Greatness of Soul

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In Hume, Aristotle and Hobbes
as Shadowed by Milton's Satan

By

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TO MICHAEL STOCKER

WHO LED THE WAY

MANY THANKS

Heroism, or military glory, is much admired by the generality of mankind. They consider it as the most sublime kind of merit. Men of cool reflection are not so sanguine in their praises of it. The infinite confusions and disorder, which it has caused in the world, diminish much of its merit in their eyes. When they would oppose the popular notions on this head, they always paint out the evils, which this supposed virtue has produced in human society; the subversion of empires, the devastation of provinces, the sack of cities. As long as these are present to us, we are more inclined to hate than admire the ambition of heroes. But when we fix our view on the person himself, who is the author of all this mischief, there is something so dazzling in his character, the mere contemplation of it so elevates the mind, that we cannot refuse it our admiration. The pain, which we receive from its tendency to the prejudice of society, is over-powered by a stronger and more immediate sympathy.
—David Hume

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

If even an admirer of Aristotle's ethics like Francis Sparshott (1994, p. 151) can characterize his great-souled man as "a prince of pomposity," itself one of the gentler reactions to him of the last century, more serious is the charge of ingratitude – in *N.E.* IV, 3 at 1124b 15 - that has been widely circulated about him, by those who, having verifiably come to his assistance in a spot of trouble, find him soon to be affecting amnesia about the episode. Mischievously, however, I am inclined to protest as follows. Graciously accepting the well-meant but often quite otiose help, not to mention that of those currying favor with him, the great-souled man is very much in character when he genuinely forgets, above all, his own graciousness on the occasion. All such casuistry aside, when it comes, dauntingly, to Hume and Hobbes, even specialists preoccupied with either of them can confess, without shame, that greatness-of-soul has never so much as registered with them as a topic of any notable relevance. Hence my fear of the very American ruling, "three strikes, and you're out".

Not to worry. Surely one can almost see Hume in his ostentatious chapter, toward the end of the *Treatise*, entitled "Of greatness of mind", nudging us with a wink and a nod as he tacitly confides, "The one really good thing in Aristotle, his third chapter in book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* I am herewith recycling in my own not so very different terms." One such term, shared in common by the two chapters, is supplied by the word "pride"', at any rate if we follow the premier Oxford translation where Aristotle's word for greatness of soul, in *N.E.* IV, 3, namely *megalopsychia*, is even translated throughout the chapter as simply pride. Take that to be one datum on which I shall be relying as a working assumption in understanding Aristotle. A second datum, in understanding Hume, is supplied by Hume when he proposes to "begin" his chapter "with examining the passions of pride and humility", thereby recalling us back 300 pages (in Selby-Bigge's edition) to the outset of the second Book of the *Treatise* the first Part of which is entitled "Of pride and humility". I am thus prepared to argue that, far from being the anomaly that one might suppose Hume's discussion of greatness of mind to be, this theme is strongly grounded in his emphasis on pride in the second Book which in its turn is thematically linked by Hume to his famous doctrine of the self with which the first Book virtually culminates. Self, pride and greatness

of mind in the third Book: this sequence then binds the *Treatise* together into a proper whole. Comparing the role of greatness of soul in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (where it is widely taken today to be in effect hardly less anomalous than that played by it in the *Treatise*), it is by no means a stretch to propose that it is almost as strongly integrated into the latter work as it is in the former, particularly if one has registered the fact that, while pride as such is largely confined by Aristotle to a single chapter of his book, it has a structural role to play in Hume's. Arguably anomalous when taken separately, these two chapters on being thematically juxtaposed – add Hobbes to the mix – cease to be such, even succeeding in delivering an unexpected research venue to analytical ethics that promises to bridge ancient and modern.

So much for establishing at the outset the scholarly bona fides of my enterprise, for my reader who has so much as glanced at Hume's almost Nietzschean paragraph that supplies a climax to his chapter "Of greatness of mind", and which I am featuring as the epigraph to this volume, must know that I am after bigger game. For with Hume and Hobbes being found – quite independently of each other – to be engaged in reformulating Aristotle's greatness of soul for the modern world, my proprietary attachment to all three of them was thus advertised as being primarily systematic and only secondarily of historical import. Hume's Paragraph aside, it is because I take him to be playing the key role, past or present, in analytical ethics – notably by querying how "ought" might be derived from "is" – that I am giving him pride of place, though sticking narrowly to my eponymous theme it is Hobbes, in my inner circle, who will be found to do the heavy lifting on a technical level in recycling greatness of soul as a viable research venue in ethics, whether taken in purely systematic terms or in largely historical ones, a Nietzschean frisson being seen to infect Hobbes and Aristotle as well.

Take Hobbes' word "magnanimity" to be almost as close a translation into English of Aristotle's "*megalopsychia*" as Hume's "greatness of mind" at any rate for anyone, past or present, with the Latin *magnitudo animi* ready to hand. Well, there is a little bit more of a back story here. As to Hume, early in the *Treatise* there are his famous, philosophically tendentious chapters on soul and self that could only prove a distraction were he to rely on "greatness of soul". Correspondingly, it is already a sea change, crossing the Adriatic, when the Greek *psyché* (soul) figures in *magnitudo animi* not as Latin *anima* (soul) but as *animus* (spirit), though as to Hobbes himself, he will feel as much at home with *megalopsychia* as with *magnitudo animi*.

Latin and Greek aside, what we today hear above all in "magnanimity", namely forbearance toward a defeated enemy, I take to be by no means uppermost for either Hume or Hobbes, though the last line of Virgil's *Aeneid*, when Aeneas comes extraordinarily close to sparing the life of Turnus, should be enough to dispel any fear that I have embarked on an antiquarian exercise. Fleeing a holocaust in Troy and leading a Trojan remnant in a diaspora, Aeneas is vouchsafed a divine mandate toward a promised land in Italy. Must then his fulfilling that imperative require the death of the local prince as well as the abandonment of Dido?

No matter. Although Aristotle presents a neat, little argument as to why a great-souled man – women are not easily factored into this story, even granting that Adam in *Paradise Lost* (at VIII, 256) credits Eve with "greatness of mind" – must excel in all the moral virtues (sheer pride demands no less), the poet may be wiser than any mere po-faced philosopher. "Virtues and vices aside", Virgil may be heard to protest, "Is it not enough for Aeneas to renew and even enhance the destiny of Troy by preparing the way for the greatness of Rome? Enough, I mean, to invest him with an unproblematic version of *magnitudo animi*, featuring his *animus* if not his *anima*, that need not rule out serious moral deficits."

Anticipated in N.E. IV, 3, this tension between poet and philosopher is already reflected in how its factual depiction of the great-souled man, warts and all, sits awkwardly with the omnibus virtue that it is officially committed to elucidating.

Figuring as a virtue, even an omnibus virtue, for Aristotle, magnanimity figures for Hobbes as only a passion, thereby supplying me with ample doxagraphic warrant, sticking to my coterie of philosophers, for opening up my own program to the extra-curricular wisdom of poets. Extending my already fairly *outré* lexicon a bit further, the obsolescent if not quite obsolete term "passion" I take to answer, near enough, to our word "emotion".

Defining magnanimity as "contempt of little helps and hindrances", Hobbes will be construed by me *avant la lettre* as proposing to take magnanimity as an *analysandum* of which his definition serves as an *analysans*, thereby explaining how it is Hobbes and not Hume who features when it comes to the analytical core of my program, "valor-fortitude" also surfacing for him in Chapter six of *Leviathan* as "magnanimity in danger of wounds or death", while "liberality" will figure as "magnanimity in the use of riches". Add now that, tucked away, a little surprisingly perhaps in ¶ 12 of Chapter fourteen, "[M]agnanimity is contempt of unjust or dishonest helps", almost as if, quite as much as Aristotle, Hobbes was prepared – near enough – to take all of the moral

virtues to be entailed by magnanimity. Further complicating my program, Hobbes is aggressively on record as being against pride, as when at the end of Chapter twenty-eight he mentions "the two last verses of the one and fortieth of *Job* where God, having set forth the great power of *Leviathan*, called him King of the Proud."

As to how my philosophers may at times be over-shadowed by poets, I am herewith giving fair warning to my analytical colleagues. Finally, indulging readers impatient for me to condense my results into a virtual sound-byte, already in Chapter four where greatness of mind two is distinguished from greatness of mind one, with Hume launching the former, and Aristotle being committed to the latter, the two philosophers are seen to trade vicious insults. For if Hume convicts Aristotle of bad-breeding, Aristotle retorts by convicting Hume of small-mindedness. Adjudicating the quarrel, I rule as follows. Better to be convicted of bad breeding than of small-mindedness, quite apart from the purely logical point that small-mindedness is the contrary of greatness of mind.

In a neutral vein, however, it may be safe to say that greatness of mind *sans* subscripts has now been accessed twice over, under at least two distinct Fregean modes of presentation, though Hobbes' "Contempt of little helps and hindrances" must surely count as a third.

CHAPTER ONE

MILTON AND HUME

A poet having been seen in my Introduction to encroach on my official program, if only to help elucidate what the word "magnanimity" means for us today, another poet intervenes soon enough in connection with what "elevates the mind" in Hume's Nietzschean paragraph. Arguably a *je ne sais quoi*, this is a certain "something so dazzling in . . . the character" of a "hero" that our "mere contemplation of it . . . elevates the mind". Precisely how it should be Milton above all who was riveted by this something so dazzling in his gropings over the years, even as a Christian, toward recycling the "heroic poem" of classical antiquity, remains a by no means exhausted theme. To urge now that it is to Milton's Satan most obviously that Milton and Hume scholars alike are jointly advised to turn for a proper grasp of this Humean/Miltonic elevation of mind, is only to launch another missing, interdisciplinary chapter, as between a great philosopher and an equally great poet, with the latter very nearly anticipating the former.

With Milton channeling Hume by surprising us, in a Fishean vein, he can be read as convicting this "something so dazzling", which Hume credits with [overpowering] our dismay over "the sack of cities", with being nothing other than the most insidious outcome of our post-lapsarian fallen nature. A superb encounter here of a Christian poet with a famously anti-Christian philosopher where the Christian figures to his greatest advantage.

Prepared even to give the devil his due, and more than his due, Milton will not hesitate to vouch in his own name, albeit in indirect style, for Satan's "merit" in the opening lines of Book Two.

> High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind
> Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
> Showrs on her Kings Barbaric Pearl and Gold,
> Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
> To that bad eminence; and from despair
> Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires

> Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
> Vain War with Heav'n, and by success untaught
> His proud imaginations thus displayed.

It is not, however, with Satan's putative merit that I am principally concerned, but rather with that of his alter-ego. For at III, 307-310 Messiah "hast been found/By merit more than birthright son of God/Found worthiest to be so by being good," thanks more particularly to having "quitted all to save/A world from utter loss". Congratulated officially for volunteering to undergo crucifixion in order to save mankind, the son of God is in fact concerned above all at III, 165-66 lest God's "goodness and [his] greatness both/Be questioned and blasphemed without defense", with the whole world, and everything in it, falling thus into ruin, averting which catastrophe, brought on by a theological conundrum into which God has fecklessly drifted, Messiah's supreme merit, trumping that of Satan, will come sacrificially into play. With the Son trumping the merits of God as well, God concedes as much when, abdicating his throne to him, he says at III, 317-19, "[A]ll power/I give thee, reign forever, and assume/Thy merits," quite as if Satan's effort to unseat God by force, far from being absurd, has been realized at last, under other, irenic auspices.

Especially to be noticed is the fastidious turn of language whereby the triumph of Messiah "by merit more than birthright" has been prefigured by how in II 18-20 Satan explains that if "just right and the fixed laws of heav'n/Did *first* create" him to be the "leader" of the rebel angels, "next" it was (co-opting God's pet theme of free will) "free choice,/With what besides, in counsel or in fight,/Hath been achieved of merit" by Satan, that sets a further seal upon Satan's leadership over them.

More crisply still, it is the word "mute", and how Milton recycles it at III, 217, where "all the heav'nly choir *stood* mute," and altogether as pusillanimous as the fallen angels faced with a comparable challenge earlier at II, 420 when "all *sat* mute," that signals subtextually a transcendent duel as between these two unexpected volunteers, Satan and the son of God.

The word "transcendent" I am plagiarizing from Milton when, by way of what today is called "indirect style", he says in his own name, playing to the hilt his role as devil's advocate, that in breaking the silence, "transcendent glory raised [Satan]/Above his fellows" (II, 427-28). Admittedly exaggerating the degree of Satan's merit on this occasion, Milton will soon rebuke serious scholars at II, 482-3, who will come to suppose that "spirits damned/Lose all their virtue", as when even Samuel Johnson can join Addison (Elledge 483) in characterizing Satan as "the most exalted and most depraved being." Maybe so! But only if "most

depraved" is compatible with a deep commitment to the normative principle (at II, 454-56) that "To him who reigns . . . so much to him [is] due/Of hazard more, as he above the rest/High honored sits", quite as if it is precisely such hazard from which God, who sits high honored, shrinks in resisting Satan's rebellion, by handing all the hazard over, first to his angels and later, the battle remaining undecided, to his Son.

Redeeming Addison and Johnson in the exegetical light of Hume's Paragraph, the depravity of Satan will consist in "the evils" which "this supposed virtue" of "heroism or military glory" has "produced in human society", though when these evils are no longer "present to us", and we "fix our view on [Satan] himself" he may well figure for us, dazzling, as "most exalted".

If Milton can say of the fallen angel Belial in his own name that "his thoughts were low" (II, 115), precisely because he will be seen (at II, 227) to have "counseled ignoble ease" when he rejected further "open war" against God (II, 119), it cannot be doubted that, for Milton, Satan's thoughts were high, notably when he protested at (I, 105-06), "What though the field be lost?/All is not lost, the unconquerable will" remains. Morally much worse than Belial, Satan emerges as much better along another dimension of axiological evaluation that we may even come to identify with greatness of soul, and it is precisely this tension between morality and greatness of soul that, already anticipated in Hume's Paragraph, now surfaces with full force as the central theme of this volume.

Returning to the first sentence of my Introduction, the moral standing of Aristotle's great-souled man may well be felt to be queried by the charge of ingratitude that continues to haunt him. A contested site here in Aristotle studies that may be almost as vexing as that between Satanists and anti-Satanists, these two textual cruxes, centuries apart, I am probably alone in addressing in tandem, prompted by the thought that if either is to be resolved it will only be by way of a package deal that covers the other, a suggestion all the more attractive because each of these research venues has pretty much given up on any further headway in the near future, oblivious of the inter-disciplinary opportunity that Hume's Paragraph has opened up for both of them. More generally still, though with more particular reference to ingratitude, there is David Ross's distinction between the Right and the Good, as much as to say Kant versus Aristotle, which serves as an analytical scheme explaining how, by merely focusing on what one might readily take to be a local, parochial worry as to an anomalous chapter in the *Nicomachean Ethics* – a worry, however, that

features deontology – I might supply a missing chapter in analytical ethics. But more of that in my next but one chapter.

Much more urgent, when it comes to winding down this chapter, is the heavy dollop of Milton's poetry, emphatically targeting the poetry qua poetry, to which I expect, more especially, my analytical colleagues to submit, in the name, let me hastily add, of Bernard Williams' famous thesis as to "the limits of philosophy" notably as regards "substantive or thick ethical concepts", such as "coward, lie, brutality, gratitude" (Williams, 140) that contrast sharply with such thin ethical concepts as the right and the good that provide analytical ethics with its austere diet. Add now magnanimity to Williams' list as to the very thickness of which Milton supplies a rich treasure-trove filling out Hume's thin (but only by comparison) schematic Paragraph, though the deeper point lies in the analytical hypothesis that it is the poetic import of magnanimity that explains, to no small extent, its thickness. Despairing as to the prospects of analytical ethics when it comes to the thickness of human life quite generally, Williams has posed a challenge that his admirers will already have found me to be addressing thanks to a serendipitous convergence of Hume and Milton, let it be only in regard to this one thick concept.

Twice over then Hume emerges as the seminal source of my larger program, once as regards a missing chapter in the history of analytical ethics, albeit in conjunction with Hobbes, but again, in conjunction with Milton, in regard to a quite technical issue – as to thick and thin concepts - in analytical philosophy proper, with Hume's Paragraph in particular serving as the catalytic agent under both headings. By way of further orientation, the odd couple of Milton and Hume may be easier to assimilate for an American if – reaching much further afield – one calls up the names of Goethe and Kant, and how for Germans they are joined at the hip in presiding jointly over *Bildung* which might almost be translated as elevation of mind or *Geist*, thereby even suggesting an Anglo-American *Bildung* of our own where Milton replaces Goethe and Hume Kant, though Hume and Milton can only cease even for us to be an odd couple if they are slotted into the German paradigm. Thanks to that reactivated paradigm also, epic poetry in the grand style might come to figure *pace* Williams in an analysis or quasi-analysis of magnanimity = elevation of mind (as it may be), with Williams' own characterization of certain concepts as thick smacking already of analysis itself, and my own explanation, more narrowly, of the thickness of magnanimity in terms of epic poetry carrying Williams' proto-analysis of it one step further. Because it is Nietzsche in whom *Bildung* culminates in Germany, it may not be so easy for me to keep him officially at a distance from my own inner circle.

Closer to home, Dryden says of Milton that he "endeavors everywhere to express Homer," as much as to say, for us, that his very poetry, notably the first two Books of *Paradise Lost*, is designed to be *expressive* above all of a Homeric elevation of mind whereby Satan emulates Achilles, and where, also anachronistically, Milton emulates Hume by allowing that if under one Fregean "mode of presentation" his hero – more precisely Milton's anti-hero – elicits from us a dazzling pro-attitude, there is another much more somber Fregean mode of presentation, answering in Hume to "men of cool reflection", that elicits from us a strong con-attitude. As to the different contexts distinguishing philosopher and poet, the con-attitude is "overpowered" by the pro-attitude in the one case, while the reverse occurs in the other. That these pro- and con-attitudes figure even in the opening lines of the *Iliad* when Homer summons the Muse to "sing the wrath of Achilles", I am quite prepared to believe, along with the suggestion that the deepest gloss on the poem is to be found, again, in Hume's Paragraph.

If in 1900, Sir Walter Raleigh could find in Milton "a more consistent and unflagging elevation than is to be found elsewhere in literature", Satan figures as the most compelling vehicle of it in Milton's oeuvre, quite apart from who is "right", as between Satanists and anti-Satanists. Put the point this way. Even granting that when it comes to challenging God, the Son trumps Satan by saving God from being "blasphemed without defense" as regards "justify[ing] God's ways to men" – going at any rate by the hermeneutic slogan "Trust the tale not the teller" in my neo-Satanist gloss on the poem – it is Satan who trumps the Son in proving to be the more expressively adept when it comes to how heroic elevation of mind might be not only convincingly represented but, much more important, how it might be so effectively expressed by way of a heroic poem in the grand style that mere, very unheroic readers of it like ourselves might come also to undergo, albeit only vicariously and thanks to a willing suspension of disbelief, that heroic elevation of mind. How it should be, once again, Hume's Paragraph to which we are indebted for this secret of Milton's doubtless serendipitous success, Nelson Goodman and his highly analytical *Languages of Art* must be credited with facilitating. For it is not, urges Goodman, what a work of art represents but rather what it expresses that we are really after.

Take the expressivity of epic poetry to supply the thickness of magnanimity, construed in terms of elevation of mind. Allow also that this result may be credited to analytical philosophy. Although it may now seem, anyway as regards one thick evaluative concept, that Williams' worry about the limits of philosophy has been allayed, two sorts of

analysis, only one of which is associated with Russell and Moore, have come into play, the other being rather associated with R.P. Blackmur and Cleanth Brooks, which only goes to show how right Williams was about philosophy pure and simple. Unaided then, analytical philosophy is stumped by thick concepts; aided, however, by an analytical poetics, it acquits itself well enough, always allowing for purists of both parties to resist any such contamination from the other; as when Barbara Lewalski insists that "Satan is seen to be a debased Achilles . . . his claims of equality with his ruler [being] without any basis whatsoever" (Elledge, 576). Trivially, one supposes that Milton wants to show that Christian virtue trumps that of classical antiquity, in particular that of Achilles. Merely then to discredit a debased Achilles could hardly serve his turn. To the contrary, however, I concede to Lewalski that Achilles' case against his ruler, namely Agamemnon, is much more evident than anything readily available to Satan. Moreover, when it comes to academic scholarship Lewalski has all the big guns on her side. Not so. I have Hume's Paragraph up my sleeve. As to the familiar jousting, more generally, as between specialist and generalist, conventional wisdom places its bets on the former. I demur when it comes, at any rate, to the generalist relying on a holistic scheme as against the ad-hocery of the specialist, and all the more when – see my next paragraph – the generalist affects to be (in addition) a non-standard specialist in his own right.

What it might be like to be a non-standard specialist in combining the kind of literary analysis that is exercised in the analysis of a poem with the very different sort of analysis that analyzes knowledge, it may be, as justified true belief, should be no longer far to seek. Calling it "a doubly analytical poetics" or even, simply, "analytical poetics", a veritable textbook paradigm of that expertise is found in a paper by me in the Fall 1996 issue of "The Wallace Stevens Journal", entitled "One Word of the Sea: Metaphysics in Wallace Stevens", that provides at least a fair approximation of it. Incidentally, the one word of the sea is found to be, in Stevens, "hoo" which, thanks to its very lack of cognitive meaning, succeeds in expressing, in the first instance, "the meaningless plungings of water and the wind" in "The Idea of Order at Key West", but more profoundly expresses later, in the third poem of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction", a metaphysical nihilism in which Satan himself might be expected to exult, when pursuing this elevation of mind, "an Arabian in my room" – no Christian he – "With his damned hoobla – hoobla – hoobla – how/Inscribes a primitive astronomy" . . . while "still the grossest iridescence of ocean/Howls hoo and rises and howls hoo and falls."

CHAPTER TWO

"LEASHED IN LIKE HOUNDS"

How's this mention of fire in the prologue to the famous play, for an anachronistic reprise of what "elevates the mind" toward the end of Hume's Paragraph?

> O for a muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention.

And now, skipping two lines of verse, focus again on the word "fire" as it joins "famine" and "sword" in order to recycle the three-fold mention early in the Paragraph of "the subversion of empires," "the devastation of provinces" and "the sack of cities."

> Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
> Assume the port of Mars, and at his heels
> (Leashed in like hounds) should famine, sword and fire
> Crouch for employment.

Emphasizing fire from below answering to fire from above, the literary critic, fanatically bent on respecting "the words on the page", will notice how the poet trumps the philosopher. While Hume compartmentalizes his two modes of presentation of his hero, con-attitude being sealed off from pro-attitude, a much more unitary grasp of the hero is supplied by the poet, once in terms of fire figuring from below as well as from above, but again, *in propria persona* when fire, sword and famine crouch at the heels of one who is at once like a god and "like himself".

Undermining this otherwise attractive unitary scenario is the recognition that it rests on the dubious premise that these three sinister hounds will remain leashed in, when the prologue already alerts us to the early prospect of at least one of them being menacingly unleashed, pursuing the metaphor, whereupon, as we well know, Hume's compartmentalized con-and pro-attitudes will themselves become radically unleashed, only now in the familiar form of a clash of left-wing and right-

wing readings of Shakespeare's play, with the eminently thematic result that the explanation, in my last chapter, of how the thickness of magnanimity, understood there in terms of its involvement in epic poetry, grows that much thicker when Shakespeare's version of epic poetry, namely his *King Henry V*, is found to feature the clash of left-wing and right-wing readings of it. In particular, and focusing on a single left-wing gloss on the word "magnanimous" that I am eager to enshrine in a canonical analysis of its thickness, entertain with me the following exchange between two captains, Fluellen and Gower, in Act four, scene seven.

Fluellen asks Gower, "What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig is born?" Correcting him, Gower says, "Alexander the Great", while Fluellen persists, "Why, I pray you, is not pig great? The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations." A play on the local phonetics of a Welsh captain, this last sentence conflates two propositions, an innocent one intended by Fluellen, and a racy, even subversive one that only the poet can be credited with submitting to our ostensibly farcical attention (the joke being officially only on the captain) by way of a *diablerie* that I take to infect the poet's Sentence even more than Hume's Paragraph, for he does not leave us long in suspense before he reminds us of how the "pig" famously killed his best friend, Cleitus, in a drunken rage.

Disregarding this shameful episode that plunged Alexander into a prolonged, almost suicidal state of remorse, Hume himself singles him out in his eponymous chapter for his greatness of mind in shaming his laggard soldiers at the gateway to India, "Go tell your countrymen that you left Alexander completing the conquest of the world." Ah yes, elevation of mind. And India, for a very little more than a decade after Hume has published his *Treatise*, Alexander's baton is passed on, centuries later, to – quoting Macaulay – "the valor and genius of an obscure English youth", Robert Clive, drawing heavily on Macaulay's long essay that Robert D. Kaplan reveres as "the sacred text of Clive's career" (Kaplan, 169). Desperately besieged by the French in a clash over India between two great powers, Clive will finally prevail thanks to the "devotion of [his] little band to its chief" that Macaulay can find to have "surpassed anything that is related of the Tenth Legion of Caesar or of the Old Guard of Napoleon," as much as to say with warlike Harry, "we band of brothers".

Fast forward now to the end of the nineteenth century (Clive will commit suicide), and we find the young Winston Churchill in *A Roving Commission* exulting over the English proconsuls of his time: Curzon in

India, Milner in South Africa, Cromer in Egypt. And more recently? Well, recalling that the owl of Minerva takes flight at dusk, I leave it to others to suggest, looking to Churchill again, that it will be in him that greatness of mind in the Second World War will undergo its finest, if not final, hour.

CHAPTER THREE

INGRATITUDE

Arguably even deeper than our puzzlement over how Aristotle's great-souled man, credited with excelling in his exercise of all the moral virtues, could be charged with ingratitude, lies our auxiliary puzzlement over Aristotle's own casual mention of this fact, without making any effort to exonerate his moral paragon, quite as if – dare I say this aloud? – the truly great are those who are precisely given a free pass in such matters. Well, we suspected this all along, didn't we?

Anyway, Aristotle does say something, right on the page, that on being massaged a bit might go some way toward exonerating Megalo, now that, engaged in judging him, we feel free to address him on a first name basis. What Aristotle says is this. Taking the dyadic predicate "x is engaged in benefiting y", with you filling the x slot and me filling the y slot, you emerge, axiologically, as superior to me. No problem here. But when ordinary chaps like us, decidedly inferior to Megalo whose lavish benefits to people at large leave us in the dust, hasten to his aid in an emergency, the axiological order of the universe is disrupted. Think of it: inferior is benefiting superior! If affecting amnesia is the only response available to an otherwise helpless Megalo, in the face of this untoward cognitive dissonance, Aristotle does seem, more resourcefully, to anticipate Dr. Freud by envisaging an interplay of classical factors that mimic ego, super-ego and id that drives this unpleasant experience deep into the subconscious, the amnesia being thus real enough, though in the psychoanalysis of Megalo's dreams a "return of the repressed" can be expected. Failing in respect to both Freud and Aristotle, 20th century moralistic dismay with Megalo's "amnesia" might well be dismissed as prissiness on our part.

Sticking to the immediate resources of analytical ethics, there is a quite different approach to this "amnesia" that draws heavily on Ross' famous distinction between the Right and the Good aka deontology vs. consequentialism, or Kant versus Aristotle. Although everyone knows the drill here, freeing me from any need to rehash this quite hackneyed yet very important stuff, it may come as a surprise that, more than even

accessing "the axiological order of the universe", as it was understood in antiquity, it will be this really quite over-familiar "deontology contra consequentialism" analytical framework, right here in our own backyard, that will help us "get with" Megalo's amnesia simply by submerging this *ad hoc* worry about ingratitude in the much larger framework of Aristotle vs. Kant. Taking each of them to define one of the two major Fregean modes of presentation of ethical reality, under the latter Aristotle and Megalo are alike in a bad way. So what else is new?

There is this, indeed, to be said for Kant over Aristotle in this otherwise highly and equally contested site. With Aristotle and Kant being equally committed to folk ethics (unlike, say, Stoicism which can feel free to brush Kant aside) Kant has a decided edge, happiness being by no means as neglected by Kant as obligation is by Aristotle. Redressing the balance, one might argue that Kant's "the only thing that is unconditionally good is the good will", thanks to "good" being used twice over, indicates that even for Kant the good trumps the right. But I digress, tempted to stage still another round in the contest between them.

Yielding to temptation, suppose that when I bestow on you a free-gift, you reply, conventionally enough, "Much obliged," affording me thus the long-sought opportunity to clarify our relationship as follows, "Ah, my friend, you misunderstand me, for you are under no obligation, as everyone must know, to return a first-class favor, though alas I was doubtless clumsy enough as to leave you with the impression that mine was merely a second-class favor which – you were quite right about this – does have attached to it the obligation of return." That a first-class favor is so much more a favor than a second-class one is proved by the fact that the first bestows everything bestowed by the second, even while subtracting from the second-class favor the deontological burden attached to it.

It should now be easy to show that in real life today, first-class, megalopsychical favors are almost as frequent, even in humbler venues of our society, as ordinary, quasi-contractual ones, as when, undertaking to return a favor, your gesture is impatiently brushed aside, not without a subtextual innuendo convicting you of a deontological *faux pas*. As to Harold Prichard's trust in moral intuitions, my vignette is precisely designed to give him a behavioristic drubbing. Not that Prichard could have failed altogether, exposed, as he must have been, to such familiar brush-offs, to profit from them, at least to the extent of realizing that they might be taken to release him from his obligation to return a favor, a first step indeed toward envisaging a megalopsychical favor, seeing that just such a release is antecedently built into it. Having in hand the distinction between a higher and a lower sort of favor, Prichard will soon see that in

testing his moral intuitions it could never have been enough to place himself on the receiving end of the "x is dispensing a favor to y" relation, where he could only suppose, in the general case, that he was the recipient of a quasi-contractual favor. Filling the x slot, however, and not least because he flattered himself on being an English gentleman, he would know that many – not all, that would be presumptuous – of his favors were megalopsychical, thereby splitting the difference as to whether one is morally required to return a favor, no in the one case, yes in the other.

Hanging, admittedly, over this volume lies the curse of elitism dispelling which, to some extent, might be entrusted the many megalopsychical favors bestowed by the "less advantaged" – advantages being precisely what they lack by the car load – among us. In the same vein Hobbes' definition of magnanimity as "Contempt of little helps and hindrances" can be nowhere more vividly elucidated, down-scale, as in the following vignette about two beggars one of whom – sticking to little helps – reaches eagerly for a stray dime in the street, spurning any old mere nickel, while another, much less proud = megalopsychical, positively rejoices in the nickel, even as the prospect of scrounging for a mere penny he disdains as being outright infra-dig, or beneath his dignity, from the Latin *infra dignitatem*. And why should not the innermost truth of greatness of soul, in pursuit of which this volume might be seen as being open-endedly engaged, be revealed at least as much in this vignette of the two beggars, admittedly parasitic on Hobbes' definition of magnanimity yet given a demotic twist, as it is anywhere else in this book? The same, *mutatus mutandis*, but by no means redundantly, might hold in regards, a bit earlier, to the megalopsychical favors of the less (not to be confused with the least) advantaged, advanced deontological considerations beyond anything in either Aristotle or Prichard coming into play. Combining these two vignettes to deliver a robust scheme, at once analytically thin (in a good sense) and substantively thick à la Bernard Williams, does succeed, contrary to expectations, in translating greatness of soul out of a very upscale, aristocratic provenance into an equally down-scale democratic outcome. Whether, a little more technically, there is indeed a single, unambiguous thing here that figures now under one Fregean mode of presentation, in the vein of aristocracy but, again, under a quite different mode of presentation, in the vein of democracy, I leave to others to decide.

Stumped at the outset of this chapter, twice over, as regards Megalo and his amnesia, Aristotle's being content to leave his putative ingratitude up in the air being for us still more puzzling, having well in hand now the distinction between a megalopsychical favor and a quasi-contractual one goes a long way toward dispelling both of our puzzles, starting with the

thought that few favors in real life will be clearly one or the other, M favors or Q favors. Immense *savoir faire* is thus called upon, even for us, when it comes to coping with so-called free-gift, "free" being a euphemism here. As to Megalo and his amnesia, the relevant free-gift to Megalo by an ordinary chap must – no need really to say so – be an M benefit, Q benefits being readily paid off. Impudent guys aside, our chap will be one already recognized among his peers as rather more free with his M benefits than others. How delicious then this opportunity to confer a megalopsychical free-gift on Megalo himself. Talk about the moral order of the universe being shaken, for it is not merely superior being forced to ask an inferior for help, that is the least of it; inferior is insisting on his help being acknowledged by superior as itself belonging to that superior order from which he will always be excluded, and not least of all by the recipient of his help. That would be enough to curl anyone's toes, and in the context of the ancient world our plucky chap may even be forced to back down.

"Have it your own way then", Megalo may impatiently concede, vowing henceforth to strike the embarrassing episode from the record. Technically, he is within his rights, a megalopsychical free-gift being one with absolutely no strings attached. But that is surely perverse. No *savoire faire* here! Yet the "help" might be rationalized as being really very little, as when one, shouting "Watch out!" saves your life, while the grumbling over your "ingratitude" – he did save your life – you might dismiss as but a little "hindrance". As to the ethics of your feeling free to move on, delaying only to give your benefactor a poignant high five, Hobbes' profound shift from semantics to pragmatics, with its appeal to a counterfactual, in L, Ch. 15, ¶ 16, should be enjoyed at some length.

> As justice dependeth on antecedent covenant, so does GRATITUDE depend on antecedent grace, that is to say, antecedent free-gift, and is the fourth law of nature, which may be conceived in this form *that a man which receiveth benefit from another of mere grace endeavor that he which giveth it have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will.*

Of course, if you, with your high five, moving on, are a rich man and your benefactor, in rags, is a poor one, there may be hell to pay, for you have given him reasonable cause to repent him of his good will. Faced with any such systematic repentance, Hobbes continues,

> [T]here will be no beginning of benevolence or trust; nor consequently of mutual help, nor of reconciliation of one man to another; and they are to remain in the condition of war, which is contrary to the first and

> fundamental law of nature, which commandeth men to *seek peace*. The breach of this law is called *ingratitude.*

So in this sophisticated analysis – no other word will do – gratitude consists in ensuring that your benefactor refrain from repenting of his good will to you. Assuming now the truth of this theory, it looks as if the two puzzles that launch this chapter, and which we might suppose, a little optimistically, to be now largely resolved, will have to be re-examined altogether anew, in the light of Hobbes' fourth law of nature. Famously, a great adversary of Aristotle, Hobbes might be then expected to weigh in against him also on this issue, and all the more – ethnological considerations come into play – because the value judgments of received opinion in classical antiquity quite as much as our own more recently, combine to convict Megalo of ingratitude. And yet, looking to Hobbes' fourth law of nature, and juggling the various parameters that have been put in place in formulating our two puzzles, Megalo has done little – one cannot really say that he has done nothing – to make Ben, as we may name his benefactor, repent of his good will to him. On the other hand, going by the facts available to them – most important has been the failure of Megalo to reward Ben for his great service – the vulgar (ancient and modern alike) have labored under the misapprehension, reasonable in its own way, that Megalo was guilty of ingratitude.

Invoking an "error theory" in order to reconcile these parameters, we can even allow that, for most practical purposes, and as a rule of thumb, returning a favor, fairly soon, may be the only reliable way of heading off the very real prospect of one's benefactors repenting of their good will. Much less cynical, however, Hobbes can say, in Chapter eleven, ¶ 7, that "cheerful acceptation" of a free-gift or, megalopsychical favor, in my idiom, "which men call gratitude" will be often "taken generally for retribution", as much as to say, near enough, that megalopsychical favors need no requital. Exonerated of the charge of ingratitude, albeit only thanks to a Aristohobbesian rational reconstruction of him, Megalo must yet bear the burden – by no means negligible for one whose middle name is Honor – of being reputed to be an ingrate by people at large, modern as well as ancient. No wonder then his sweeping contempt of us for our terrible benightedness.

Any reason why Megalo should not publicly applaud, and thereby reward, Ben's megalopsychical assistance? And thus undermine Ben's meglopsychical pretensions? Anyway, I have been dismayed by your obliviousness to an obvious escape-clause, familiar to all Aristotle scholars at 1123b 25 where Megalo "returns a service done to him with interest, since this will put the original benefactor into his debt in turn, and make

him the party benefited." Too middle-class himself to appreciate the fine point that underlies the charge of ingratitude, Aristotle must suppose that it is tautologically obvious that only a *megalopsychos* could bestow a megalopsychical free-gift. Not so, say I, taking great pains to establish this admittedly demotic point. A final secret in the vein of *arcana imperii* that I was hoping to keep to myself, Megalo in precisely allowing poor Ben to indulge, also, in these megalopsychical airs and graces has succeeded in rewarding him, richly, after all, and thus arguably – professional logicians must resolve the issue – despoiled him of his speciously new-found dignity, quite as if – we've known this all along, surely – *kleine leute* like ourselves will always lose out to formidable authority-figures like Megalo (first name notwithstanding), thereby floating still another hypothesis in order to grasp what Aristotle's greatness of soul might be all about.

Viewed under this most recent Fregean mode of presentation, Megalo's greatness of soul might now strike us as positively hateful. Witness in particular how this hatefulness comes to feature in a Hobbesian gloss on that authority-figure *par excellence*, namely Milton's God, in connection with the heavy burden of gratitude that, in Hobbes' words, "greater benefits than there is hope to requite" God lay on Satan, thereby disposing him "to counterfeit love but really secret hatred" of God. For, as Hobbes adds, "Benefits oblige, and obligation is thralldom; and unrequitable obligation, perpetual thralldom, *which is, to one's equal, hateful*" (my emphasis). Satan the equal of God? Of course not, but there is a back story here. Refusing to be obeyed by his angels from any sort of fear of his power, God has disguised it, leaving Satan to believe that he may be, near enough, his equal in power, and it is precisely at this point that Hobbesian psychology kicks in, seeing that "benefits from one whom we acknowledge for superior incline to love", while unrequitable benefits from an equal will induce a murderous hate in the grip of which Satan's rebellion against God, which the vulgar will deplore as the blackest ingratitude, Hobbes will take to be beyond any such insipid moralistic appraisal. Equal in power in the opinion of the angels, at any rate, going by how Satan anticipates a stalemate as the result of his rebellion, Satan and God will then be held by them in equal honor, a conclusion that can be simply read off from Hobbes' doctrine of honor. By merit then Satan will prove to be the axiological equal of God.

With Hobbes and Hume thus seen to be converging, heavily and, above all, independently, on Milton, even releasing conjectures as to what a Humeohobbesian gloss on *Paradise Lost* might look like, Aristotle might be also invited to weigh in, thanks to Lewalski's mention of pride when,

pursuing her anti-Satanist theme, she notices that at one point “Satan himself admits that he was motivated to rebel by pride and ambition” (Danielson, 86). Complicating this approach we are given Satan’s desire to “quit the debt immense of endless gratitude to God, so burdensome still paying, still to owe” (Milton, IV, 51-53).