

attention to the matter of the tragic in Nietzsche's political thought and invite further consideration of the implications of Nietzsche's tragic philosophy for politics and for his view of political designs. Highlighting *amor fati* as a human aim for Nietzsche raises the question of the place of love in his thought. Further research on Nietzsche's political thought might more fully address the question of the extent to which the fatalism of Nietzsche's antimoralism leaves a place for the possibility of love and the extent to which this makes love of necessity and affirmation of life possible. By inviting us to think about pluralism, manifold souls, love, and fate, the books highlight key matters for further consideration in Nietzsche's political thought.

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Ann Hartle: *What Happened to Civility: The Promise and Failure of Montaigne's Modern Project*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022. Pp. ix, 178.)

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Calls for a return to civility have been commonplace for many years now, but it only seems more apparent that, whatever civility might be, it is not the kind of creature that comes when it is called. Ann Hartle's *What Happened to Civility: The Promise and Failure of Montaigne's Modern Project* offers a new account of our seeming inability to halt the slide into incivility by locating the problem within civility itself. Hartle sees civility as both the "social bond" that is meant to "replace the traditional moral values" and the "complete moral character" required of a modern liberal citizen (2). Yet civility is inadequate as a replacement for the traditional moral virtues because it leans on the latter even as it tries to shuffle them off the historical stage (4, 148). Civility is not self-sustaining: as a merely human invention, it lacks the kind of transcendent support possessed by the traditional moral virtues, which found their grounding and stability in their orientation towards the divine (20–22). Not only is civility a merely human invention, it is the invention of that most human of early modern philosophers, Michel de Montaigne.

Montaigne invented civility as a new social bond for two reasons. The first is that the previous social bond, represented by the Catholic Church and its twin pillars, tradition and scripture, had been shattered by the Reformation, creating a vacuum which, by the time Montaigne retired, had been filled with the chaos of the French Wars of Religion (15). The second

reason is Montaigne's dislike of the old order, which, in his view, codified the natural human admiration for the strong in a hierarchy of masters and slaves (28). While this hierarchy was ostensibly for the benefit of all, the very language of the common good was simply a mask for the domination of the weak by the strong (23).

The collapse of the old social order therefore gave Montaigne the opportunity to replace a world he opposed with a new, modern world of his own making. This is a world of "authentic" individuals who know how to "belong to themselves," rather than to the city or to some larger whole (68–75). Authentic individuals overcome their natural selves in order to make themselves into whatever they want to be (70–72). Authentic individuals become their own judges; they have no need of "recognition or honor" from those with whom they live, and certainly no need of the kind of robust ethical community found in Aristotle (86). The social bond appropriate to such authentic individuals who do not need each other for the good life is civility (*ibid.*). Civility resolves the old conflict between the strong and the weak (89): the strong are discouraged from seeking mastery in public life and encouraged instead to interiorize their need for honor (89–97); the weak are liberated from the shame of servility in which the traditional order cast their activities, as well as from any subjection to the requirements of the common good (97–98). Shorn of both masters and slaves, civil society is "the free association of equals in which each seeks the good in his particularity" (98).

By inventing civility, Montaigne has invented the modern liberal order—or at least the disposition required by individuals inhabiting such an order (7–8, 55, 63). But there is a flaw in his invention—albeit one that he recognized and attempted to forestall (148). As the new order becomes increasingly unmoored from the fragments of the old order upon which it was founded, the old hierarchy of the strong and the weak—which had been concealed, rather than truly eradicated—is reemerging, without the constraints provided by tradition (13, 146). This is the dire situation in which we find ourselves today. Montaigne offers us some resources, insofar as he can show us how to shore up our deteriorating civility—mainly through the revitalization of free speech in the universities and a greater role for religion in public life. But the weakness lies in civility itself; ultimately, only moral community of the kind fostered by the medieval Catholic Church seems able to protect us from "terror, the concentration camps, and the gas chambers" (3, 146).

Hartle is not the first scholar to suggest that Montaigne plays an important role in bringing about the modern liberal order. Judith Shklar, David Lewis Schaefer, and Pierre Manent have all attempted in one or another way to locate Montaigne at the origins of liberal modernity. Scholars like Biancamaria Fontana and David Quint have also made important arguments about Montaigne's attempted reformation of his society's mores. But Hartle's focus on civility as the key to understanding Montaigne's contribution to modernity is original. It allows her to make connections between numerous

important Montaignean themes, such as belonging to oneself, retirement from public life, hostility to cruelty, self-revelation, and appreciation for the everyday—and, what is more novel, to connect these Montaignean themes with major currents of modernity, such as the mastery of nature and the invention of representative government, the state, and civil society, that are more often associated with other modern progenitors like Machiavelli, Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke. Hartle's treatment of these subjects is always intriguing and often exciting, but this reviewer was left wishing for a fuller development of many of them. Specifically, more detailed comparison of Montaigne with other early modern philosophers would have clarified Montaigne's unique contribution. As a minor example, Hartle's promising comparison of the role of Epaminondas in the writings of Machiavelli and Montaigne concludes by telling us how Montaigne improves upon Epaminondas but not how, or whether, Montaigne improves upon Machiavelli (96–97).

Another issue is Hartle's use of Montaigne's text. Montaigne is not cited as much as this reviewer would have expected and, when he is cited, it is sometimes unclear how his text is being used. A reference to his "science of forgetfulness" (28) implies that Montaigne claims to possess such a science, whereas, in the *Essais*, he is castigating "philosophy" for thinking such a science is "in our power" (2.12). At another point we are told that Montaigne thinks appeals to the common good are always only the "pretext of reason" for the domination of the strong by the weak (23), whereas the context seems to imply a narrower critique of *raison d'état* (3.1). Montaigne is a very tricky writer, and Hartle a very experienced interpreter of Montaigne, but this reviewer would have benefited from some explanation of her method.

Lastly, this reviewer is not persuaded that the modern social bond has disintegrated to the extent claimed by Hartle. Whether Hartle is right or not that the modern liberal order renders moral community impossible (e.g., 9, 86, 131), it seems like a dangerous exaggeration to say that we are witnessing "the reemergence of the master-slave dynamic, in all its naked brutality and cruelty" (13, 146). The liberal order has its weaknesses, and Hartle has done an important service by reminding us of how much we might learn about those weaknesses by returning to Montaigne, but that order's ability to curb naked brutality and cruelty remains one of liberalism's remarkable strengths. In this light, we might wonder whether Montaignean civility is not more durable than Hartle allows.

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