. 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/03/08/you-dont-have-to-be-nice-to-political-opponents-but-you-do-have-to-talk-to-them/?utm_term=.16a3d462f893

Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, and Steven M. Tipton. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California P, 1996.

Benitez, Eugenio. "Cowardice, Moral Philosophy, and Saying What You Think." *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity*. Ed. Gerald A. Press. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. 83-98.

Bennett, William. *The Book of Virtues*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Bentham, Jeremy. *An Introduction to the Principles and Morals of Legislation*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007.

Berger, Florian. *The Face of Courage: The 98 Men Who Received the Knight's Cross and the Close-Combat Clasp in Gold*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2009.

Berkowitz, Peter. *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999.

Berkowitz, Roger. "Why Arendt Matters: Revisiting 'The Origins of Totalitarianism.'" *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 18 Mar. 2017, <lareviewofbooks.org/article/arendt-matters-revisiting-origins-totalitarianism/.>

Berlin, Isaiah. *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*. Ed. Henry Hardy. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

_____. *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*. Ed. Henry Hardy. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

Blunden, Edmund. *The Mind's Eye, Essays*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1934.

Boesche, Roger. *Theories of Tyranny: From Plato to Arendt*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996.

_____. "Why Could Tocqueville Predict So Well?" Political Theory 11 (1983): 79-103.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Trans. Christian K. Verlag. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

Bourke, Joanna. *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. London: Bloomsbury Press, 2010.

Brooks, David. "Saving the System." *New York Times*. April 29, 2014. A23.

_____. *The Road to Character*. New York: Random House, 2016.

Brown, D.G. "Mill on Harm to Others' Interests." Political Studies XXVI (1978): 395-99.

Bruni, Frank. "The Dangerous Safety of College." *The New York Times*, 11 Mar. 2017. SR3.

Bukharin, Nikolai. *The Prison Manuscripts: Socialism and Its Culture*. Trans. George Shriver. New York: Seagull, 2006.

Burns, Timothy. "The Problematic Character of Periclean Athens." *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, Eds. Geoffrey Kellow and Neven Leddy. Toronto: University of Toronto P, 2016. 15-40.

Buruma, Ian. *Murders in Amsterdam: Liberal Europe, Islam, and the Limits of Tolerance*. London: Penguin, 2006.

Campbell, Bradley and Jason Manning. "Microaggression and Moral Culture." Comparative Sociology 13 (2014): 692-726.

Canovan, Margaret. *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

_____. *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1974.

Capaldi, Nicholas. *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

_____. "John Stuart Mill's Defense of Liberal Culture." Ed. Eisenach, Eldon J. *Mill and the Moral Character of Liberalism*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2005.

_____. "Mill's Forgotten Science of Ethology." Social Theory and Practice 2 (1973): 409-420.

Card, Robert F. "Situationist Social Psychology and J.S. Mill's Conception of Character." Utilitas 22 (2010): 481-93.

Carlisle, Janice. *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991.

Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History*. Ed. Michael K. Goldberg. Berkeley, CA: University of California P, 1993.

Chesterton, G.K. *G.F. Watts*. London: Duckworth & Company, 1904.

_____. *A Miscellany of Men*. Norfolk, VA: IHS Press, 2003.

_____. *Orthodoxy*. London: Simon & Brown, 2012.

Cicero. *On Duties*. Ed. M.T. Griffin. Trans. E.M. Atkins. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

Conway, David A. "Law, Liberty and Indecency." Utilitas 49 (1974): 135-47.

Cooper, Laurence D. "Beyond the Tripartite Soul: The Dynamic Psychology of the 'Republic.'" The Review of Politics 63 (2001): 341-72.

Craiutu, Aurelian. *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012.

_____. *Faces of Moderation: The Art of Balance in an Age of Extremes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Crick, Bernard. *In Defense of Politics*. 5th ed. London: Continuum, 2000.

Crowder, George. *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*. New York: Continuum Books, 2002.

_____. "Pluralism and Liberalism." Political Studies 42 (1994): 293-305.

Dagger, Richard. *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.

Dahl, Robert A. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1991.

_____. *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000.

De Becker, Gavin. *The Gift of Fear and Other Survival Signals that Protect Us From Violence*. New York: Random House, 1997.

Deneen, Patrick J. *Why Liberalism Failed*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2018.

Deresiewicz, William. "On Political Correctness: Power, Class, and the New Campus Religion." *The American Scholar*, 6 Mar. 2017, <theamericanscholar.org/on-political -correctness/#>.

Dewey, John. *Liberalism and Social Action*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1999.

Disch, Lisa T. "More Truth than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt." Political Theory 21 (1993): 665-694.

Dobel, J. Patrick. "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," Public Administration Review 58 (1998): 74-81.

Dreher, Rod. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Penguin, 2017.

Durkheim, Émile. *Moral Education: A study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education*. Trans. Everett K. Wilson and Herman Schnurer. London: Free Press, 1961.

Dworkin, Ronald. "Deux Conceptions de la Démocratie." *L'Europe au soir du siècle. Identité et démocratie*. Eds. Jacques Lenoble and Nicole Dewandre, Paris: Édition Esprit, 1992.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*. New York: Metropolitan, 1997.

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. Ed. Helen Vendler. New York: Signet Classics, 1998.

Fawcett, Edmund. *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015.

Feinberg, Joel. *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 1: Harm to Others*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.

_____. *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law, Vol. 2: Offense to Others.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985.

Feuer, Lewis. "John Stuart Mill as a Sociologist: The Unwritten Ethology." *James and John Stuart Mill: Papers of the Centenary Conference*. Eds. John M. Robson and Michael Laine. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.

Flaubert, Gustav. *A Sentimental Education*. Trans. Douglas Parmée. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

Foot, Philippa. *Virtues and Vices*. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1979.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage, 1995.

Friedersdorf, Conor. "On Being Asked, 'Where Are You From?'." *The Atlantic*, 19 Sept. 2015, <www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/09/on-being-asked-where-are-you-from/405355/.>

_____. "The New Intolerance of Student Activism." *The Atlantic*. 9 Nov. 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/the-new-intolerance-of-student-activism-at-yale/414810/>.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 2006.

Fuss, Peter. "Hannah Arendt's Conception of Political Community." Idealistic Studies 3 (1973): 252-265.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Galston, William. "Defending Liberalism." The American Political Science Review 76 (1982): 621-629.

_____. *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

_____. "Liberal Virtues and the Formation of Civic Character." *Seedbeds of Virtue*. Eds. Mary Ann Glendon and David Blankenhorn. Lanham, MD: Madison, 1995.

Garsten, Bryan. *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009.

Gay, Robert. "Courage and Thumos." Philosophy 63 (1988): 255-265.

Graves, Robert. *Goodbye to All That*. London: Penguin, 2011.

Gray, John. *Mill on Liberty: A Defence*. London: Routledge, 1983.

Grossman, Dave. *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Gutmann, Amy. *Democratic Education*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," Social Research 44 (1977): 3-24.

Hauerwas, Stanley. "The Difference of Virtue and the Difference It Makes: Courage Exemplified," Modern Theology 9 (1993): 249-264.

Haugh, Christopher I. "The U.S. Government Confronts Its Bias." *The Atlantic*, 2 July 2016, <www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/the-us-government-confronts-its stereotypes/489470/.>

Havel, Václav. *Living in Truth*. Ed. Jan Vladislav. London: Faber & Faber, 1989.

_____. *Open Letters: Selected Prose 1965-1990*. Ed. Paul Wilson. London: Faber & Faber, 1991.

Hedges, Chris. *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Ed. J.N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper Classics, 2008.

_____. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper Collins, 1982.

_____. *Selected Letters: 1917-1961*. Ed. Carlos Baker. New York: Scribner, 2003.

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Scribner, 1957.

Herodotus. *The Histories*. Ed. John M. Marincola. Trans. Aubery De Selincourt. London: Penguin, 2003.

Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1990.

Hirschman, Albert O. *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. Richard Tuck. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

Hoess, Rudolf. *Commandant of Auschwitz*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. London: Phoenix Books, 2000.

Holmes, Richard. *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Honderich, Ted. "The Worth of J.S. Mill on Liberty." Political Studies XXII (1974): 463-70.

Horace. *The Complete Odes and Epodes: with the Centennial Hymn*. Trans. W.G. Shepherd. New York: Penguin, 1983.

Ignatieff, Michael. *The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a Divided World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2017.

Jacobson, Daniel. "Mill on Liberty, Speech, and the Free Society." Philosophy & Public Affairs 29 (2000): 276-309.

James, William. *Writings, 1902-1910*. New York: Library of America, 1988.

Jardin, André. *Tocqueville: A Biography*. London: Peter Halban, 1988.

Jaume, Lucien. *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008.

Judt, Tony. *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century*. New York: Penguin, 2008.

Kahan, Alan S. *Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.

Kant, Immanuel. *An Answer to the Question: 'What Is Enlightenment?'* Trans. H.B. Nisbet. New York: Penguin, 2010.

_____. *Kant: Political Writings*. Ed. H.S. Reiss. Trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

_____. *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*. Trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.

Keane, John. *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* Ed. Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard. New York: Grand Central, 2002.

_____. *Strength to Love*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010.

Kohn, Jerome. "Freedom: the priority of the political." *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*. Ed. Dana R. Villa. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.

Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. James H. Nichols. Ed. Allan Bloom. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

Kołakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism*. Vol. 1-3. Trans. P.S. Falla. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Krause, Sharon R. *Liberalism with Honor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002.

Kristol, Irving. "The Adversary Culture of Intellectuals." Encounter Oct. 1979: 5-14.

Kymlicka, Will and Wayne Norman. "Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory." Ethics 104 (1994): 352-381.

Lamberti, Jean-Claude. *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989.

Lerner, Ralph. "Commerce and Character." *The Thinking Revolutionary: Principle and Practice in the New Republic*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987.

Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Trans. Raymond Rosenthal. London: Abacus, 1989.

Lewis, Anthony. *Freedom for the Thought We Hate: a Biography of the First Amendment*. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001.

_____. *Mere Christianity*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001.

_____. *Studies in Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Liberman, Anatoly. *Word Origins and How We Know Them: Etymology for Everyone*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Lloyd, Margie. "In Tocqueville's Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Liberal Republicanism." The Review of Politics 57 (1995): 31-58.

Lord Acton. *Essays in the History of Liberty: Selected Writings of Lord Acton*. Ed. J. Rufus Fears. Vol. I. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985.

Lord Moran. *The Anatomy of Courage: The Classic WWI Study of the Psychological Effects of War*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.

Lukianoff, Greg and Jonathan Haidt. "The Coddling of the American Mind." *The Atlantic*. September 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>.

_____. *Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate*. New York: Encounter Books, 2014.

Macedo, Stephen. "Charting Liberal Virtues." Nomos 34 (1992): 204-232.

_____. *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue, and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Discourses on Livy*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998.

_____. *Florentine Histories*. Trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.

_____. "Party & Sect in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories." *Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought*. Ed. Martin Fleischer. London: Croom Helm, 1972. 209-266.

_____. *The Prince: Second Edition*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998.

_____. *The Prince*. Ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.

MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *After Virtue: A Study In Moral Theory*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame P, 1981.

Madison, James, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. New York: Signet Classics, 2003.

Manent, Pierre. *A World Beyond Politics?: A Defense of the Nation State*. Trans. Marc LePain. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

_____. *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*. Trans. John Waggoner. Boston, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.

Mansfield, Harvey C. "Constitutional Government: The Soul of Modern Democracy." The Public Interest 86 (1987): 53-64.

_____. "How to Understand Politics: What the Humanities Can Say to Science." 2007 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities. Washington, DC. The National Endowment for the Humanities. <http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/mansfield/HMlecture.html>.

_____. "Is Manliness a Virtue?" Paper presented in the Bradley Lecture Series, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC, 1997.

_____. "Is Manliness Optional?" The American Enterprise September (2003): 32-34.

_____. *Machiavelli's Virtue*. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998.

_____. *Manliness*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978.

McCain, John and Martha Salter. *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life*. New York: Penguin, 2004.

McWhorter, John. "Closed Minds of Campus." *Wall Street Journal*. November 27, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/closed-minds-on-campus-1448634626>.

_____. "The Know-Nothing Campus 'Protest' Movement." *The Daily Beast*, 1 May 2017, <www.thedailybeast.com/the-know-nothing-campus-protest movement?source=twitter&via=desktop>.

McWilliams, Wilson C. *Redeeming Democracy in America*. Ed. Patrick J. Deneen and Susan J. McWilliams. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas P, 2011.

Miliband, Ralph. *Marxism and Politics*. London: Merlin Press, 2003.

Mill, James. *Political Writings*. Ed. Terence Ball. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Mill, John Stuart. *Autobiography*. London: Penguin, 1989.

_____. *Autobiography and Other Writings*. Ed. Jack Stillinger. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

_____. *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. Vol. XVIII. Ed. J.M. Robson. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1977.

_____. *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

_____. *Principles of Political Economy: and Chapters on Socialism*. Ed. Jonathan Riley. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

_____. *The Spirit of the Age, On Liberty, The Subjection of Women*. Ed. Alan Ryan. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.

_____. *A System of Logic: Racionative and Inductive*. Vol. II. 3rd Ed. London: John W. Parker, 1851.

_____. *Three Essays on Religion*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998.

Miłosz, Czesław. *The Captive Mind*. Trans. Jane Zielonko. New York: Vintage, 1981.

Milton, John. *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*. Eds. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon. New York: Random House, 2007.

Montaigne, Michel de. *The Complete Essays*. Trans. M.A. Screech. New York: Penguin, 1993.

Mosley, Michael. "The Second Brain in Our Stomachs." *BBC News*. 11 July 2012. <http://www.bbc.com/news/health-18779997>.

"New Year's Address by Vaclav Havel to his Nation (Prague, January 1, 1990)." 19 Dec. 2011. Free Republic. Accessed 17 Jan. 2013 <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2822384/posts>.

Newell, W.R. *The Code of Man: Love, Courage, Pride, Family, Country*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Nichols, Tom. "How America Lost Faith in Expertise." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 2, pp. 60–3., <www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-02-13/how-america-lost-faith-expertise>.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Douglas Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

_____. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Trans. Adrian del Caro. Ed. Robert B. Pippin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.

Novák, Jakub. "Understanding and Judging History: Hannah Arendt and Philosophical Hermeneutics," Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy II (2010): 481-504.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Man Overboard." *The New Republic*. 22 June 2006. <https://newrepublic.com/article/64199/man-overboard>.

O'brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Oldfield, Adrian. *Citizenship and Community: Civic Republicanism and the Modern World*. London: Routledge, 1990.

_____. "Citizenship: An Unnatural Practice?," *Political Quarterly* 61 (1990): 177-187.

Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Revolt of the Masses*. Trans. Anthony Kerrigan. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame P, 1985.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

_____. *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell Volume 4: In Front of Your Nose*. London: Penguin, 1968.

_____. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Owen, Robert. *A New View of Society: or, Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character*, London: Richard Taylor and Co., 1813.

Owen, Wilfred. *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Ed C. Day Lewis. New York: New Directions, 1965.

Owens, Patricia. "The International Origins of Hannah Arendt's Historical Method." Political Power and Social Theory 32 (2017): 37-62.

Park, Madison, and Kyung Lah. "Berkeley Protests of Yiannopoulos Caused $100,000 in Damage." *CNN*, 3 Feb. 2017, <edition.cnn.com/2017/02/01/us/milo-yiannopoulos-berkeley/index.html>.

Pears, David. "Courage as a Mean." *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. Berkeley: University of California P, 1980. 171-87.

Philp, Mark. "Republicanism and Liberalism: On Leadership and Political Order—A Review." Democratization 3 (1996): 383-419.

Plato. *Early Socratic Dialogues*. Trans. Trevor J. Saunders. New York: Penguin, 1987.

_____. *Essential Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.

_____. *Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Ed. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.

Pocock, J.G.A. *The Machiavellian Moment*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Popper, Karl. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. London: Routledge, 2011.

_____. *The Poverty of Historicism*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Rabieh, Linda R. *Plato and the Virtue of Courage*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University P, 2006.

Rahe, Paul A. *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville and the Modern Prospect*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.

Ramachandran, Gowri. "Book Review: *Manliness* by Harvey Mansfield." Yale Journal of Law & Feminism 19 (2007): 201-220.

Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2005.

_____. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971.

Rees, J.C. "A Re-reading of Mill on Liberty." Political Studies VIII (1960): 113-29.

Reeves, Richard. *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand*. London: Atlantic, 2008.

Riley, Jonathan. "Mill's Neo-Athenian Model of Liberal Democracy." *J.S. Mill's Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment*. Eds. Nadio Urbinati and Alex Zakaras. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. 221-249.

Robson, John M. "Civilization and Culture as Moral Concepts." *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*. Ed. John Skorupski. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 338-371.

_____. *The Improvement of Mankind: the Social and Political Thought of John Stuart Mill*. Toronto: University of Toronto P, 1968.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*. New York: Library of America, 2004.

Rorty, Amélie O. "The Two Faces of Courage." Philosophy 61 (1986): 151-171.

Rosen, Frederick. *Mill: Founders of Modern Political and Social Thought*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. "Discourse on This Question: Which Is the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero and Which Are the Heroes Who Lacked This Virtue?" *Social Contract, Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero, Political Fragments, and, Geneva Manuscript*. Trans. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth P, 1994.

_____. *Emile: or, On Education*. Trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

_____. *The First and Second Discourses*. Trans. Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters. New York: St. Martin's P, 1969.

_____. *On the Social Contract*. Trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987.

_____. *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*. Ed. Allan Bloom. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1968.

Ryan, Alan. *John Stuart Mill*. London: Routledge, 1974.

_____. "Mill in a Liberal Landscape." *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*. Ed. John Skorupski. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 497-540.

_____. *On Politics*. London: Penguin, 2013.

_____. *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*. 2nd ed. London: MacMillan Press, 1987.

_____. "Two Concepts of Politics & Democracy." *Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought*. Ed. Martin Fleisher, London: Croom Helm, 1973. 76-113.

Sabl, Andrew. "Virtue for Pluralists." Journal of Moral Philosophy 2 (2005): 207-35.

Sandel, Michael J. *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982.

_____. "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self." Political Theory 12 (1984): 81-96.

Sassoon, Siegfried. *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.

_____. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.

Saxonhouse, Arlene W. *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.

Schleifer, James. *The Making of Tocqueville's Democracy in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P, 1980.

Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur. *The Vital Center: Our Purposes and Perils on the Tightrope of American Liberalism*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1962.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Semmel, Bernard. *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1984.

Seneca. *Letters from a Stoic*. Ed. Robin Campbell. New York: Penguin, 1969.

Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

Sherman, Nancy. *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

Shklar, Judith N. *Ordinary Vices*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984.

_____. *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*. Ed. Stanley Hoffman. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1998.

_____. "Rethinking the Past." Social Research 44 (1977): 80-90.

Sinopoli, Richard C. *The Foundations of American Citizenship: Liberalism, the Constitution, and Civic Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.

_____. "Thick-Skinned Liberalism: Redefining Civility." American Political Science Review 89 (1995): 612-620.

Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," History and Theory 8 (1969): 3-53.

Smith, Nicholas D. "Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery." *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*. Ed. David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991. 142-55.

Smith, Steven B. *Modernity and Its Discontents: Making and Unmaking the Bourgeois from Machiavelli to Bellow*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2016.

Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I. *The First Circle*. Trans. Thomas P. Whitney. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

_____. *The Gulag Archipelago Volume 1: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. Trans. Thomas P. Whitney. New York: Harper, 2007.

Spinoza, Benedict de. *Theologico-Political Treatise*. Trans. R.H.M. Elwes. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2009.

Stier, Marc. "Liberal Virtue/Communitarian Virtue," Paper presented at the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, 2002.

Stocker, Michael. *Valuing Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Storing, Herbert J. *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: the Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution*. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1981.

Strout, Cushing. "Tocqueville's Duality: Describing America and Thinking of Europe." American Quarterly 21 (1969): 87-99.

Tacitus. *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1942.

Thompson, Dennis. *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.

Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Martin Hammond, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution.* Trans. Gerald Bevan. London: Penguin, 2008.

_____. *Democracy in America*. Trans. George Lawrence. Ed. J.P. Mayer. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.

_____. *Memoirs, Letters, and Remains*. Ed. Gustave de Beaumont. Boston, MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1862.

_____. *On Democracy, Revolution, and Society*. Eds. John Stone and Stephen Mennell. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1982.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Boston, MA: Mariner, 2012.

Tsouras, Peter G., ed. *The Book of Military Quotations*. Minneapolis: Zenith, 2005.

Turner, Camilla. “Students Who Avoid Making Eye Contact Could Be Guilty of Racism, Oxford University Says.” *The Telegraph*, 22 Apr. 2017, <www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/04/22/students-avoid-making-eye-contact-could-guiltyof-racism-oxford/?WT.mc_id=tmgoff_fb_tmg.>

Twain, Mark. *Pudd'nheather Tales*. Ed. R.D. Gooder. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Urbinati, Nadia. *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 2002.

Vaculík, Ludvík. *A Cup of Coffee with My Interrogator*. Trans. George Theiner. London: Readers International, 1987.

_____. “Impermissible Thoughts.” Index on Censorship 4 (1975): 12-14.

Villa, Dana R. “Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action.” Political Theory 20 (1992): 274-308.

_____, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.

_____. *Public Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008.

Volokh, Eugene. “At the University of Oregon, No More Free Speech for Professors on Subjects Such as Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation.” *The Washington Post*, 26 Dec. 2016, <www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/12/26/at-the-university-of-oregon-no-more-free-speech-for-professors-on-subjects-such-as-race-religion-sexual-orientation/?utm_term=.91f96452d6df>.

Waldron, Jeremy. *The Harm in Hate Speech*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2012.

_____. *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers, 1981-1991*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Walter, George, ed. *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. London: Penguin, 2006.

Walzer, Michael. “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands.” Philosophy & Public Affairs 2 (1973): 160-180.

_____. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense Of Pluralism And Equality*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.

Warren, Mark E. “What Should We Expect from More Democracy? Radically Democratic Responses to Politics.” Political Theory 24 (1996): 241-70.

Weber, Max. *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Ed. H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968.

_____. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*. Trans. Gordon C. Wells. London: Penguin, 2002.

Wells, H.G. *First and Last Things*. Matthews, NC: Bastion, 2008.

Wiedemann, Thomas. *Greek and Roman Slavery*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Wiesel, Elie. *The Night Trilogy: Night, Dawn, Day*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.

Wieseltier, Leon. "The Fear of Reason: In Defense of Rational Argument." *The New Republic*. 23 June 2011.

Williams, G.L. "Mill's Principle of Liberty." Political Studies XXIV (1976): 132-40.

Wilson, James Q. *On Character*. Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1995.

Winthrop, Delba. "Tocqueville's American Women and 'The True Conception of Democratic Progress." Political Theory 14 (1986): 239-261.

Wolff, Jonathan. "Mill, Indecency and the Liberty Principle." Utilitas 10 (1998): 1-16.

Wolin, Richard. *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl L. Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

Wolin, Sheldon S. "Hannah Arendt and the Ordinance of Time." Social Research 44 (Spring 1977): 91-105.

_____. *Tocqueville between Two Worlds: the Making of a Political and Theoretical Life*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

Wollheim, Richard. "John Stuart Mill and the Limits of State Action." Social Research XL (1973): 1-30.

Woodruff, Paul. "Socrates and Political Courage." Ancient Philosophy 27 (2007): 289-301.

Xenophon. *Spartan Constitution*. Ed. Michael Lipka. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2002.

Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*. 2nd Ed. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004.